

**DIALOGUE**  
**QUARTERLY**

Volume-22 No. 2 October-December, 2020

**Subscription Rates :***For Individuals (in India)*

Single issue	Rs. 30.00
Annual	Rs. 100.00
For 3 years	Rs. 250.00

*For Institutions:*

Single Issue	Rs. 60.00 in India, Abroad US \$ 15
Annual	Rs. 200.00 in India, Abroad US \$ 50
For 3 years	Rs. 500.00 in India, Abroad US \$ 125

All cheques and Bank Drafts (Account Payee) are to be made in the name of "ASTHA BHARATI", Delhi.

*Advertisement Rates :*

Outside back-cover	Rs. 25, 000.00	Per issue
Inside Covers	Rs. 20, 000.00	,,
Inner page coloured	Rs. 15, 000.00	,,
Inner full page	Rs. 10, 000.00	,,

**DIALOGUE**  
QUARTERLY

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

*Associate Editor*  
**Pranav Kumar**

**ASTHA BHARATI**  
**DELHI**

*The views expressed by the contributors do not necessarily represent the view-point of the journal.*

© Astha Bharati, New Delhi

*Printed and Published by*

**Dr. Lata Singh, IAS (Retd.)**

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)

*Printed at :* Vikas Computer & Printers, Naveen Shahdara, Delhi-32

## Contents

Editorial Perspective	7
Dr. Jayanta Madhab	
India needs to reorient its Covid strategy but lockdown isn't the answer	
CAA and Assam Elections	
1. North-East Scan	
Meghalaya 2020- Did we learn anything at all?	11
<i>Patricia Mukhim</i>	
Myanmar's Political Instability and Northeast India's Prospect of Getting Land-linked	14
<i>M P Bezbaruah and Amiya Sarma</i>	
World Must Help Myanmar Because Myanmar Needs Help, and Not Respond to Myanmar as a Response to China	18
<i>Pradip Phanjoubam</i>	
2. Jayanta Madhab – An Obituary	23
3. The Politics of Perception and the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019	25
<i>Malini Bhattacharjee</i>	
4. The Roadmap for CAA	33
<i>Subimal Bhattacharjee</i>	
5. Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019: Redeeming the Promise of Partition in Assam	40
<i>Binayak Dutta</i>	
6. Anti-CAA Agitation and the Assembly Election of Assam, 2021	48
<i>Jamini Buragohain</i>	
DIALOGUE, Volume-22 No. 2	5

7. MSP, Agricultural Reforms and the Farm Bills <i>M.P. Bezbaruah and Faridus Mamun Khan</i>	56
8. Revisiting Dharampal's Bharateeya Chitta, Manas and Kala <i>Harshal Bhadkamkar, Bhushan Damle and Makarand Mulye</i>	65
9. Area Studies and International Relations: Linked or Delinked <i>P.L. Dash</i>	75
10. Tea Plantation Workers' Participation as a Political Community in Assam <i>Priyanka Neog</i>	82
11. Myths and Culture-History of Arunachal Pradesh: Studying Etic-Emic Paradigm <i>Prasanta Kumar Nayak</i>	90
12. Upanishads as Catalyst of Indic Studies Across the Globe <i>Shruti Kant Pandey</i>	100
13. Indo-Uzbek Ties Along 'Great Indian Road' <i>Sunita Dwivedi</i>	109
14. Coverage of Rape Cases in Media with Special Reference to 'Nirbhaya' Gangrape <i>Afaq Ahmad and Seema Shukla</i>	119
15. Comunidades of Goa: A Re-reading of Select Goan Literature in the Light of Land Laws and Their Effect on Human-Land Equation <i>Smita Sail and M.G. Priya</i>	129
16. Indian Diaspora as a Soft Power Apparatus: Establishing the Diaspora Identity and its Influence in the Indo-US Bilateral Relations <i>Kamni Kumari and Rajneesh Kumar Gupta</i>	145
17. Book Review Revisiting the Political Thought of Ancient India: Pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra Tradition <i>Shiladitya Chakraborty</i>	157

## Editorial Perspective

### **Dr. Jayanta Madhab**

Dr. Jayanta Madhab was President of Astha Bharati from March 2002 till his death in October 2020. An outstanding economist dedicated to the economic development, of the northeast. He was a human being par excellence and gentlemen to the core. One barely comes across a person with no prejudices and biases. Always smiling and a patient listener he was pillar of strength to us in Astha Bharati. For several years he wanted to be relieved of the Presidentship of Astha Bharati, but we always successfully persuaded him to continue.

Whenever in Delhi, he would insist on visiting our office and attend all the meetings and guide us. Astha Bharati owes a lot to him and we shall cherish his memory and try to live upto his expectations. We all in Astha Bharati feel blessed to have been associated with him. May his soul rest in peace.

We are publishing an obituary written by his friend and colleague Shri Barin Ganguli.

### **India needs to reorient its Covid strategy but lockdown isn't the answer**

At a time when things were easing out and the country was coming back to a new normal, Covid-19 made a backdoor entry—and with a greater potency, vibrancy and threat. India now finds itself in the middle of a second wave of coronavirus, with the number of new cases rising exponentially, especially in Maharashtra. The next four weeks, as per the Centre's cautionary advice, are “very, very critical”.

So, how will the government deal with the pandemic, which has wreaked havoc on India's economy after authorities went in for a stringent nationwide two months lockdown in March 2020? Will it go for another round of lockdown? Will it see the spectre of painful migrations from metros and cities? The biggest question, however, is: Can India afford another lockdown?

As the country stares at these questions, especially the last one, reports of restrictions are already coming in, including weekend lockdowns being imposed in Maharashtra. Several states have gone for night curfews (One wonders how night curfew shall curtail Covid cases when day norms are flouted). But given the experience of havoc wrought by lockdown last year, the government should desist from treading that perilous path again. India is yet to recover from the body blow that its economy received last year. Lives and livelihoods were badly disrupted, and continue to be so in several sectors, especially travel, tourism and hospitality. Any attempt to unleash lockdown just when the economy is showing some signs of recovery would be disastrous.

What we need to understand is that the deadly virus will make several comebacks, and in the guise of multiple variants. We need to learn to live with it, at least for a few years. This means masks, social distancing and proper sanitisation will have to be an integral part of our day-to-day lives. The very reason why the virus has made a deadly comeback today is because we, of late, especially after the arrival of Covid-19 vaccines, went back to our old lifestyles. We stopped following Covid protocols, maybe out of undue vaccine assurances or due to virus fatigue, and in no time the country saw a massive spike in coronavirus cases, striking over a lakh cases on a daily basis.

The authorities must realise that blanket lockdown, which may seem an easy way out, is not the answer; it will be a recipe for disaster of unprecedented proportions. What the country needs today, instead, is for us to pursue Covid protocols seriously. Masking up and maintaining social distancing norms have to be followed rigorously. Here we need to desist any temptation of overdoing it. For instance, the Delhi government's decision to challan a single person driving a car without a mask. How will a single person driving his own car spread the virus? Ironically, this order has come at a time when thousands of people are attending election rallies in several states without any masks or an iota of social distancing?

Interestingly, however, the country is witnessing Covid surge in states, with the exception of Tamil Nadu, that have no electoral activities of late. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh account for over 80% of the cases. Of these, Maharashtra alone has almost 60% of India's total Covid-19 cases. This is a riddle which confounds many, and no clear-cut answers are available yet. Maybe the states with mobile populations



are the victims. Given that a number of Bollywood actors and other high-profile celebrities have been the victim of the virus this time, one may assume Mumbai's high-flying nightlife has contributed to the surge. A final word on the spread, however, is not out; it remains a mystery, just like the virus itself, which is changing its nature and character very rapidly.

Amid all this comes the accusations from the Maharashtra Health Minister claiming vaccine scarcity in the state, and accusing the Centre of not doing enough for the state—a charge contested by none other than Maharashtra strongman and NCP leader Sharad Pawar who claimed that the Centre is doing what it could to help the state. This is the time our leaders must desist from indulging in a political slugfest. If the pandemic is to be defeated, it can be done only when the Union and the state respect the spirit of federalism as defined in the Constitution of India.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has so far done well to handle the Covid-19 pandemic. Critics, before jumping into an obituary-writing mode, must understand the challenges of the gigantic proportions facing the Modi government on this front.

On January 16, 2021, India, with a population of 1.38 billion people, kickstarted the world's largest Covid-19 vaccination drive. The plan has been to inoculate 300 million "priority population" by July-August 2021. Inoculating 300 million people within 6-7 months is akin to vaccinating almost the whole of the US or equal to vaccinating the combined populations of Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and France. This one statistic is enough to explain the challenges facing the Modi dispensation.

This is a crucial phase for India as well as the world in the fight against Covid-19. The government, after handling the crisis so well, cannot afford to let the situation slip away. With India in the midst of the second wave, it needs to reorient its Covid strategy. And of course, it needs to realise that lockdown cannot be a part of India's Covid strategy anymore.

### **CAA and Assam Elections**

A landable measure like the Citizen's Amendment Act (CAA) rendering historical justice to those who found themselves on wrong side of the partition, following Independence in 1947, has faced opposition in

Assam for different reasons than in other parts of the Country. In Assam for historical reasons, anti-Bengali and anti-outsiders sentiments have stoked sentiments against outsiders amongst the indigenous Assamese population apprehending danger to their identity and majority as in Tripura etc. Its downside is that it fails to differentiate between a refugee and a migrant. The former is a victim of religious repression in East Pakistan/Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, while the latter is a voluntary migrant from East-Pakistan for economic reasons a phenomenon going on for long.

This perceptual conflict of anti-Bengali sentiments in Assam and moral responsibility of the nation to help refugees and deport illegal migrants differentiates the anti-CAA sentiments in Assam. Reconciling it is a time-consuming process and requires an understanding between the Bengali Hindu refugees and the Assamese. But meanwhile, as in 2016 elections, which the BJP-led NDA won in Assam, the anti-CAA sentiments seem to have even less traction in 2021 election. Other issues like development, growth and peace and local issues seem to be main concerns of the heterogeneous Assamese people. It is expected the NDA will scrape through again. Impact of the electoral process exposes the limits of anti-CAA agitation and sentiments. While its emotional appeal will persist, its electoral and agitation potential will at best remain less than decisive.

—**J.N. Roy**

## **North-East Scan**

# **Meghalaya 2020- Did we learn anything at all?**

**Patricia Mukhim\***

2020 will be remembered not just for the pandemic but the hardships it has caused a large section of Indians, which includes a sizeable chunk of our own people here who live a hand to mouth existence. It is curious that despite all the interventions, poverty, malnutrition, stunting of children is on the rise. Maternal and infants deaths have spiked especially during Covid times and laid bare our decrepit health care infrastructure. One is unsure if serious interventions in the health sector are on the cards or whether the financial crunch will deprive the health sector of the much needed resources. As it is, Meghalaya allocates a bare minimum for education and health, No wonder we are neither truly educated not fully healthy.

The year that has been most challenging for the Government of Meghalaya in terms of resources available. But even if there was no Covid, the roads in Shillong city would have shown up as being the most sub-standard. Those in Government, especially those heading the Public Works Department ought to take a round of the city to witness the extremely poor quality roads which can only be compared to those of Nagaland. These roads will now get a makeover which will be washed away by the first heavy shower because our road engineers have not been trained to make roads in areas with heavy rainfall. Actually the reason is because they have used sub-standard material to cover up the mess underneath because the bulk of the money goes into private pockets. It's a sad commentary on the state of Meghalaya that we have not heard of a single case of corruption taken up by the Chief Vigilance

---

\* The writer is Editor, The Shillong Times.

Commissioner, despite blatant misuse of public funds by the PHE and PWD Departments, among others.

And while the post of the Lok Ayukta has been created the institution is crippled by lack of resources and manpower. From all indications the government is not really keen on empowering the Lok Ayukta because it has to be made answerable for its acts of omission and commission. Hence every institution created for whistle-blowers is running at half-speed. It's not a good idea to be fastidious and acrimonious while critiquing governance because so many factors go into the process of governing a state. Firstly it is a lot of grunt work and in any system there are those that work relentlessly and others that simply work to earn a salary. Having the best minds and skills does not necessarily guarantee one a job in the government. Those that have neither mostly get employed because that too is an accepted part of the recruitment process.

A state that is soon arriving at its 50<sup>th</sup> milestone has nothing much to show by way of achievements. Perhaps, if the Inner Line Permit is granted by the BJP, now that the saffron party has also joined the ILP bandwagon, then there may yet be a feather in the cap of the chief of the MDA Government. But what the ILP will achieve twenty years hence could be a negative growth rate with Meghalaya becoming more dependent on the Centre and its youth having to leave the state to look for jobs outside. We can also say goodbye to any other institution building dream. Do any of the ILP states have national or international institutions for human resource development? Would the Institute for Hotel Management or IIM Shillong for instance have been set up in Nagaland or Mizoram or Arunachal Pradesh? And who actually wants the ILP? Has a survey been carried out?

In any case, Meghalaya has been a state with a huge silent majority which includes its well-heeled intellectuals and academics that will not go against populist demands. NEHU with its Economics, Political Science and Sociology Departments should have done a cost-benefit analysis of the ILP. That would have enlightened those who don't much understand what the ILP entails. Some of NEHU's leading lights with doctorates to boot should have given their considered opinions but that's like asking for the moon. In any case NEHU is too embroiled in its internecine politics to be able to contribute anything of lasting value to the society. The well-paid intelligentsia with the luxury of thinking remains silent while issues are hijacked by those that have not the

faintest idea on how the ILP will strangle the fledgling economy of Meghalaya.

A silent majority is a danger to democracy. For years Meghalaya has been held hostage to pressure groups. The railways are yet to enter the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. Here too no cost-benefit analysis has been carried out. We are all victims of the politics of representation. A few hundred people out of three million citizens decide what's good or bad for us and we have to remain silent and acquiescent or pay the price. We are willy-nilly co-opted to be on the side of those who oppose every progressive idea. The reason why we have elections is because the constitutionally elected representative can be held accountable for decisions taken on behalf of the constituents. Representation implies acting on the expressed wishes of citizens. On the ILP do all the citizens of Meghalaya actually agree on it? This writer travelled extensively to interview stakeholders in tourism if they know what the ILP is all about. They do not have any idea what it implies. All they know is that tourism will be affected for sure.

The MRSSA which is a faux ILP now says that day 'travelers' from Guwahati to Shillong and return will not be entertained. Anyone entering Meghalaya as a tourist has to spend a minimum of two days here. What happens if a similar Act is applied by the Assam Government and people from Meghalaya needing to seek medical assistance or attend to any business in Guwahati are told they must stay back at least two days or will not be allowed to enter the state of Assam? Of course Assam is too benevolent to even think of such a quid pro quo but Meghalaya is not on the right track as far as the surveillance on Indian citizens is concerned.

Protectionism is bad because it kills competition which is the fundamental premise of every successful enterprise. The MRSSA and ILP are all instruments of protectionism. Protectionism is popular primarily for political reasons, not economic reasons. Harvard scholars call it economic suicide.

Those in favour of protectionist policies also claim they are protecting the 'jaidbynriew.' Can they give a detailed analysis of how that protection, which amounts to economic isolation will benefit the people of Meghalaya? This bellicose sub-nationalism is built on irrational fears of the future. The ILP and MRSSA are built on a catastrophic, apocalyptic vision of the world around us. To the uninitiated the above instruments seem like the only way out. But how can they

be the way out when they are likely to choke the economy and there are no imaginative proposals from the proponents of the ILP on our economic future? Meghalaya is not and cannot survive as an island in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It needs to engage with the world around it. The ILP on the contrary is an unrealistic policy proposal that intends to stifle that opportunity. One can understand the exhaustion and pessimism of the voters who see no change with every successive government but the pressure groups too have been there for decades. Some among them have joined politics but showed no inclination to break away from the road much trodden – the road of corruption, of selfish business interests and of hanging on to power at all costs. Sadly the voters have time and again been pushed to bear false witness against reality as they are doing now by their studied silence.

2021 has arrived but for the people of Meghalaya there is no promise of a secure future, only toxic distortions of how that future will pan out, even as more leaders are created for the next elections. And that's the way the cookie crumbles. Meanwhile between now and the next elections we will continue to hear the over-wrought bellowing about the monster in the closet – the demonic other who is the cause of our existential identities.

## Myanmar's Political Instability and Northeast India's Prospect of Getting Land-linked

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

The military coup of February 01, 2021 in Myanmar is a bad news not only for human rights and democracy in that country but also in the northeastern part of India. For Northeast India, this has again dashed

---

\* M.P. Bezbaruah, Professor, Department of Economics, Gauhati University, Guwahati-781014 (Assam). Email: gauhati.ac.in

\*\* Amiya Sarma, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Gauhati University, Guwahati-781014 (Assam). Email: amiya@gauhati.ac.in

the region's hope of escaping from its prolonged geographical isolation by connecting through Myanmar with the prosperous region of Southeast Asia.

Lying next to each other for nearly 15 hundred kilometers of shared border, the population of Northeast India and Myanmar has many cultural and ethnic commonalities, especially near the border areas. Many tribes of border areas of Nagaland and Manipur have their cousins located on other side of the border in Myanmar. The *Singphos*, who are known to have used tea as a beverage even before the British colonial explorers discovered tea plants in the jungles of upper Assam, are one of the most widely dispersed tribes across these transnational borders. Beginning from Upper Assam their habitation extends across Arunachal Pradesh and northern Myanmar and right up to the Yunan Province of China. Rhi lake located in Myanmar across the Mizoram border is held in high esteem by the *Mizos* some of whom even treat the lake as a pilgrimage. Apart from these cross-border ethno-cultural affinities, there has been migration across the border over the ages. Most famous of these migrants are the *Ahoms* who came from Northern Thailand across Myanmar and entered Assam crossing the *Patkai* Hills of Arunachal Pradesh. They set up their kingdom in the Brahmaputra Valley and ruled the valley for about 600 years. They, of course, assimilated completely with the indigenous population. Indeed it is said that Assam has got its name from their tribe name *Ahom*. During the prolonged *Ahom* rule, there were many instances of close relation of Assam and Myanmar. *Ahom* princesses sometimes were married off into the royal families of Myanmar. The people who accompanied these princesses often settled there setting up Assamese villages in the middle of Myanmar, many of which still exist. However, towards the end of the *Ahom* rule, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, there were several Burmese invasions which were so barbaric that the atrocities committed by the Burmese army are still remembered in the folklores in the Assamese society. The atrocities of the Burmese army in Manipur were reportedly even more gruesome than what these were in Assam. Finally, the brutalities ended when the British colonial power came into Assam and defeated the Burmese (Myanmarese). Following the treaty of Yandaboo of 1826, Assam and then Burma also came under British colonial rule.

Under the colonial rule, Burma and the Northeast India had some similar experiences. The colonial capitals were invested in both these

regions to exploit their natural resources of forest products, minerals and land for tea plantation. After independence from colonial rule, first India in 1947 and then Myanmar in 1948, the regions politically have traversed different courses. While Assam and the rest of Northeast India acquired a democratic polity as a part of India, Myanmar by in 1961 came under dictatorial military rule and remained so for the next 50 years. During this period, world community generally boycotted Myanmar for its suppression of democracy and violation of human rights. China took advantage of the country's isolation from the rest of the world to increase its influence in the country and also to exploit its natural resources. Northern Myanmar, parts of which are controlled by local militias rather than the government in Yangon, used to be the safe haven of extremist elements of Northeast India during this period. In 1990s, the Government of India started to engage with the military Junta of Myanmar, partly to counter further penetration of China into Myanmar and partly as a requirement to open up to the East as articulated in the 'Look East' policy.

It is well known that the Northeast India expected a lot from the Look East policy that followed the Indian economic reforms in the early 1990s. With softening of India's eastern borders across Myanmar, the region hoped to be liberated from its geographical isolation by connecting economically with Southeast Asia. As a beginning, border trade agreement was signed with Myanmar in 1994. However, Myanmar under the military regime still had a currency and banking system which did not allow flourishing of free official trade. So the border trade arrangement had to be based on a barter system. Given the limitations of barter, official or formal border trade did not flourish. But informal trade of cheap consumer goods like electronics, apparels, blankets coming in through Myanmar and medicines, fertilizers, eatables going across from Indian side continued to thrive through the border points of Moreh in Manipur and Champhai in Mizoram.

When democracy returned to Myanmar in 2011 and it was followed by economic reforms in the country, some of the hindrances of economically engaging with the country disappeared. Government of India also further invigorated its Look East initiatives by renaming the project as Act East policy. Several concrete steps followed, the most significant of which from the Northeast Indian perspective, being the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, which is to connect Moreh in India with Masot in Northwestern Thailand.



Installation of a democratically elected government and updating of its currency and financial system enabled Myanmar to reconnect with the rest of the world. Investments started to flow in from different parts of the world. But it should be noted that the military in Myanmar actually never went back to the barracks. It has retained its influence through constitutional arrangement was therefore not a surprise when Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Myanmar's pro-democracy movement and the democratically elected government, had to maintain a stoic silence during the Rohngiya crisis of 2015 triggered by Myanmar's armed forces. All these meant that the changes in Myanmar had not been deep-rooted and irreversible. The return of the military to power has all along been on the cards during the country's decade of flirtation with democracy.

Recapture of power by the military in Myanmar has come as a setback to Northeast India's hope of economically connecting with the prosperous zone of Southeast Asia through Myanmar. Given the volatility and uncertainty of political and economic situations in Myanmar, it is perhaps hightime for India to focus more on Bangladesh than Myanmar as the outlet for landlocked Northeast India to the rest of the world and the southern part of India itself. If the tried and tested pre-independence links of the region through Bangladesh by road, rail and waterways can be revived, it may be beneficial for both Northeast India and Bangladesh. While Bangladesh can profit from export of its transit-related services of transportation, hospitality, banking, etc., Northeast India can benefit from reduction of cost in terms of money and time of transition of men and material to Kolkata and further inside the country and even to Southeast Asian countries of Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia etc., across the Bay of Bengal. If the wellbeing of Northeast India has to receive high priority in India's Act East Policy, it may be necessary to further strengthen India's improved relations with Bangladesh. Bangladesh incidentally has emerged as a new growth center in South Asia. So re-routing of Act East through Bangladesh should now have another justification.

# World Must Help Myanmar Because Myanmar Needs Help, and Not Respond to Myanmar as a Response to China

**Pradip Phanjoubam\***

What is unfolding in Myanmar after the atrocious military coup on February it may well turn out to be a do or die moment for the beleaguered country. In all likelihood, even the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) commander-in-chief Min Aung Hlaing, did not anticipate that public protest would be so widespread, cutting across age and community barriers. Whether the momentum of the protest or its appeal across Myanmar people's multiple and complex fractures along ethnic, religious and class lines will sustain is difficult to say, but at least the coup leaders will be hoping it will not. For the moment, they are unlikely to be having peaceful sleep, especially because this movement is driven by the energy of the younger generation, urged on by the older. If the coup does not hold, and if a government by the democratically elected National League for Democracy, NLD, led by the iconic Aung San Suu Kyi returns, it is predicted to be a pivotal chapter in Myanmar, triggering the process of successfully harnessing of the military to be brought under decisive civil control, as in any mature democracy. If the coup holds, the death knell could be for democracy in Myanmar, for although the military has promised this was an emergency to last one year, it is unlikely they would be able to keep the promise, for it does seem the minute they let go, it would be back to democracy in a way bigger than ever, and therefore again spelling the marginalisation of the military in politics – obviously a good outcome but one which the Tatmadaw would dread.

Although, the last has still not been said on this sorry chapter of Myanmar's history, perhaps the coup itself was led by the military's anxiety that they were slowly but surely squeezed towards this fate of political marginalisation and the coup itself was meant to reverse the deepening of democracy and its values amongst the people of Myanmar.

---

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

The 2008 constitution framed by the military, Myanmar's political system was designed to ensure a majority share of power for the military in the experimental partnership with civil leadership. Hence 25 percent of seats in both the bicameral Union Assembly (Pidaungsu Hlutaw) at the national level, consisting of the 440-seat Lower House Pyithu Hluttaw and the 224-seat Upper House Amyotha Hluttaw, and in the 14 subnational state and regional legislatures (State Hluttaw) are reserved for the military. Over and above this, key portfolios of Home, Border Affairs and Defence were also reserved for serving military officers. With this formidable advantage of a 25 percent seats headstart in the contest to control the Hluttaws, the military brass probably presumed that together with its proxy parties in the civil space, the military would continue to hold majority support and therefore be always at helm of all future governments. The 2015 election proved how illusory this anticipation was, for NLD came out on top with a landslide victory in the seats open for competition. The military sponsored Union Solidarity and Development Party, USDP, and their other civil allies were left to be content with only 12 percent of the seats, therefore relegated to the opposition benches. Quite obviously, the election result then demonstrated the Myanmar people had no doubt about their preference in matters of choosing between democracy and military rule.

The military leaders would have been understandably disappointed by the election outcome, but also probably continued to pin their hopes that the euphoria over the sudden democratisation of the polity after five decades of military rule, as well the sheen provided by iconic leader Aung San Suu Kyi to the winning party she belonged, would wane in time and the next election would reflect the true mood of the nation. Indeed, in the run up to the November 2020 elections, most of the predictions by the media somewhat agreed with this assessment, not always for the same reasons, but anticipating the same outcome. The belief then was, there was a degree of disenchantment with the performance of the NLD government everywhere, but particularly so in the ethnic states where much of the local grievances remained largely unaddressed. In the case of the Rakhine and Shan states this disillusionment was even greater for the NLD bulldozed their way in to use a provision in the 2008 constitution that empowers the party in power at the Union to form governments in the states regardless of whether the party won majority in these local arenas. This, the forecasts said would have dented the NLD bases in the states, and hence although

the party was still tipped to emerge as the single largest in the 2020 election, they would have to enlist the support of the ethnic parties to be able to form the next government. Belying all these predictions, the NLD swept the polls yet again with a margin even bigger than in 2015. In the Rakhine state, election was deferred because of the violent civil unrest marked by the Arakan Army's new offensive against the Myanmar state, otherwise, even in the ethnic states, rather than ethnic parties winning themselves a position to be king makers, the NLD made inroads into their bases as well. Whether this is a result of a change of heart amongst the ethnic populations, or it is an outcome of changing demography on account of immigration is still not clear, but the fact is the NLD domineered everywhere. This scenario was one of the worst fears of the Tatmadaw leadership. For now, with the assurance of such a huge mandate of the Myanmar people, Aung San Suu Kyi, might be emboldened to move for amendment of the constitution to relegate the military away from the civil power structure to make Myanmar a true democracy. One of the chief motivations of the Tatmadaw in staging the February coup is believed to be to avoid any such possibility. The other reason often cited is of course the presidential ambition of the military chief Min Aung Hlaing, due to retire shortly.

Now the hope of the Tatmadaw would be that slowly but surely people will gravitate towards whoever holds the reins of state power, regardless of how this power was attained in the first place. This is a phenomenon those of us in Manipur are extremely familiar with, including with regards to the current regime, after all, in terms of impoverishment, unemployment, poor education as well as a rare and sometimes misplaced sense of pride in their past and peoplehood, Myanmar and Manipur share plenty. However, given the nature of the widespread street protests all over Myanmar currently, the Tatmadaw's calculations may yet again be proven false. If the people of Myanmar do manage to break free of this distressing trend of mediocrity mindset that makes people always end up tailing power, a situation so well summed up in the Meitei saying *lairen matung ngainba* (fish shoal crowding around the trail of a python), and continue to put the pressure on the military to give way to democracy, the days of the military as rulers may be numbered.

The other interesting thing to watch in the wake of the Myanmar coup is international reaction. Outside of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi, had lost much of her initial lustre especially after her reluctance to

speak and act on behalf of the Rohingyas when they were being brutally persecuted by her country's military, forcing seven lakhs of them to flee to Bangladesh. She even went ahead to defend the military in December 2019 at the trial by the International Court of Justice at The Hague to decide whether the Tatmadaw's action amounted to war crime and genocide, arguing that the international reading of the situation was blind to the real situation in the country. Still, the Western world by and large has taken a moralistic stand against the coup and has threatened sanctions and isolation of Myanmar, a line of action which many Myanmar observer say will not serve the purpose as it would only impoverish the people further without hurting those behind the coup in any substantial way.

Another curious tendency is to see Myanmar through the prism of China, and therefore to delay a decision on a response till after seeing how China responds. This is unfortunate. From engagements in the past many decades, China's likely response to any regime change in any country it considers important to its economic and strategic interest, should have been obvious to anybody. China does, and indeed would consider Myanmar important not just as a big resource rich neighbour, but also as a passage to the Indian Ocean to connect to Africa and Middle East which are some of its most important destinations for shopping oil and other resources. Because the Malacca Strait which opens a sea route for the country to the Indian Ocean is controlled by the US therefore making it vulnerable to the possibility of being forbidden to use it in the event of heightened friction with the US, a friendly Myanmar is vital for it. Hence, have no doubt about it, China would cosy up with anybody in power in the country. It rolled out the red carpet for Aung San Swu Kyi while she was at the helm, and now if the coup does hold, China can be predicted to make moves to befriend the military leaders again as it did before while they were in power in their last avatar. Whether this is morally right or wrong is another question, what needs to be understood is that China by necessity would not do anything to alienate anybody in power in Myanmar. This being so, the rest of the world should respond as they think fit to the situation regardless of what China does. As it has been so aptly explained, the political DNA of China, as indeed all of Asia and the rest of the world outside of Europe, are quite different from those of the Europeans. These countries do have boundary skirmishes with neighbours, but are not given to exporting their ideologies and belief with Evangelical zeal

as Europe has done and America is doing now, invading even distant sovereign states in the name of promoting their brand of democracy. Asian countries are in many ways inward looking and are happy just to be themselves, and least bothered if others believe or do not believe in what they believe. China for instance is a country which even in ancient time built the Great Wall, choosing to shut themselves from the rest of the world if need be. This being so, the world should go about doing as they think is the best course of action without bothering about China, unless the latter encroaches into their own interest in any unwarranted way. The point is to help Myanmar because Myanmar needs help, and not respond to the Myanmar situation as a response to China.

## Jayanta Madhab - An Obituary

Jayanta Madhab was nicknamed *Jay* by his colleagues in the Asian Development Bank [ADB] not to compare him with the chirpy bird but out of love, affection and feeling of nearness to him. Born in Sivasagar district in Assam on October 25 in 1929, Jay *possessed all the qualities of an Assamese, a free, uninhibited and fervent disposition, respect for others, love for nature and the qualities to endear by their unaffected outlook.* He died in a private hospital in Guwahati, following multiple-organ failure, His mortal beings were consigned in flames with full state honors on October 18, 2020. He was 91 years old. Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal of Assam said the following on Jay's death "the state has lost an economist who by dint of his sheer expertise in economics helped the state in taking a slew of measures on the economic and financial affairs".

During his long professional career. Jay had acquired many laurels. Starting as an advisor in the erstwhile Calcutta Metropolitan Authority *after completing his PhD from London School of Economics*, he went to ADB in Manila. *Post-retirement* from ADB as *Director*, Jay worked as the founder Chairman-cum-Managing Director of the North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd (NEDFC) and the Global Bank. He played a pivotal role in conceiving and setting them up and promoted the concept of micro-financing and helped many young entrepreneurs of Assam and other NE States with loans to start their ventures. He also worked as an Economic Advisor for the State Government of Assam.

My association with Jay was very personal. Jay was associated with many groups in ADB because of his two biggest assets. His golf skill and his sweet disposition. I used to play golf and that is how I became an occasional social guest in his group parties. Both my wife

Shipra and I became close to him after I performed the post last-rite rituals in Vedic style after the tragic death of his only son in London. This bond became stronger after Jay came back and started living between Delhi and Guwahati. Whenever he was in Delhi he made it a point to come to our place and have a Bengali meal. He was very fond of talking to Shipra and used to open up telling her on his achievements, about the foundation named after his son and always requested me to have the next AFE-ADB India Chapter Annual Meeting in Guwahati including an evening in his home.

His desire to have all of us in his tastefully decorated hill top home on the bank of the Brahmaputra River was fulfilled on October, 28, 2017 coinciding with the Chapter's Annual meeting in Guwahati. It was a memorable evening. Thirty seven of us enjoyed a slice of Assamese culture through 'Bihu' dance and amazing Assamese food, against the backdrop of howling sound of the waves of the Brahmaputra River. I saw a smile of satisfaction on Jay's face which I have locked in my memory vault forever. I last heard from Jay in April 2020 expressing his desire to discontinue as a member of the Executive Committee of the Chapter. We reluctantly accepted his request and recorded his services to the Chapter as Ex President.

I wish to end this **eulogy** of my friend Jay with a poem which I picked up from the War Cemetery in Kohima. This is a large cemetery where Allied dead soldiers graves are maintained. I was moved by the epitaph carved on the memorial of the 2nd British Division in the cemetery which has become world-famous as the "Kohima poem"

When You Go Home, Tell Them of Us And Say,  
For Your Tomorrow, We Gave Our Today

My friend Jay was like the words in the poem. He gave his best today to give others a better tomorrow particularly to the youths of North East. I pray for eternal peace for his departed soul.

**Barin Ganguli**

**President, AFE-ADB, India Chapter. October20, 2020**



# The Politics of Perception and the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019

**Malini Bhattacharjee\***

The contours of politics often get shaped not so much on the basis of the actual impact of certain policies but more by the perceptions about their impact by different stakeholders. The Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019 and the controversy it has created is an important example in this regard. As Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal gear up for State Assembly elections this year, the CAA is back in public discourse and will possibly be a turning point in deciding the electoral outcomes in at least some states, if not more. Some analysts have argued that the CAA is likely to have an important impact in the elections of Assam as the CAA-NRC controversy has its genesis in Assam and because the sentiment against the ‘foreigner’ has been the highest in the region since several decades now owing to historical reasons.

As is the case with several contemporary debates in India, the outlines of the CAA-NRC discourse continue to be framed within the binary walls of secularism vis-à-vis communalism. What appears to be missing in this debate is a serious intellectual reflection on how the CAA validates or deflects from the conceptual idea of citizenship in contemporary times. The larger normative rationale behind the objective of protecting the rights of religious minorities fleeing persecution from neighbouring countries has also been side-lined. While several analysts have criticised the CAA for being unjust to the north eastern states and for violating the Assam Accord, the question of refugees fleeing from erstwhile East Pakistan and Bangladesh has not been sufficiently well examined. In this essay I do two things: First, I seek to argue that the

---

\* Malini Bhattacharjee, Assistant Professor, Azim Premji University, Bangalore.  
Email: malinibhattacharjee@gmail.com. Mobile No. 9632766947.

Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 should be re-examined through the lens of contextualised citizenship by reflecting on the normative objections to the Act. Second, I dwell on the specific objections to the Act with regard to its impact on Assam and draw attention to the refugee question that has been completely ignored in this discourse. Finally, I draw upon the recent developments in Assam in light of the upcoming elections and reflect on the possible impact of the CAA on the outcome of the elections.

### **Differentiated Citizenship and the CAA**

There have primarily been three normative objections to the CAA 2019. The first argues that the Act is unconstitutional as it violates the Right to Equality under Article 14 of the Indian Constitution which ensures that the “state shall not deny to any person the right to equality before law or the equal protection of laws within the territory of India”. By singularly excluding Muslims from the ambit of this law, critics allege that, the State has violated this very fundamental principle of equality. The case of Muslim sects such as Shias and Ahmediyas, who face routine persecution in Pakistan and the recent persecution of Rohingya Muslims by the neighbouring state of Myanmar are highlighted in this regard.

The second important objection against the Act is that it is allegedly ‘anti-secular’ and sectarian as it makes citizenship conditional to one’s religious adherence. The fact that the Act does not specify Jews, Muslims and atheists as legitimate categories of persons deserving of this protection is also considered problematic by critics. The argument is that as the Indian state is a secular state, the CAA 2019 is violative of the basic spirit of the Constitution. The Supreme Court’s verdict in the *S.R. Bommai Vs. Union of India* case 1994, where the Court declared secularism to be a basic feature of the Indian Constitution has been cited to make this point.

The third objection is to the alleged under-inclusivity of the Act. The first question that critics have raised in this regard is why the Act covers only three countries, i.e., Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan and no other neighbouring countries like Myanmar or Sri Lanka where the persecution of religious and ethnic minorities has been a reality. The second question is with regard to why only ‘religious persecution’ has been considered but not mentioned explicitly in the Act and why other forms of persecution such as those based on ethnicity or language

have not been covered. Linked to the other criticisms, the third question is with regard to why only six religious communities have been considered eligible for the benefit and finally the fourth question is with regard to why has the cut-off date been chosen as 31st December, 2014.

On the other hand, supporters of the Act have hailed it as redemption for persecuted religious minorities in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan and believe that justice will finally be delivered to the victims of Partition, who for no fault of theirs, were left on the wrong side of the border.

Though the constitutionality of the Act is sub-judice a few reflections on the above are not unwarranted here. I begin my reflection on the CAA 2019 by drawing attention to the idea of differentiated citizenship as this seems to be at the core of the controversy. In this regard, a brilliant paper by Eric J Mitnick<sup>1</sup> provides an interesting entry point to this discussion. Mitnick begins by drawing attention to how constitutive theory and contextual methodologies have become entrenched in legal scholarship and how it has given rise to the idea that law is ‘constitutive of social reality, of relations among persons in society, and even of human identity itself’<sup>2</sup>. In the same paper he introduces two distinct models of citizenship; one based on the classic liberal universalistic conception of citizenship which emphasizes on formal quality and the other known as differentiated citizenship which calls for dissimilar treatment to members of different social groups, evident in the works of multicultural theorists such as Will Kymlicka, Joseph Carens and Iris Marion Young. In the remaining part of the paper Mitnick builds a case for differentiated citizenship by arguing that ‘an enhanced sensitivity to context’ acknowledges that marginalized groups that have been oppressed are differently located in public life and therefore must be treated unequally in ‘order to be treated equally’.<sup>3</sup> Mitnick’s primary argument is that formal equality fails to capture the ‘complex moral calculus inherent in differentiated citizenship policy’<sup>4</sup>. Mitnick concludes eloquently by arguing that if one were ‘to be true to political life, as it is actually lived, there must be a place within political theory for the non-ideal, the historically contingent, the concrete’.<sup>5</sup> It is little wonder therefore that most modern nation-states, including developed western liberal democracies, have favoured a model of differentiated citizenship in some form or another.

India too makes room for differentiated citizenship in the form of affirmative action for citizens belonging to Scheduled Castes, Schedules

Tribes, other Backward Classes, women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and more recently for the Economically Backward Classes. Despite its merits, the obvious drawback of this model is that it takes into account structural disadvantage as a starting point for affirmative action. While recognizing structural disadvantage is by itself not problematic, it may lead to two kinds of problems; first, because the disadvantaged community is not homogenous, it may lead to preferential treatment for those members within the group who are not actually disadvantaged and second that it excludes those members from other communities who may be equally or more disadvantaged than those identified for special treatment. These problems however are not sufficient reasons to dismiss the rationale for providing unequal treatment to marginalized groups. For instance, before the legislation for granting reservations to Economically Backward Classes was passed, one could have made the argument that there may be a miniscule percentage of upper-caste persons who maybe be economically and socially, more or equally backward than a person belonging to the SC or ST community and hence reservations for SCs and STs are discriminatory in nature and that they violate Article 14 of the Indian Constitution. One intuitively realizes that despite some merit to the argument, the logic and ethics of this proposition is not entirely tenable because policies are made not on the basis of exceptions but on the basis of existing norms. One only needs to go through the Constituent Assembly Debates in order to understand the grounds on which differential treatment towards Scheduled Castes and Schedules Tribes were envisaged. Why, for instance, were political safeguards provided for SCs and STs but dropped for minorities (both religious and linguistic) while protecting their cultural and education rights?<sup>6</sup> As will become evident from models of citizenship prevalent in modern states, unequal treatment of citizens and refugees has precisely been the method to ensure substantive equality for those who are perceived to be more marginalized than the others owing to historical reasons.

If one were to apply a similar analytical logic to the CAA 2019, it would become clear that the objections to its alleged under-inclusivity and discriminatory character are not tenuous simply because the very basis of differentiated citizenship is unequal treatment for structurally disadvantaged marginalized groups and the tenets of formal equality do not apply here. Is persecution on the basis of religion a reality in the three countries mentioned in the Act? No one in their right minds

would perhaps negate this. Is the persecution of religious minorities largely a result of the Partition of 1947? If so, then there are definite historical reasons to provide for preferential treatment to those communities who have been victimised. Are there other forms of persecution that people in these countries are being subjected to and are there other neighbouring countries where religious persecution is taking place? Obviously so. But that by itself cannot be a compelling reason to label the CAA 2019 as being discriminatory or anti-secular.

It may also be useful to remember that the Indian state has enabled affirmative action for targeted groups in a progressive fashion. While SCs and STs were identified as the initial beneficiaries for affirmative policy, similar reservations for other groups like OBCs, women in PRIs and Economically Backward Classes were progressively announced over a period of time. It is only possible that going forward, similar policies will be made to provide preferential treatment to other targeted communities not covered by the CAA 2019. The CAA 2019 cannot be considered anti-secular as it covers not only Hindus but also five other religious communities that routinely face persecution in the three said countries. More importantly, nothing in the Act says that Muslims, Jews or atheists from these states will not be allowed to apply for citizenship through the existing route of naturalization. Finally, the claim that the BJP has a majoritarian agenda and that there is a likelihood that the CAA-NRC combine could possibly be used as a tool to turn India into a Hindu Rashtra cannot be considered to be a valid rationale to oppose the Act simply because a legislation cannot be opposed on the basis of suspicions regarding the intentions of the government but only on the basis of whether or not it violates constitutional provisions.

The most glaring gap in the discourse surrounding the CAA controversy is that the oppression of religious minorities in the context of Partition has not been spelt out sufficiently. In the subsequent section I dwell on the historicity of this problem in the context of Assam and the likely impact of the CAA on the Assam elections.

### **Assam and the CAA**

One of the strongest resistances to the CAA 2019 has come from the state of Assam. While the other northeastern states too were up-in-arms against the CAB 2016, their apprehensions and fears have been quelled by the announcement that the CAA 2019 will not apply in the regions covered by the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and Inner Line Permit

(ILP) as notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873. As Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur enjoy ILP status, and as large parts of Meghalaya and Tripura fall under the Sixth Schedule, they have been insulated from the CAA. However, given that only three small regions of Assam- Bodo, Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao- are covered by the Sixth Schedule, the resentment has been the highest in Assam.

The primary objection to the CAA 2019 from Assam has been that it violated the Assam Accord which had set March 24th, 1971 as the cut-off date for detection and deportation of illegal immigrants. Representatives of the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) have argued that the BJP has communalised the issue of illegal migration by rendering support to the Bengali Hindu immigrants while Bengali Muslims are being targeted as they do not constitute BJP's vote bank. They have also argued that Assam had already borne the burden of the Partition by allowing for millions of refugees to settle therein and that the implementation of the CAA would further change the demography such that the indigenous people would become minorities in their own land.

While several media reports have adopted a sympathetic position towards the anti-CAA protestors in Assam, the violent and day to day non-violent silencing of Bengali Hindu voices in post-colonial northeast India has been conveniently forgotten. When the Partition of India happened, apart from Punjab on the western side, both the regions of Bengal and Assam were partitioned too. I have argued elsewhere<sup>7</sup> that the politics surrounding the 'foreigner's problem' in Assam and the subsequent demand for updating the NRC can be traced to the Sylhet Referendum of 1947 that led to the Partition of the state of Assam. Unlike the case of Punjab, the partitions of Bengal and Assam were not immediately followed by similar scales of rioting and the Hindu refugees of East Pakistan did not all cross the border overnight but were forced to flee their homes in the subsequent years in order to escape repeated persecution. It is a well-known fact that despite the signing of the Nehru-Liaqat Pact in 1950, which Prime Minister Nehru in his naivete believed would solve the problem of minority persecution in Pakistan, the condition of Hindus in East Pakistan continued to deteriorate drastically. It is estimated that a staggering 9.5 million people had migrated from East Bengal to India from 1946-1971 of which 7.1 million moved to West Bengal, 1.4 million to Tripura, 0.7 million to Meghalaya and 0.3 million to Assam.<sup>8</sup>

More importantly, in the north eastern states, this community faced a compounded disadvantage as they became the target of several indigenous language and ethnic movements that surfaced in various forms and most prominently in the language riots of 1960s and the Assam movement from 1979-1985. The Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 was another watershed event that further escalated this exodus when after two million Bengali Hindus were killed by the Bangladeshi army, over eight million were forced to flee to India. Though a large segment of these refugees, especially those belonging to the upper castes/ classes, who possessed some social capital could acquire legal citizenship and could negotiate their hardships with a certain amount of confidence, a large section, especially from the downtrodden sections continued to struggle. Many belonging to the latter segments have found themselves in the most inhuman of circumstances whereby despite having been in refugee camps for years, have not received legal citizenship from the Indian state.

The history of Partition coupled with continuous immigration has led to the rise of multiple dual identities combining linguistic and religious markers in Assam which constitute important vote banks for political parties. As the state is gearing up for elections, one witnesses a variety of different alliances based on diverse permutations and combinations that are likely to cater to one or more of these identity groups. While the BJP has joined hands with the AGP and the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), the Congress has stitched a 'mohajut' (grand alliance) with All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), Bodo People's Front, three Left parties and a newly formed regional party named Anchalik Gana Morcha which emerged during the anti-CAA protests of December 2019. Two other parties that were born during the anti-CAA protests- the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and Rajjor Dal (RD) -have come together to fight the elections.

Going by recent developments, the perceptions surrounding the CAA rather than the actual provisions of the Act are likely to play a critical role in deciding the outcomes of the elections. As is evident, the BJP has gone unnaturally quiet on the CAA since the past few months as it has possibly sensed that this strategy may backfire. While the Assamese and tribal communities are already resistant to the idea, around 12 lakh Hindus whose names have not featured in the final NRC list are likely to feel betrayed by the party. If the NRC process had already created dissatisfaction and resentment across the board, the

delay in the enactment of the CAA Rules and the perception that the BJP is engaged in the delicate balancing act of placating to Assamese linguistic sentiments vis-à-vis religious sentiments of the Bengali Hindus may result in the latter's vote being split. Given that Bengali Hindus do not constitute more than 25 % of the state's population, the split may not be significant for the BJP's victory. Irrespective of the outcome of the election, it is evident that the fault lines between different religious and linguistic groups in the state are going to become even more layered than before. In this regard, the merits of differentiated citizenship are likely to be more than offset by the politics on the ground. More importantly, the election will make it clear as to whether the cleavage of language which has been the primary pivot of the politics of Assam since long is going to triumph over other political cleavages like religion.

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Eric J. Mitnick, 'Differentiated Citizenship and Contextualized Morality', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Apr., 2004, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Apr., 2004), pp. 163-177.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 165.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 173.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 175.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Shefali Jha, 'Rights versus Representation: Defending Minority Interests in the Constituent Assembly', in R. Bhargava, ed. *Politics and Ethics of the Indian Constitution* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- <sup>7</sup> Malini Bhattacharjee, '73 yrs ago, Sylhet Referendum left a Hindu community homeless between Assam and Bangladesh', *The Print*, 6 July 2020. Available at <https://theprint.in/opinion/73-yrs-sylhet-referendum-hindu-community-homeless-between-assam-bangladesh/455233/>
- <sup>8</sup> P.N. Luthra, 'Problem of Refugees from East Bengal', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Dec. 11, 1971, Vol. 6, No. 50 (Dec. 11, 1971), p. 2467.



# The Roadmap for CAA

**Subimal Bhattacharjee\***

On 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019, the President of India signed the Citizenship Amendment Bill and so it became the law of the land- the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha had deliberated on the bill and the Union Home Minister, Shri Amit Shah had mentioned in details of the requirements of the legislation and how it wasn't taking away the citizenship of any existing citizen. The NDA government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi envisioned the trinity of National Register of Citizens (NRC), a nationwide Nation Population Registry NPR and CAA as a series of legal and procedural steps aimed at weeding out illegal immigrants from the country. These moves are also aimed at addressing one of the greatest security challenges that the country faces, and at the same time ensure that the persecuted minorities in the neighbourhood in the 3 countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan have a home to call their own. However despite more than a year of the CAA law in place, the government is yet to notify the rules for the same although it has indicated that the pandemic and the related emergency demanded priority approach in other areas.

The passage of CAA saw unprecedented opposition across the country from all quarters with many claiming that the Act would effectively dilute the provision of secularism so enshrined in the constitution. Conspiracy theorists claimed that a nationwide NRC would be used to disenfranchise Muslim population and at the same time create a safe haven for the Hindu population. This led to one of the most aggressive and visible agitations at Shaheen Bagh in the national capital that got international traction with many likening the policies to

---

\* Subimal Bhattacharjee is former country head of General Dynamics and works in grassroots Assam through his organisation JOOKTO. [subimalb@gmail.com](mailto:subimalb@gmail.com), [office@subimal.in](mailto:office@subimal.in).

the racial purity laws brought in by the Nazis in pre-war Germany. The agitation at Shaheen Bagh was marred by one of the most violent communal riots in Delhi which resulted in deaths and destruction of public property at an unprecedented scale.

But some of the worst opposition to the Act came from the north eastern states with Assam being in the eye of the storm. Since the introduction of the bill in parliament, major organizations in the state of Assam have voiced their protest on all possible forums and even Assam Gana Parishad had broken away from the BJP led state government in Assam although they returned back very soon. But the final passage of the bill threw the state into a flurry of violent protests led by the student bodies which saw normal life come to a standstill in the Brahmaputra Valley and also witnessed deaths of protestors due to police action. In what cannot be allowed to be a precedent, the Japanese Premier Abe Shinzo had to cancel his visit to the country and meet the Indian PM at Guwahati due to the agitation.

The primary reason for the opposition in Assam is the dissonance due to the difference in the cut off dates between the Assam Accord and the CAA. While the Assam Accord takes 25<sup>th</sup> March 1971 as the date beyond which anyone entering the state of Assam is to be declared an illegal foreigner and deported, whatever be his religion. On the other hand CAA takes December 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 as the cut-off date and allows persecuted Hindu and other minorities from the neighbouring countries to get a fast track to citizenship. This was believed by many to be a signal that the government wanted to create a backdoor for letting in Hindu Bengali immigrants who had come in from Bangladesh. The fact that the state government was yet to act on those who had been excluded in the NRC seemed to justify this allegation. There were three other primary oppositions to the CAA. Firstly that the CAA violated the principle of secularism that has been enshrined in our constitution by excluding Muslims from the list of persecuted immigrants. Secondly that it would harm the demography and culture of the North East which already saw huge fissures. And finally, it was believed that CAA would hurt the international image of the nation when it came to relations with the neighbouring states of Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

The government has at lengths spoken about each of the objections and tried to explain the rationale for bringing in the CAA and it will be pertinent to touch upon some of those points to illustrate that the primary objections are ill founded.

Firstly, let us look at the accusation that the CAA is a backdoor entry for the Hindu Bengali immigrants who have been left out of the NRC. The NRC exercise undertaken in Assam between February 2015 and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019 under the watch of the Supreme Court of India has seen massive anomalies as many have struggled to prove their citizenship, mostly in the poorer section of the society. With as many as 19 million people having been found ineligible, it is necessary for the government to review the process so that no one who is truly a citizen of India is missed out because of the ill handled process on the ground. But the canard that has been spread about the CAA is that it will take care of the Muslim infiltrators but allow the Hindu Bengalis a way to get back on the list. This is definitely not true. The NRC form had no column for religion and the process focused on the applicant to prove through legacy documents that either proved that the applicant was a citizen of India before the midnight of 24<sup>th</sup> March 1971 or else his ancestor was a citizen. If it was the second case, the applicant had to prove his relationship with the ancestor again through a set of documents. Nowhere is it possible for someone who has claimed to be an Indian citizen to go back and claim that he was a persecuted minority. If at this point, the applicant wants to revise his claim to being a persecuted minority fleeing oppression, then he would be criminally culpable for having shared false documents earlier and would most certainly be prosecuted. Thus to assume that the CAA can be used as a backdoor is nothing but a humongous lie.

Secondly, the CAA does not affect the principles of secularism as Article 25 of the constitution has not been changed which allows every individual to profess and practice their religion. All that the CAA does is create a special window for persecuted Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and others in the neighbouring countries and allow them to get fast track citizenship. By doing so, the government is not discriminating against any religion. All that the government seeks to do is to reverse the legacy damage of the partition due to which Hindus were stuck in foreign land where their religion became a discriminatory factor. The CAA also in no way affects the Muslims who are applying for citizenship or for Long Term Visas and will continue to do so. The procedure for that has been laid down by the MHA and rules for the same have been notified.

Thirdly, we must keep in mind that Article 371 with all its provisions remains intact for the North Eastern States. Thus it is guaranteed that

the inhabitants will not see any cultural invasion and nor will they ever have to give up their lands. Also the various tribal communities in the region are protected by Schedule 6 of the constitution which includes the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura as well as the areas covered under the Inner Line Permit which includes Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland. These areas are exempt from the imposition of CAA. Also the high powered committee formed under Clause 6 of the Assam Accord has already worked on its report and submitted to the government and have notified many steps to protect, preserve and promote the cultural and linguistic identity of the indigenous communities of Assam that not only secure their land and culture but also economic prospects. The Modi government has over the years pursued economic growth for the region without compromising on the social and cultural identity of the North East States. The assertion that the CAA would in any way affect the demographics or culture of the region is completely unfounded.

Finally many opponents of CAA have said that it would have a detrimental effect on our relations with neighbouring countries like Afghanistan and Bangladesh. What these opponents are not taking into consideration is that the government of a sovereign nation has the authority to draft laws for the benefits of its citizens and as long as the said laws did not contradict the existing obligations of the government, that is perfectly all right. The CAA is in no way going to change the existing statute of citizenship and all that it does is that it provides a faster opportunity for Hindus and other persecuted communities to find a home in India. Also the government of India has engaged significantly with the government in Bangladesh to explain the rationale and also provide confidence that nobody is being deprived of their citizenship by bringing in the legislation.

The CAA is not a new law but an amendment to existing law. The Parliament, in 1955, passed The Citizenship Act which regulates the acquisition and determination of citizenship. It established *jus sanguinis*, or right of blood, as the primary form of citizenship determination in India meaning that a person's citizenship is determined by their parents' citizenship. It also provides the conditions for naturalisation or the process by which one may come to acquire Indian citizenship. The Act has been amended six times since its origin to account for the evolving nature of citizenship in India, the CAA being the sixth.

The CAA contains two major provisions. Firstly, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis coming from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh would not be treated as illegal immigrants, thus making them eligible for citizenship. Secondly, it reduced the time required for naturalisation for these communities from the current twelve years to seven years. The process of naturalisation usually has a time requirement with regards to the permanent residence in India so that the applicant becomes well versed with the nation's laws, culture, spirit, customs, and way of life. The fact that we have to keep in mind as we look at the CAA is that it does not automatically guarantee citizenship. It just lets the persecuted minority apply for citizenship, something that an illegal migrant is not allowed to do.

The Act is necessitated by the ongoing persecution of Hindus in the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh. This persecution is not a spin created by the government here in India and is supported by reports of various NGOs and international organizations working in these regions. The persecution of Hindus is not a new thing. The partition of India in 1947 led to a bloodbath in the western frontiers as columns of humanity moved from Pakistan to India. But the violence did not end with the partition. Over the initial years of its existence, both West Pakistan and East Pakistan saw concerted violence directed at the Hindu minorities supported by inaction from the local police. Hindus were prevented from owning properties, many of their existing properties usurped forcibly lynched, raped and bullied. There were multiple cases of forced conversions. The persecution of Hindus is an ongoing phenomenon in Pakistan.

East Pakistan too saw similar concerted violence against Hindus but nothing can match the genocide during the 1971 war. The Bangladesh Liberation War (1971) resulted in one of the largest genocides of the 20th century. While estimates of the number of casualties was 3,000,000, it is reasonably certain that Hindus bore a disproportionate brunt of the Pakistan Army's onslaught against the Bengali population of what was East Pakistan. An article in Time magazine dated 2 August 1971, stated "The Hindus, who account for three-fourths of the refugees and a majority of the dead, have borne the brunt of the Muslim military hatred." And this was all sanctioned by Islamabad.

While the situation in Bangladesh has improved over the years, Hindus still make for soft target as they do not get the same legal protection that a Muslim does. There are still many cases reported of

rapes, forced conversions and lynching that make it evident that being a Hindu in Bangladesh is not a happy place. Lands belonging to Hindus are grabbed frequently and despite the Bangladesh government's intervention, such attempts do not stop and the perpetrators of religion based hatred don't feel any deterrence to such governmental interventions.

The CAA aims at providing a soothing platform for those who have to flee their homes in the neighbouring countries due to the unending persecution. The Act differentiates between someone coming to India because he has nowhere else to run as against those who have come to India on account of better economic opportunity and also a few that want to foment trouble in the country.

The Act has at its heart the fundamental idea that there are some communities that are more Indian than others and therefore need less time for naturalisation because they have shared value systems despite living in foreign lands. In this the CAA is fundamentally correct. India is the only country in the world with a Hindu majority. If India cannot be a homeland for all Hindus, then which country can? If the ruling government is defining India as a homeland for all Hindus, then what is wrong in that? In doing so, it doesn't exclude any other religion and those who practice and propagate that religion.

India has a long history of providing refuge for communities facing persecution. Parsis are a notable example of a community that has made India their home. What the CAA intends to do is to make India the final safe haven for all Hindus.

This Act is the fulfilment of a promise that the ruling BJP government had made in its 2014 Lok Sabha election manifesto. The promise read, "India shall remain a natural home for persecuted Hindus and they shall be welcome to seek refuge here". The initial steps to this were the notifications issued in 2015 and 2016, which excluded religious minorities of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh from being deported, as illegal immigrants are, under the Passports Act, 1920, and The Foreigners Act, 1946. This CAA is the final step of the process and a necessary one. It is therefore unfortunate that despite the passage of more than one year, the government is yet to notify the rules around CAA.

While the attention to address the situation arising out of the Covid19 pandemic has been cited as a reason for the delay in notifying the rules that will govern the implementation of the CAA, the

government has assured that it is bound to implement it as soon as it is conducive to do a large scale exercise that will require a large involvement of government machinery and security forces many of whom are still engaged in Covid19 related duties. Needless to say the government has deliberated and worked on the parameters for notifying such rules. However time is crucial and so the notification has to be undertaken soonest so that the aggressive opposition to the CAA in the form of the Shaheen Bagh protests do not take another round of endless opposition to a law that seeks to help persecuted minorities. Clearly the government is concerned about the year lost which is also a year lost by thousands who have become stateless due to religious persecution and who saw a ray of light in the CAA. Hopefully implementation of the CAA will start sooner than later and the pandemic wont show up its fast spreading tentacles in another sinister wave. What is of essence is that the government promise remains to do this justice through CAA.

# Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019: Redeeming the Promise of Partition in Assam

**Binayak Dutta\***

## **Introduction**

When interprovincial borders of colonial era became international boundaries post-partition, gradually the provincial governments and the Government of India<sup>1</sup> began to discourage migration of Muslims from Pakistan to India between 1948 and 1950.<sup>2</sup> The correspondence between Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel point out that there was a rising discontent among Indians in general and refugees in particular about the inflow of Muslims into India from Pakistan.<sup>3</sup> The East Pakistan situation was very critical as there was a steady exodus of Hindus who constituted 31 percent of the total population in 1947 and were reduced to 22 percent in 1951.<sup>4</sup> The situation became critical when the initial trickle of people wanting to migrate to India from East Pakistan became a flood by 1949 as the political atmosphere in East Pakistan became increasingly hostile to the minority communities.

## **Historical Antecedents: The Assamese Blueprint**

When the debates of the Constituent Assembly rolled into deliberations on provisions relating to citizenship in independent India, it was the members from Assam who argued in favour of the distinction between ‘displaced-refugees’ and ‘immigrants’. Members in the Constituent Assembly from Assam were vocal in their demands that, the rights of refugees should be protected even if by “special provision” as against

---

\* Dr. Binayak Dutta, Department of History, North Eastern Hill University, NEHU, Shillong-793022 (Meghalaya).



‘vague migrants who may come in.’<sup>5</sup> When the Constituent Assembly met to debate on citizenship, it was Rohini Kumar Choudhuri, of Assam who championed the citizenship claims of the refugees coming to Assam, more so the partition victims. In pressing his amendments to the draft of Articles, 5 and 6 he demanded citizenship for those persons who fled from East Bengal to Assam,

because they found things impossible for them there....Can anyone imagine for a moment that there is no fear of disturbance in the minds of these East Bengal people who had come over to West Bengal and Assam?... I want citizenship rights to this class of people who have originally belonged to Sylhet in the province of Assam, who long before the partition, have come to the Assam Valley as citizen ‘of that province and are staying in the present province of Assam... I want to make it perfectly clear that I want citizenship rights for those people of East Bengal who had gone over to West Bengal or Assam out of fear of disturbance in the future or from the sense of insecurity and – also for those people who have come over from Sylhet, who at the time of coming had no fear of disturbance or anything of that kind, but who on account of fear of disturbances now have decided to live here.’<sup>6</sup>

Choudhuri did not lose sight of the obvious distinction between the refugee and the immigrants as he argued,

I only want that those classes of persons whom I have mentioned should be included and should get citizenship rights ... and those classes of persons whom I want to exclude should not get the right of citizenship...’’<sup>7</sup>

And he was not alone. He moved the amendment in his representative capacity on behalf of the Assamese Hindus, Mr. Dharanidhar Basu-Matari representing the Tribal people of Assam and Mr. Nibaran Chandra Laskar, representing the Bengali Scheduled Castes, also from Assam,<sup>8</sup> the three important components of society in Assam.

As the years rolled by, many districts of East Pakistan were engulfed by communal conflagration. The refugee situation aggravated further as riots broke out in various other parts of East Pakistan in 1949 and 1950.<sup>9</sup> The Census Report 1951, observed that,

“Soon after the 1949 Refugee Census occurred the incidences of Soneswar and Habiganj, the oppression of the Hajongs in Northern Mymensingh and the atrocities committed on the Santhals in Rajshahi, in East Dinajpur, etc. Then came the gruesome incidents over large areas of East Pakistan in February-March 1950, especially Dacca. These led to the inevitable result, viz, the desertion by hundreds and thousands of Hindus in East Pakistan of their hearths and homes to seek shelter in the neighbouring districts of West Bengal and Assam whichever was nearer...”<sup>10</sup>

The number of displaced almost touched about half a million people by April, 1950 and it became necessary to request the Governor-General to issue an ordinance...”<sup>11</sup> which was promulgated on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1950 which was formalized through the Undesirable Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Bill 1950 to “provide for the expulsion from Assam of undesirable immigrants”,<sup>12</sup> as distinguished from “persons who on account of disturbances or disorder in Pakistan or any other country have come to take refuge in Assam...”<sup>13</sup> Almost all the members speaking on the bill prominent being Shri Rohini Kumar Choudhury, Shri Surendranath Buragohain, Shri Dev Kanta Barooah, and Shri Kuladhar Chaliha, all from Assam, came out in support of the bill and its passage into an act on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, 1950, contributed to create a legal foundation for a differentia between Non-Muslim and Muslim migrants, on the ground. But the debate was not a closure to the discussions and uproar that visited the Houses of Parliament on the issue of trans- border migration from East Pakistan and the question of citizenship in India of the persecuted minority communities from there again in November, 1950. On 15th November, 1950 when the Prime Minister spoke on the President’s address to Parliament and referred to the refugee situation, he assured that,

...the hon. Member referred to the question of citizenship. There is no doubt, of course, that those displaced persons who have come to settle in India are bound to have their citizenship. If the law is inadequate in this respect, the law should be changed.<sup>14</sup>

The Governments of India and Assam had indeed come a long way since April 1950, when the Prime Minister in Parliament had made a sovereign commitment in protecting the rights of the refugees from

East Pakistan and who came to settle in Assam. It hardly needs mention that the sovereign promise of 1950 remained unredeemed and these refugees found themselves continuously marginalized in the seven decades.

### **Twenty First Century and a New Era in Citizenship Politics in Assam**

When the Supreme Court in the *Sarbananda Sonowal versus Union of India and Another* reaffirmed the distinction between refugees and Immigrants,<sup>15</sup> a new chapter began to be written in Indian legal and political history. The Judgement helped to reaffirm the historical and constitutional distinction between refugees and immigrants which had been mandated by the Constituent Assembly and Parliament since inception of independent India, but which the political leadership in Assam had forgotten over time. The judgement was a moment of transition, in Indian legal history as the legal infrastructure was set in place to redeem the unfulfilled sovereign promise of 1950, which had fallen to disuse, over time. When the new government came to office in 2014, it began to seriously engage with the issue of displacement across the borders and refugee rehabilitation. Therefore, it was of little surprise that the Central Government's began to take the initiative to implement this judgement through a union Home Ministry Notification issued on September 2015 which exempted the Bangladeshi and Pakistani nationals belonging to the minority community entering India on or before 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014 without proper relevant documents from being declared as illegal entrants or foreigners, and exempted them from the Passport (Entry into India) Act 1920 and the Foreigners Act of 1946. However, reports indicate that "this failed to curb the harassment of Bengali speaking people by the police. It just continues under a different convenient name. People are being harassed in the name of detection and identification of foreigners."<sup>16</sup> When the National Register of Citizens- a process that was singularly unique to the province of Assam in India reached its culmination in September 2019, the government at the centre and the state was left with over 19 lakh people excluded from the updated Register of which only 4 lakh 86 thousand persons were East Bengali Muslims and about 6 lakh 90 thousand persons were Bengali Hindus,<sup>17</sup> Assam was again on the horns of a dilemma. Admittedly the NRC was a major turn in citizenship politics of Assam as the BJP, the party in power, both at the central

Government and at the province was caught in a bind between its commitments to the cause of refugees on the one hand and its support to the NRC updation in Assam on the other. As the publication of the Assam NRC raised a hue and cry and local organizations which had earlier advocated for its speedy completion came out to condemn it and its cancellation. In this background, the BJP as the party in Government both at the centre and the state in a rework of its strategy decided to undertake to protect the religious minorities especially Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs<sup>18</sup> who 'have fled to India to seek shelter and continued to stay in India even if their travel documents had expired or they have incomplete or no documents.'<sup>19</sup> In view of grassroots experience, the Christian refugees were also included in its ambit. What compounded the problem was the complex issue of 'D' Voters and detainees in the six Detention Camps in Assam<sup>20</sup> which according to the Assam Government affidavit in the Supreme Court dated 31.01.2019 was 938 of which approximately 35% were those who belonged to Bengali caste Hindus, Garos, Hajongs, Kochs, other Indigenous tribes and Dalit Hindus. As many as 31 children were lodged in these camps and many inmates had died in the camp itself due to various reasons including suicide. The number of detainees rose to 1044 by November 2019. In this background, Shri Amit Shah, in an interview to ABP News on 2<sup>nd</sup> October at Patna categorically pointed out that the "idea of NRC is linked with CAB. I want to make it clear that first Citizenship Amendment Bill will be introduced, which will give Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and Christians from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan citizenship. After which NRC will come and it'll remove every single infiltrator from the country." It is in pursuance of its electoral commitment the Party Manifesto of 2019 promised for

...the enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Bill for the protection of individuals of religious minority communities from neighbouring countries escaping persecution...Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs and Christians escaping persecution from India's neighbouring countries will be given citizenship in India.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore within six months of its return to power, the NDA government presented the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December in the Lok Sabha and on 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2019 to the Rajya Sabha and ensured its passage in both the Houses of Parliament. With the Presidential assent on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, 2019 the Bill

became an Act with its publication in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary (No.71), Part II, S.1, dated the 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2019. With the passage of this Act, the Government redeemed its pledge to the people of India wholly as those who were faced with the prospect of eviction and deportation from India belonging to the specified communities from the neighbouring countries, who had escaped to India to avoid persecution or the threat of persecution till 31<sup>st</sup>December, 2014 were made eligible to be regularized as citizens subsequent to their application to the prescribed authority under the Act and on fulfilment of the conditions for Indian citizenship as specified under section 5 of the Citizenship Act. It was declared by Section 2 of the Amendment Act that those belonging to the specified communities “shall not be treated as illegal migrant for the purpose of this Act”.<sup>22</sup>

### **In Lieu of a Conclusion**

When the Home Minister moved the motion to introduce the Bill, and declared, that, “This is a document of freedom, this is a document that would be recorded in history in golden letters... In the end, I want to, through this house, make it clear to the country, that there is a fundamental difference between refugee and immigrant...This bill is for the refugees, this bill is for the religious minorities...”,<sup>23</sup> he was only stating something that was clearly outlined in the Party manifesto of both 2014 and 2019. The passage of the Act was the fulfilment of one of the key components of the B.J.P. manifesto since 2014.<sup>24</sup> Ever since the foundation of the party, the Bharatiya Janata Party( B.J.P.) has had a consistent ideological commitment of addressing the concerns of Hindu refugees who were conceived as an inalienable part of the Indian national consciousness, who had been forced to reside in a part of a land that had become a foreign country after partition and who were forced to migrate to India from Pakistan since partition in 1947 and subsequently from Bangladesh post 1971 because of religious persecution.

The Act of 2019 is a bold and positive step in reconciling the lingering baggage of partition in north-east India. It marked a definite closure to the problem of unfettered cross border migration cutting across communities till 2014 when the Supreme Court set the NRC process in motion in Assam. Contrary to most beliefs, the Act does not grant automatic citizenship to any individual from any social or religious group but only helps to resolve the lingering confusion between refugees

and illegal immigrants. This is clearly outlined in the ‘Statement of Objects and Reasons’ of the Act. That is the biggest takeaway from the Act of 2019. Citizenship had always been a contested site in Assam politics where partition took place along with Punjab and Bengal and all protection to the refugees afforded by the Act of 1950 had fallen to disuse after 1971 when Bangladesh came to be created. One of the most ominous effects of partition was the unending stream of migration of people across the borders, which till 1947 was provincial and psychological, but after 1947 became international, legal and political which had to be accommodated in evolving legal frameworks on citizenship in India. Maximum churning on the citizenship question was on the question of migration of refugees and demographic transformation which was reflected through the political tumult on the ground and the manner in which these people came to be perceived in official debates and popular politics. Bill and its actualization is an act of the fulfilment of BJP’s manifesto and the realization of the Nehru’s promise to Parliament of 15<sup>th</sup> November, 1950 as also the wishes of the founding members of the Constituent Assembly and the Parliament belonging to Assam. What followed the passage and notification of the Act probably reminded the Indians that despite the passage of time, the wounds of partition have not healed and the promise of the midnight hour had long been forsaken. Though the attempts of the post-colonial government has been to move beyond the predicaments of partition of India in 1947, it is something that we are yet to reconcile with. For the last seven decades, the wounds of partition continued to fester the lives of the people like a phantom through the predicaments of citizenship in north east India. While partition of India may have been an event many years past for the other parts of the country, for the north-eastern region and its people, it is a live issue that we are still coming to terms with. The unrest over the Citizenship Amendment Act is a live example.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See interventions on the citizenship provision by Sardar Bhopinder Singh Mann in the Constituent Assembly Debate, dated 12th August, 1948. For details on the introduction of the Permit System since 19th July, 1948 in Feroz Meharuddin vs. Sub-Divisional Officer and Ors., AIR 1961 M.P. 110.
- <sup>2</sup> West Pakistan (Control) Ordinance, 1948 and the rules framed under the Ordinance introducing a system of permits see judgement in Feroz

- Meharuddin vs. Sub-Divisional Officer and Ors., AIR 1961 M.P. 110.
3. Durga Das, *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50*, Vol-VI, pp. 262-263, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1973.
  4. Abul Barkat, et.al, *Deprivation of Hindu Minority in Bangladesh: Living with vested property*, Pathak Samabesh, Dhaka, 2008, pp. 61-66.
  5. Constituent Assembly Debates dated 8th January, 1949, p. 1369.
  6. Constituent Assembly Debates dated 12th August, 1949 see intervention by Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri, p. 414-415.
  7. Constituent Assembly Debate dated 12th August, 1949 see intervention by Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri, p. 414.
  8. Constituent Assembly Debate dated 12th August, 1949 see intervention by Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri, p. 413.
  9. Binayak Dutta, *Violent Parting: Recovering the History of Violence in Sylhet on Partition and After.(1947-50)* in *The Heritage*, Vol. IV, Issue-1, 2013, pp. 20-36
  10. Census of India, 1951, Vol.XII, Part I-A, p.356-57.
  11. Indian Parliamentary Debates, 8th February, 1950, Vol.-I, pp. 313-314.
  12. Indian Parliamentary Debates, 8th February, 1950, Vol.-I, p. 313.
  13. Indian Parliamentary Debates, 8th February, 1950, Vol.-I, p. 315.
  14. Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, Vol. Two, Publication Division, Government of India, Delhi, 1954, p. 10.
  15. Para 57, AIR 2005 SC 2920.
  16. The Telegraph, dated 3rd April, 2016
  17. Pratidin dated 12.09.19
  18. Tweet by the BJP on 4th November 2019.
  19. Statement of Objects and Reasons of The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.
  20. The Six Detention Camps in Assam are at Goalpara, Silchar, Tezpur, Kokrajhar, Jorhat and Dibrugarh.
  21. Bharatiya Janata. Party Manifesto for General Elections, 2019, p. 12.
  22. The Citizenship Act, 1955, Section 2 (ii) 3 as inserted by the Act No. 47 of 2019.
  23. Home Minister Amit A. Shah's reply to the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill Debate in Lok Sabha on 9.12.19.
  24. Manifesto of the B.J.P. in 2014, p. 40.

# Anti-CAA Agitation and the Assembly Election of Assam, 2021

**Dr. Jamini Buragohain\***

## **Introduction**

CAA took its birth in the political context of Assam, but anti-CAA protest spread to other parts of India and acquired a wider character. Despite its broader manifestations, there were some distinctive features about the anti-CAA movement of Assam. Among them, two features stand out. First, the compilation of a state-wide NRC was a long term demand of the people from the state, since the signing of the Assam Accord in 1985 (Hazarika 2019). Historical and cultural factors have led to the evolution of a strong ‘anti-outsider’ sentiment among the native ethnic communities of the state. The NRC process was welcomed as an administrative exercise to identify the prospective ‘outsiders’ from the state. Second, for most of the native communities of the state, religious antecedents of the prospective ‘outsider’ was not the point of concern. The actual cause of concern were those ‘outsiders’ who posed a threat to the identity and culture of the Assamese people of the state.

To assess the impact of CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019) on the electoral scenario (Assembly Election, 2021) of Assam, we should understand why CAA came into being in the first place. Second, there is a need to understand the various shades of political manifestations of the anti-CAA sentiment in the state. Third, an analysis of the strength of these manifestations would provide important clue about the role of the anti-CAA sentiment on the electoral outcomes of 2021.

---

\* Dr. Jamini Buragohain, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Ulubari, Guwahati-781007( Assam). Mobile No. 09643670204.E-mail: jamini1982@gmail.com



## **The Birth of CAA**

Assam has been a land of migrants. Many migrant communities have come to Assam and made it their home. Despite this historical reality, there tends to be a strong 'anti-outsider' sentiment within the different ethnic communities residing in the state. This 'anti-outsider' sentiment can be traced back to the colonial period, when colonial administrative and political decisions reinforced the sentiment. There have been literary figures of Assam who have pointed out the presence of 'outsiders' within the state at different points of time. But the more recent 'anti-outsider' sentiment can be traced back to the 1970s. It was believed that military pogroms organised by the government of East Pakistan had led to migration of millions of Bangladeshi people into the states of West Bengal, Assam and Tripura, some of whom never returned to their parent state and settled in India. Officially, apprehensions were expressed by no other than the Chief Electoral Officer of India S. L. Shakhder in 1978 that between 1961 and 1971 census 34.98 per cent foreigners have made into the electoral list in the north-eastern region, and that by 1991 more than 100 percent foreigners would be incorporated (Manirul Hussain 1993, quoted in Baruah 2013: 120). Within Assam, it was the by-election to the Mangaldoi Constituency of 1978 that brought into light the problem of 'outsiders', as the constituency had a large concentration of Muslim voters who were supposed to hail from Bangladesh (Baruah 2013: 120). In 1979, the "Assam Gana Sangram Parishad" (Committee for Assam People's Struggle) was formed by different civil, political and cultural groups that spearheaded the Assam Movement from 1979 to 1985.

The movement ended in 1985 with the signing of the Assam Accord between the leaders of the Parishad and the Union government led by PM Rajiv Gandhi. Despite its promise to resolve the 'outsiders' issue, the Accord failed to achieve its core objective. Two specific reasons can be cited for its failure. The Mahanta government of the AGP (Assam Gana Parishad), whose leader emerged out of the Assam Movement, and which formed the state government in 1986 simply failed to deliver on its poll promise to detect and deport outsiders from the state. Today, the party is struggling to survive as an independent political party, depending to a large extent on its bigger ally, the BJP. In fact, in the 2016 state assembly election, people of the state relied more on the BJP to deliver on the promise of resolving the 'outsiders' issue from the state than the AGP.

Another factor that retained the issue of the ‘outsider’ within the broader political discourse of Assam was the migrant friendly IMDT Act of 1983. The Act by overriding provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946, created a citizenship regime which made removal of illegal migrants difficult for the authorities. An important feature of this Act was that it shifts the ‘burden of proof’ from the accused to the authorities. More Significantly, the organisational structure required to make the IMDT Act fully operational was never put into place. An Economic Times Report (2005) pointed out that while 300,000 Bangladeshis were deported by the Foreigners Act, 1946, from 1962 to 1984, there were fewer detections made under the IMDT Act regime (ET 2005) from 1983 to 2005. The Act was finally struck down as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2005, and the provisions of the previous Foreigners Acts, 1946, were restored.

Betrayal of the cause for evicting ‘outsiders’ by the AGP and the quasi-legal cover provided to illegal immigrants through the IMDT Act, 1983, ensured that the anti ‘outsider’ sentiment remained intact within the civic consciousness of Assamese society. This sentiment was captured by the BJP in the 2016 state assembly election. They claimed that on being installed into power, they would protect the land (*maati*), boundary (*bheti*) and nation (*jaati*) from destruction. An ominous reference to the existential threat posed by the ‘outsiders’ to the ethnic communities. Thus, when the Sarbananda Sonowal led BJP government came to power, people hoped that it would take more pro-active steps to address the issue of ‘outsiders’ and work out “...constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards .... to protect preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people” (Section 6, Assam Accord 1985: 2).

But there was a disjuncture in the form of the ‘outsider’ between the BJP government and the perception of the Assamese civic consciousness. This disjuncture came to the fore when the final list of the NRC was released in July 2018. As Dutta (2020) succinctly puts it, “The final list disappointed both the incumbent government and many stakeholders although the reason behind the disappointments were different” (Dutta 2020: 55). The stakeholders thought that the number of people excluded from the NRC, despite their religious background, was too small; and for the BJP government the number of Muslims left out of the NRC was small (ibid. 55). For the stakeholders, 1.9 million people excluded from the NRC process was far lesser than the

anticipated 4 million illegal outsiders. And to the dismay of the government, of the 1.9 million people left out of the NRC process, many of them turned out to be non-native migrant Hindus. As a statutory creation, CAA came into being to provide a legal remedy to all the non-native Hindus who were deprived of their Indian citizenship by the NRC (National Registrar of Citizens) process in Assam.

### **The Political Manifestations of Anti-CAA Protest**

It was this disjuncture between the government and the stakeholders that led to the anti-CAA movement in the state. For the stakeholders, the CAA aggravated the problem of the ‘outsiders’ as it extends the date of entry into the state from 1971 (according to the provisions of the Assam Accord) to 2014. This was in addition to the millions of illegal migrants who were perceptibly not traced by the NRC process. One may disagree with this line of reasoning, but this popular *zeitgeist* prevailed on December 11, 2019, which initiated the anti-CAA agitations in the state, and which adversely affected the government and the state for nearly two months. The incumbent state government was put on the back foot, as it struggled to contain violence and convince the people that the number of people who would be provided citizenship through CAA would be smaller in number. Many observers regarded introduction of CAA as the second ‘political betrayal’ of the people of Assam after the AGP’s fiasco on the issue earlier.

Two organisations played a leading role in organising the masses. The first was led by the AASU (All Assam Student’s Organisation), and the second was led by KMSS (Kisan Mukti Sangram Samiti). As one of the more structured organisations, AASU played an important role in mobilising people for protest rallies and demonstrations. Noted citizens from the literary, academic, media and the cinematic world took part in its protests. As a student organisation, AASU’s role in keeping the issue of ‘outsiders’ alive in the Assamese common imagination has been well documented, given its active role during the Assam Movement.

The KMSS, under the leadership of Akhil Gogoi, operates as an activist organisation with scattered base throughout the state. It is primarily known for its struggle for granting land rights to landless farmers and its opposition to big river dams over the tributaries of the Brahmaputra. During the anti-CAA agitation, it took up the cause of landless people and opposed granting citizenship to ‘outsiders’ till the landless people are settled first. But after its leader Akhil Gogoi was

arrested under the UAPA Act, on the allegation that he had links with Maoist groups, the organisation lacked an effective leader.

As off-shoots of the anti-CAA agitation, three new political actors emerged: a) the AJP (*Axom Jatiya Parishad* - Committee for Assam's Nationalist) led by Lurin Jyoti Gogoi, who was the president of AASU during the anti-CAA agitation, b) RD (*Raijor Dal*- People's Party), the political wing of KMSS led by Bhasco de Saikia (in Akhil Gogoi's absence) and c) AGM (*Anchalik Gana Morcha*- Regional People's Alliance) led by noted journalist Ajit Kumar Bhuyan. Despite their unanimous opposition to CAA, the three new political actors have refused to join hands. Following the '*Mahagathbandhan*' model of Bihar, all major political parties have formed a '*Mahajoot*' (Grand Coalition), as a pre-poll arrangement in Assam, consisting of the INC (Indian National Congress), AIUDF (All India United Democratic Front), BPF (Bodoland People's Front), and a few Left Parties to fight against the BJP led alliance with the AGP. Ajit Kumar Bhuyan's AGM is a part of this regional '*Mahajoot*'. The main problem with the '*Mahajoot*' is that its constituent parties have not arrived at a common seat-sharing formula, opening many common constituencies to, what their leaders argue as, 'friendly-competition'. This would inevitably lead to splitting of votes which would benefit the BJP led alliance. The second problem with the '*Mahajoot*' is that ideologically opposing parties have joined the alliance without developing a common minimum agenda on core issues of governance. For instance, there are significant ideological difference between the BPF and AIUDF, yet they are a part of the '*Mahajoot*'.

Lurin Jyoti's AJP and Akhil's RD are fighting the elections separately. But there is a fundamental flaw in their party structure. One of the leading dailies of the state, '*Dainik Janambhoomi*' noted in its February 28 report that all the new political organisations lack basic organisational structure to contest elections (*Dainik Janambhoomi* 2021: 1). Most of them are relying on the anti-outsider emotion which the anti-CAA agitation has stirred. Lurin Jyoti Gogoi, being the former president of AASU, is expected to tap resources from his previous organisation to ensure his electoral effort. Besides, he is counting on the support of various similar organisations of the state for his electoral victory. The fate of Ajit Bhuyan's AGM is similar to that of AJP. Despite his objective and attempts to bring together all similar organisations under one fold, he has not received positive response from his other counterparts. The bandwagoning of the AGM with the

'*Mahajoot*' reveals its internal weakness. Akhil Gogoi's RD, on the other hand, do possess a dedicated cadre base, consisting of young enthusiasts. But its cadre base is so thinly spread out that a strong election machine cannot be formed through it. Besides, in the absence of its firebrand leader to campaign for it, RD's task for the upcoming election would be a herculean one.

### **Limits of the anti-CAA Agitation**

It would be pertinent at this point to make a brief comparison between the anti-CAA agitation and the Assam Movement. Such a comparison would reflect the depth of these agitations across social sectors, and also reflect the limits of anti-CAA agitation. First, the organisation and mobilisation during the Assam Agitation were integrated under the 'Assam Gana Sangram Parishad' with AASU and the Assam Sahitya Sabha playing the lead role and other cultural and social organisations complementing their actions. This integration ensured broader participation and co-ordination among the agitating masses. Integration, however, does not imply that protests were peaceful. Violent outbreaks did take place and some of them were bloody. In comparison, the anti-CAA agitation was not integrated. Both AASU and KMSS participated actively, but never integrated themselves under one single organisational body. Many other large scale demonstrations did take place but they were autonomous and lacked co-ordination with organised agitations. As a result, the anti-CAA agitation was more segregated and limited. Lack of co-ordination among various groups exposed many of them to co-option and manipulation. This slowed down the momentum of agitations and made it a more limited period affair. Moreover, the Assam Sahitya Sabha stayed out of the anti-CAA agitation which limited its appeal for the people.

Second, the legitimacy crisis faced by state institutions during the Assam Movement was unprecedented. Two Congress led governments were formed and dissolved within months. And there was fear among government officials to discharge official duties lest they become target of reprisal. Civil disobedience at a mass scale led to breakdown of law and order at many places. However, it should be noted that the penetration of the state machinery in the 1970s and 80s was limited, more specifically, in some of the interior areas. This posed difficulty in enforcing laws of the state. The disenchantment with the state led to the birth of the armed insurgent wing, i.e., ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam). In contrast, the post-2020 state has made significant

inroads into some of the hinterlands by developing infrastructure and adopting technical knowhow that increases communication among different administrative units. This advantage along with the limited nature of the anti-CAA protest ensured that the administration retained control over the protesters and the agitation.

Thirdly, the Assam Movement witnessed the emergence of a single political outfit to represent it in the electoral arena, i.e. the AGP. The aggregation of political interest into a single party ensured that the vote block generated by the movement remained intact, and led to victory of the party. In comparison, the anti-CAA agitation has produced three new political actors, namely AJP, RD and AGM, and they have decided to maintain their distinctive political identity independently of each other in the poll bound state. This is bound to split votes in the upcoming poll. In addition, these new political actors would also have to encounter voter's weariness with regard to their claims, given the previous performance of the AGP.

To sum up, the issue of 'outsiders' has left an indelible imprint on the imagination of the common consciousness of the state. It emerged out of a 'drowning out' argument, but the primary trigger was pulled by an official narrative. However, subsequent state actions have done little to assuage the fear of the outsider among the native communities of the state through administrative means. One may argue that the issue of 'outsider' is politically exaggerated, yet it would persist in the emotional sensitivities of the society. The issue has lost much of its electoral value due to its repudiation by important political actors of the state. Therefore, it is unlikely that it would have a significant impact on the electoral outcome of the state in the forthcoming elections.

In contrast, certain other factors may play an important role in deciding electoral outcomes. First, the demographic heterogeneity of constituencies would play an important role in poll calculations. Assembly constituencies in the state display incredible heterogeneity in terms of its voters. For instance, in the present BTC (Bodoland Territorial Council) area, non-Bodos demographically exceed the Bodos. It is no wonder the Lok Sabha MP from the BTC area is a non-Bodo person. The example of BTC is not an exception, but rather a norm for a majority of assembly constituencies. And poll maths require appealing to a cluster of communities to achieve the desired majority. Anti-outsider sentiment is not uniform across all communities and constituencies. This was evident from the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, when despite the anti-CAA agitation, the BJP-AGP alliance was able to secure nine Lok

Sabha seats (out of fourteen) in the state. Therefore, a blend of diverse appeals would play a crucial role in wooing voters.

Second, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma would also play an important role in the forthcoming election. As the chief poll engineer of the state, Dr. Sarma is credited with micro-management of constituencies. This involves generation of constituency wide information through local sources and addressing major concerns through state endowments. Such a strategy has played an important role in delivering favourable electoral outcomes. And as the primary architect of micro-management of polls, Dr. Sarma has deployed constituency wise-knowledge to deliver electoral victories, first, during his years in the Congress, and later for the BJP. His poll strategy would play a key role in delivering critical result for the BJP.

Third, the role of AASU should also be analysed in the forthcoming polls. As the flag bearer of the anti-foreigners movement, the student body is expected to play a crucial role in certain key constituencies of Upper Assam. Lurin Jyoti of AJP would be dependent upon AASU to a large extent for his organisational operation. With a structured organisation, AASU members can galvanise support for anti-CAA candidates in crucial Upper Assam constituencies.

## References

- Baruah, Sanjib (1999), *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, reprinted 2013.
- Dutta, Akhil Ranjan (2020), "Assam and the NRC: A Political Reading", *EPW*, LV (39): 55-58.
- ET (2005), "SC Strikes Down IMDT Act as Unconstitutional", *The Economic Times*, [Online: Web] Accessed 5 March 2021, URL: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/sc-strikes-down-imdt-act-as-unconstitutional/articleshow/1168803.cms>
- Government of Assam (2021), "Implementation of Assam Accord", [Online: Web] Accessed 5 March 2021, URL: <https://assamaccord.assam.gov.in/portlets/assam-accord-and-its-clauses>
- Hazarika, Sanjoy (2019), "Assam's Tangled Web of Citizenship and The Importance of a Consensus", *The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy*, [Online: Web] Accessed 4 March, 2021, URL: <https://www.thehinducentre.com/the-arena/current-issues/article29724344.ece>
- Hussain, Manirul (1993) *The Assam Movement: Class, Ideology and Identity*, Delhi: Manak Publications. Quoted in Sanjib Baruah (1999), *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Staff Reporter (2021), "Birudhi Dol Homuhor Nirbachani Prastuti ai Nai", *Dainik Janambhoomi*, Guwahati, 28 February 2021.

# MSP, Agricultural Reforms and the Farm Bills

**M.P. Bezbaruah\* and Faridus Mamun Khan\*\***

The three farm bill passed in Indian parliament in September 2020 have aroused protracted protest from a section of farmers, and at the same time, revived the academic debate on agricultural reforms in the country. The present write-up explains how the MSP-Procurement system, which initially contributed to make the Green Revolution a resounding success, later, caused several distortions in the agriculture sector. While acknowledging that the three farm Acts are steps in the right direction for ushering in much waited agricultural reforms, the authors argue that the scope of the reforms should be broadened by encompassing overdue agrarian and subsidy reforms.

Green Revolution, sprouting in the late 1960s, turned India within a decade from a chronically food-grain deficit country to a food secure nation capable of maintaining a buffer stock of cereals. Though the technological breakthrough in the form of HYV seeds spearheaded the revolution by extending the frontier of production possibilities (Bezbaruah 1994, pp 15-29), the Minimum Support Price (MSP) system and Procurement Policy brought in by Government of India in 1965 had an equally important role in making it a grand success (Balasubramanyam 1986, p 81). The arrival of the new technology, supported by subsidized supply of inputs of fertilizer, pesticides and irrigation water, enabled farmers to raise their productivity of wheat and paddy. Yet without the price assurance offered through MSP and Procurement operations, the farmers would have been penalized with

---

\* M.P. Bezbaruah, Professor, Department of Economics, Gauhati University, Guwahati-781014 (Assam). E-mail: bezbaruah.mp@gmail.com

\*\* Faridus Mamun Khan PhD Scholar, Department of Economics, Gauhati University, Guwahati-781014 (Assam) E-mail: fariduskhan@gmail.com



post-harvest price crash rather than rewarded for increasing production. The MSP-Procurement system worked very well to smoothen supply and prices of the important cereals of wheat and rice across good and bad years of agricultural cycles. In good years, the system protected farmers from the risk of the price crash by mopping up surplus market arrivals through public procurement for accumulating a buffer stock. In a bad agricultural year, in which consumer would have been adversely affected, because of price rise due to insufficient production, food-grains were released from the buffer stock to augment market supply and moderate the price to be paid by consumers. The system worked quite well for sometimes. But in 1980s some adverse effects of the Green Revolution and its supporting system started to surface (Bidwai 1988). The input subsidies combined with free electricity supply induced overuse of agro-chemicals and ground water leading to resource degradation and depletion in the longer run. For sustainable use of natural resources and environmental services, it was necessary to gradually phase out such subsidies. However, even as India embarked upon a broad based economic reform in 1991 the subsidy reform in agriculture could not be taken forward much, as farmers especially in the Green Revolution areas of Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh in the meantime became politically powerful and would not accept any reduction of the private benefit they had been receiving (Misra and Chand 1995). Indeed these farmers often demanded hiking of procurement prices and quite often manage to secure raises which were not entirely justified on the ground of cost and efficiency.

Holding back of agricultural reforms has resulted in several imbalances in Indian agriculture. (a) As inputs continue to be available at subsidised prices, incentives for economisation of inputs and resources have been insufficient. Consequently, the real production cost has been steadily increasing. (b) Though government has the practice of announcing MSP for a number of crops, these floor prices have generally been effective only for wheat and rice, which are procured actively, especially in Green Revolution areas, by the government agencies led by the Food Corporation of India (FCI). The high and assured procurement prices for rice and wheat have been distorting farmers' incentive in favour these two crops at the expense of nutritionally important crops like pulses. (c) Continuation of wheat-rice cycle in the Punjab-Haryana belt has aggravated degradation of soil of and water in the seat of the Green Revolution (Government of India 2001).(d) As

FCI has been procuring the grains at high prices but supplying the same for public distribution at subsidized prices, profiting from leakages of the PDS supply has been possible. A part of the leaked grains reportedly gets resold in the procurement *mandis*. Basu (2011) describes this practice as revolving door effect. (e) As FCI continued to procure wheat and rice and pile up stocks well beyond PDS off-take, grains sometimes rot in the FCI warehouses. Off-loading the excess stock in the international market has generally not been an option as rice and wheat production has not been cost competitive in India compared to usual international prices (Vishandass 2013).

Apart from the above, the MSP procurement system of the government has been criticized for not catering to wider range of crops and a broader group of farmers outside the Green Revolution belt (Gulati 2021). Although MSPs are announced for as many as 23 crops<sup>1</sup>, these support prices are not necessarily effective for the crops for which procurement is not active and large enough<sup>2</sup>. As mentioned above wheat and rice have been prime beneficiary of the system. Further, procurement has been effective primarily in Green Revolution areas. In many other parts of the country the procurement operations are scanty or non-existent. Even in areas where procurement has been active, the system has apparently benefited mostly the medium and large farmers. Small and marginal farmers frequently fail to secure the full price support as they remain dependent on the mercies of the powerful Commission Agents who are authorised to procure grains for FCI in authorised *mandis* under the APMC Act<sup>3</sup>.

In order to address these anomalies, economists have been arguing for reform of the procurement and MSP system (Chand 2009 and 2012, Basu 2011, Gulati 2013, Sangwan 2020, Bhalla 2021). The first and the third of the three farm bills passed in the Indian parliament in September 2020 are meant to reform the procurement, storage and marketing system of food-grains.

The first bill entitled 'The Farmers' Produce Trade Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill; 2020' allows the farmers to sell their produce outside the APMC *mandis*. This bill seeks to limit APMC's jurisdiction to the APMC 'market yard'. Outside the market yard, entities are made free to transact in agricultural produce in what has been referred to as the 'trade areas'. Thus, a trade area is where trade happens that is not already under APMC. Transaction in the trade areas is free of an obligation to pay a fee to the APMC and no licences are required by buyers.

The third bill 'Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020' aims to dismantle restrictions on movement and storage of several food-stuff such as cereals, pulses, potato, onion and edible oil which has been in force since 1955 under the Essential Commodities Act. These restrictions were relevant at the time when India used to be plagued with chronic shortages of food-grains. In those days it was possible for unscrupulous traders to manipulate market price to their advantage by resorting to hoarding for artificially aggravating scarcities. Since then India has come a long way to a situation of surpluses which cannot be adequately and efficiently handled by government controlled warehouses. By removing restriction of private storage of grains, the bill is expected to infuse much needed private investment in storage of grains.

The second bill entitled 'Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act 2020' provides a framework for contract farming<sup>4</sup>. Contract farming is not new in India. For instance, the multinational beverage producer PepsiCo has been involved in contract farming in Punjab for the last three decades. Initially several apprehension were flagged about efficacy of contract farming sighting mainly the clout of the corporates enabling them to force exploitative contracts on hapless farmers. These discussions generally ignored the fact that the corporations invest a substantial amount in setting up plants meant to process output procured from contracted farmers. They need the farmers for a stable supply of raw material for their plants as much as the farmers need them for receiving an assured price. Hence a congenial arrangement with farmers is as much in the interest of the corporation as for the well-being of the farmers. As the years rolled by and contract farming continued to stay on, some of these apprehension started to fade away. Studies report that contract farming in Punjab has contributed to farmers' income and employment growth (Singh 2002, Dhillon and Singh 2006) though authors often stop short of recognising it as an unmitigated boon.

The contract farming system has assumed added relevance in the present time because agricultural output in India has undergone a significant compositional shift over the last couple of decades. The composition has changed away from cereals like rice and wheat to horticulture crops of fruits and vegetables, and livestock products (Paltasingh 2018). Indeed the rapid growth of output in the latter two subsectors has helped India to sustain its growth of agricultural

production since 2000. This compositional change has been in conformity with changing consumers' preferences in the country. Data from NSSO's household consumption expenditure surveys show that consumers across all expenditures strata have increased consumption of horticultural and livestock products and reduced intake of cereals (Deshmukh and Vyavahare 2018). Horticultural and livestock products being more perishable than food-grains, the kind of procurement and storage operations applicable for wheat and rice cannot work for these products. It is necessary that the entire post-harvest value chain from procurement of farm output at the farm gate for further processing to supply of the processed products to final consumers is in place. This is an imperative for minimising post-harvest losses and ensuring fair prices to both farmers and consumers. Contract farming is one of the ways of organising such a value chain. While there is scope for having a relook into the dispute settlement mechanism outlined in the bill, the bill in principle is meant to facilitate attuning farming in the country to the changing times and consumers' preferences.

While the reform sought to be introduced by this three farm bills have been long overdue, there exists other areas of the agrarian system which also require reforms. These areas begging for reforms have not received enough attention of the opinion and policy makers. Over the years, the holding sizes of the farmers have generally declined in most part of a country and the rank of marginal farmers has increased concomitantly. With holding sizes being no longer economically viable, many have left agriculture to get engaged in non-farm occupations. The long waited workforce shift from agriculture to non-agriculture has gathered some momentum in the recent years. However, to boost the process it is necessary to reform the anachronistic tenancy laws still prevailing in the states. These laws were framed in the time when tenant farmers needed protection from exploitation by bigger landlords. But in effect these laws made formal tenancy virtually impossible. Tenancy however has continued informally all along but on short term basis, as longer term leasing out of land involves a risk of losing ownership of plot under the tenancy laws. The ill effects of the existing system have been well documented in the literature (Haque 2012, NITI Ayog 2015, Goswami and Bezbaruah 2018). Time has now come to do away with restrictions on leasing of agricultural land so that those willing to migrate out of agriculture can lease out their land without the fear of losing its possession and those willing to upscale their farming can easily get land to lease in for a longer period.

Meanwhile there has been shrinkage of the government provided extension service, which played a stellar role in the success and diffusion of India's Green Revolution from the late 1960s to well into the 1980s. The service was the active and effective medium of communication between research laboratories on the one hand and the farmers at the grassroots on the other for resolving technology related glitches farmers faced in their fields. Private extension service providers that have emerged to fill in the void created by decay of government's extension service are often not independent of input suppliers. This has given rise to the possibility of conflict of interests from which farmers and farming can suffer due to inappropriate technical advice. Reviving the extension service is also a need of the hour if India is to successfully adopt the technological breakthrough anticipated to arrive embodied in genetically modified crops and other forms.

Phasing out of subsidies on input of agro-chemicals and electricity is also necessary to make Indian agriculture less chemical dependent, less water intense, and progressively become more organic in nature. These reforms have been attempted several times without much success in their implementation.

Though reforms may be intended for larger benefit of agriculture, the farming community and the country as a whole, the resulting changes may adversely affect certain interest groups. Successful implementation of economic reforms in general and agricultural reforms in particular is not merely a matter of designing appropriate laws but also one of the politically managing their successful implementations. It is unfortunate that the Union Government and a section of farmers have got embroiled in a prolonged impasse on the farm bills. It is necessary for the Government to dispel the apprehension of the farming community that agricultural marketing will be left to the mercies of uncontrolled market forces and stranglehold of the big corporates. Despite reforms sought to be brought to the procurement system, governments will have to remain active moderators of the market forces in the interest of both farmers and consumers. In particular MSP and public procurement will have to be continued for maintaining the Public Distribution System which has expanded considerably as a result of implementation of the National Food Security Act. Farmers on their part need to accept the fact that the reform content of the bills are overdue and need to be carried forward for overall better performance of the country's economy and ecology.

## References

- Balasubramanyam, V.N. (1984) *The Economy of India*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Basu, Kaushik (2011) India's Food grain Policy: An Economic Theory Perspective, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 46, No. 5.
- Bezbaruah, M.P. (1994) *Technological Transformation of Agriculture*, Mittal Publication New Delhi.
- Bhalla, Surjit S. (2020) Protesting Farmers are Arguing for the Perpetuation of Colonial Rule, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/farmers-protest-agri-laws-apmc-mandis-msp-surjit-bhalla-7101406/>
- Bidwai, Prafulla (1988) Indian Agriculture in Crisis: Wages of Ecological Devastation, *The Times of India*, New Delhi Edition, February 20.
- Chand Ramesh (2009). Wheat Market: The Distortions Caused by Government Intervention, *Economic and Political Weekly*, V.44 (12): 41 to 46.
- Chand Ramesh (2012). Development Policies and Agricultural Markets, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Review of Rural Affairs, V.47 (52): 53-63.
- Deshmukh, M.S. and Vyavahare, S.S. (2018) An Analysis of Consumption Expenditure in India, *European Academic Research*, Vol. 5, Issue 10.
- Dhillon, Sharanjit S. and Singh, Navchetan (2006) Contract Farming in Punjab: An Analysis of Problems, Challenges and Opportunities, *Pakistan Economic and Social Review*, Vol. 44, No. 1.
- Goswami, Binoy and Bezbaruah, M.P. (2019) Revisiting the Tenancy-Inefficiency Question With an Inter-Temporal Optimisation Framework: Insights from the Agrarian Setup of Assam Plains In Eastern India, *Journal of Social and Economic Development*, Vol. 20, No. 2.
- Government of India (2001) *Approach Paper to the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002–2007)*, Planning Commission, New Delhi.
- Gulati Ashok (2013) How to Create Economic Freedom for Agriculture – Can Agriculture be Unshackled from Government Controls, in Bibek Debroy and Laveesh Bhandari (ed) *State of Economic Freedom in India 2013*.
- Gulati, Ashok (2021), 'To Help Farmers, Right Approaches Through Farmer Producer Organisations, not APMC Mandis', *The Indian Express*, January 4, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/farm-laws-2020-farmers-protest-msp-apmc-mandi-system-7125406/>
- Haque, Tajmul (2012) Impact of Land Leasing Restrictions on Agricultural Efficiency and Equity in India, [http://www.landandpoverty.com/agenda/pdfs/paper/haque\\_full\\_paper.pdf](http://www.landandpoverty.com/agenda/pdfs/paper/haque_full_paper.pdf).
- Misra, S.N. and Chand, R. (1995) Private and Public Capital Formation in Indian Agriculture Comments on Complementarities Hypothesis and Others, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.30, No. 24.

- NITI Aayog (2015) Raising Agricultural Productivity and Making Farming Remunerative for Farmers, Occasional Paper based on work of the Task Force on Agricultural Development constituted by the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, Government of India in March 2015.
- Paltasingh, Kirti Ranjan, Goyari, Phanindra and Tochkov Kiril (2018) Indian Agriculture after the Green Revolution: an Overview, Goswami, Binoy, Bezbaruah, M.P. and Mandal, Raju (ed) *Indian Agriculture after the Green Revolution: Changes and Challenges*, Routledge, London and New York
- Sangwan, Sher Singh (2020) Prospect of Agri Value Chain for Wheat in Haryana: Its Economics, Market Surplus and Linkage with Processors, *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, Vol 75, No. 4.
- Singh, Sukhpal (2002) Contracting out Solutions: Political Economy of Contract Farming in the Indian Punjab. *World Development*, Volume 30, No. 9.
- Vishandass, Ashok (2013) Pricing, Costs, Returns and Productivity in Indian Crop Sector during 2000s, Discussion Paper 7, Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, New Delhi.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The crops for which CACP (Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices) recommends MSPs comprise 7 cereals (paddy, wheat, maize, sorghum, pearl millet, barley and ragi), 5 pulses (gram, tur, moong, urad, lentil), 7 oilseeds (groundnut, rapeseed-mustard, soyabean, seasmum, sunflower, safflower, nigerseed), and 4 commercial crops (copra, cotton, raw jute and sugarcane).
- <sup>2</sup> FCI has been in the business of procurement wheat and rice at Agricultural Prices Commission (Later renamed as CACP) announced Minimum Support prices since the late 1960s. The system was partially extended to pulses and oilseed in 1985 with formation of NAFED (National Agricultural Co-Operative Marketing Federation of India Limited) NAFED has the mandate to provide price support operations for pulses and oilseeds, whenever their market prices went below the announced MSPs.
- <sup>3</sup> Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMC) were constituted to frame the rules and enforce them for the well-intended goal of securing good post-harvest price for farmers and preventing their exploitation by the creditors and other intermediaries. Agricultural Markets in many parts of the Country including Punjab came to be regulated under the State APMC Acts enacted in 1960s and 70s. Under these acts the geographical

area in the State is divided into marketing zones wherein the markets are managed by the Market Committees constituted by the State Governments. Once a particular area is declared a market area and falls under the jurisdiction of a Market Committee, no person or agency is allowed freely to carry on wholesale marketing activities. The monopoly of Government regulated wholesale markets has prevented development of a competitive marketing system by blocking farmers in direct marketing, organizing retailing, a smooth raw material supply to agro-processing industries and adoption of innovative marketing system and technologies.

<sup>4</sup> Under contract farming agricultural production is carried out as per agreements between farmers and processing companies or cooperatives. A contracted farmer is obligated to supply the agreed quantity produce of specified quality in a specific time period. The processing company on its part is obliged to buy off the crops from the farmers, at a prearranged price.



# Revisiting Dharampal's Bharateeya Chitta, Manas and Kala

**Harshal Bhadkamkar\* Bhushan Damle\*\* and Makarand Mulye\*\*\***

## **Abstract**

Bharateeya Chitta, Manas and Kala was published by Dharampal in 1991 in a series of lectures at Chennai. In this work Dharampal presented the need for an indigenous frame of reference to understand and solve the problems faced by the people of India. His primary premise was that the consciousness, mind, thought process and sense surrounding the Indian people is unique. He argued that this uniqueness demands a special framing of problems for the root cause identification and appropriate solution. He further urged the need to develop such a frame and provided some initial thoughts on the process of achieving this. This seminal work with the potentiality of becoming the cornerstone of the Indian decolonization discourse, does not have appropriate recognition. We revisit this three decade old work and show that the claims in this work are still valid but the task lies unachieved. We then argue the need of such a reference frame today and present our view on the possible structure. We conclude with our thoughts on the steps

---

\* Dr. Harshal Bhadkamkar is PhD in astrophysics from TIFR. He works in a private firm and independently pursues his personal research interests in decolonisation studies.

\*\* Shri Bhushan Damle has completed B.E. electronics and masters in sociology. He is associated with many organisations involved in grass root social work. His research interests are india-centric sociology, nationalism, and decolonisation studies.

\*\*\* Shri Makarand Mulye is a journalist, working for various Marathi dailies and periodicals since 1995. He is associated with Deen Dayal Prerana Kendra and Rashtriya Matadata Manch, working in the areas of sociology, political science and decolonisation studies through these organizations.

of building such a frame and possibilities of its success with some present day examples.

## 1. Introduction

Dharampal was a Gandhian thinker and historian specializing in the history of the Indian society in pre-British and early British era. His works on the science and technology, polity and education systems in India in early 19th century are well known in certain sections of Indian intelligentsia. As a historian he was very rigorous and hardly mixed the raw data with his interpretational remarks (Gupta, 2007). Ironically, though being a historian, his works are more celebrated within the faculty of science and engineering schools of India. On the contrary, we find them largely absent from syllabi of university departments of humanities (Prasad, 2007). Although largely neglected, Dharampal's work is one of the most authentic sources on late Indian history. The importance of his works is primarily due to the India-centric standpoint he takes, differing from the typical, west-originated narratives. The omnibus of Dharampal's work has been translated and published in English, Hindi and Marathi (Dharampal, *The Collected Writings of Dharampal*, 2016; Dharampal, *धर्मपाल समग्र लेखन (हिन्दी)*, 2007 (Dharampal, *भारतीय चिन्त मानस व काल*, 2013).

Based on the research findings of his lifelong work on the history of the Indian society, Dharampal wrote commentaries that presented his overall impressions on the subject. Unlike his previous works that were data driven and grounded firmly on archival records, these works were more philosophical in nature and presented his own thoughts on the methodology for studying and understanding India. These works provided a new normative direction to the subjects of Indic studies. The first among the two, 'Bharatiya Chitta Manas Aur Kal' (BCM&K - Indian consciousness, mind and time) was published in early 1990s, followed by the next work 'Bharat Ka Swadharma'. The two books together contain the essence of the statement Dharampal attempts to make through his entire life work. The specific standpoint that Dharampal takes on Indic studies is fully depicted in these two works. Unfortunately these more reflective works are not remembered as much even within his admirers as the earlier ones based on his historical research. This is amply clear from a careful reading of the memoirs published upon his demise, where his reflective writings do not get same level of mention as his earlier history works such as the Beautiful Tree get (Gupta, 2007). However, thorough study of these later works of Dharampal is essential to understand the

viewpoint he held while conducting his research and a new perspective it can provide towards the India research.

The only contemporary response that BCM&K received from the academia was a special issue of the journal of Hindu-Christian studies, containing four responses to the BCM&K (Clooney, 1995). The primary feature that emerges from this commentary is that nearly every critique agrees with Dharampal's claim that the task of rediscovering the Indian consciousness needs to be undertaken. However, they are divided upon how to embark on this momentous task, some even doubting if any of Dharampal's ideas could work.

We present in this commentary a scrutiny of ideas presented in *Bharatiya Chitta Manas Aur Kal* (BCM&K) and their current relevance. The outline of this article is as follows. We first present a brief summary of main themes arising from the work BCM&K. The work was presented originally not as a concise, critically edited book, but as a series of lectures. We have filtered through this style of presentation to unveil the major themes. We then discuss our own ideas and opinion on the subject matter of BCM&K in section 3. Section 4 provides current outlook regarding the relevance and applicability of Dharampal's ideas in today's India.

## **2. Brief Review of Themes in BCM and K Need for the formation of a frame of reference**

The first chapter of BCM&K opens with Gandhiji's return to India and consequent subtle change to the philosophy behind the Indian freedom movement, towards the larger goal of awakening the Indian society to achieve its destiny. Gandhiji was naturally aware of the soul of the Indian society. Dharampal laments that later leaders not only discontinued the pursuit of that distinctive soul, but rather considered this task completely worthless. He argues that the true independence could only be realized by total self-awakening of Indian society. This task, as he calls, is to achieve the fullest understanding of *chitta* (soul) and *kaala* (time) of the Indian society. The entire book can thus be summarized as the call of Dharampal to take up this task of self-awakening.

Primary topic discussed in the first two chapters is the absence of any frame of reference to study the Indian society that can be called indigenous. The frame used currently is western and is influenced by the evolution of western thought process. Dharampal claims that this frame of reference is severely inadequate to understand various facets of Indian society. This idea is also present in seed form in Gandhiji's

Hind Swaraj<sup>2</sup>. Since the Indian thought process differs from that of the west in terms of worldviews, aspirations, *etc.*, it is incorrect to fit such attributes for the Indian society within the current western frame of reference. The answers provided through such a frame are skewed and non-reconcilable with Indian experience. The actions based on the erroneous conclusions drawn from it do not bring a state of balance in the Indian society. Dharampal strongly claims that special efforts are required to bring a 'new' state of balance based on Indian ethos. Developing an indigenous, local frame of reference which can serve as the foundation for answering various questions that arise in the social life of India is thus an essential step.

Dharampal admits that such a work may never be complete with perfection and cannot be performed in isolation from the rest of the world. A frame once prepared will require constant amendments with time, not because of any inherent flaws but due to the fundamental aspect of the time progression of the society. Presently it would suffice to make a broad outline of it and the details can be filled with further studies later on. The requirement currently, according to Dharampal, is that of a foundation stone and not of a fully well-built castle.

Dharampal presents two broad directions on how such a goal can be achieved. The first is to study various aspects of the Indian society at any one point of time, the present being the most appropriate. This path was followed by himself in his earlier works, and is observed to be inefficient. Another direction is to study the standpoint of philosophical canons and literary classics of India for the relevant data on the Indian psyche. However, caution must be taken while relying on the works in Indology. Since they provide a commentary on the Indian literature from the western frame of reference, their use will be limited in forming an indigenous frame of reference.

### **The Indian spirit of questioning**

In the third chapter, Dharampal delves into the ways of forming such an indigenous frame of reference. The key to this conundrum, according to him, can be found in the Indian spirit of questioning. Dialogue is a common form adopted in Indian literature to present discussions on various social aspects *e.g.* Yama-Nachiketasamvad, Yudhishtira-Yaksha samvad *etc.* Discussions on various aspects of social functioning can be initiated in the same spirit to advance in this task of developing a new reference frame aligned with the Indian ethos

Dharampal claims that the current Indian society is in a confused state. It does not have a sound understanding of inter relation between

an individual, the society and various sociopolitical constructs. This is because the society is torn between the principles born out of the long indigenous cultural tradition and principles borrowed from the western Euro-centric frame of reference. The true understanding of the *chitta* and *kaala* will naturally lead to time-adjusted social customs, leaving behind the obsolete ones. Unfortunately, since the elite leaders of the society are highly divorced from these principles, the entire society is slowly driven to the disconnect with the tradition of India.

Dharampal elucidates his point through addressing the question of what is meant by education. Is it limited to literacy, learning trades or the livelihood skills? The answer depends highly on the context and perspective. It is also crucial for societal planning towards establishing educational institutes. Dharampal points to the fact that this question is impossible to answer without a proper indigenous frame of reference.

### **Indian understanding of *chitta* and *kala***

Chapters four and five attempt to provide a perspective on Indian consciousness through a glance at classic Indian literature. Dharampal begins with the Indian notion of space-time as *anadi-anant*. This is characteristically different from the western idea of the origin of the universe at a definitive starting point. Indian scriptures show that humans occupy a tiny corner in the entire sphere of creation and hence human activities are worthless in the great cosmic drama. Dharampal then brings the attention to the division of *para* (transcendental) and *apara vidya* (worldly knowledge) and its implication in present context. He holds that good understanding of these concepts is relevant to understand the cognition process of Indians and the worldview that the society derives from it.

### **Way ahead**

In the concluding chapter of BCM&K, Dharampal puts his views on the ways of carrying out the present task. Firstly, it demands a deep belief in establishing a reference frame that is purely indigenous, built on Indian thoughts for the upliftment of the Indian society. The task requires taking pride in our national achievements and compassion to the fellow countrymen.

Dharampal points the difference in the viewpoint regarding the relation between the man and the God that has important bearing to the problem at hand. While the Indian view is that of oneness with the universal soul, western is that of full subjugation to it. Therefore it will

not be possible to rejuvenate Indian society through western social structures that demand total subjugation to the power center. Dharampal concludes these essays with a call to all the people of India to support this task of rejuvenation. He assures that the task will be achievable when everybody joins hand re-asserting that the only way out of the chaos around is to discover again our *chitta* and *kala*.

### **3. Discussion**

BCM&K is an important work for the decolonization discourse of India. This is not only because it is rooted in the solid historical research, but the audacious acceptance of the chronic problem and its solution by Dharampal. This generalization and universalization of the problem that he has achieved makes his perspective applicable globally. However, the philosophical works of Dharampal get lesser attention than due and the Indian decolonization discourse, which is far from being an organized discipline, does not always take a due note of it (Paranjape, 2001). We now present our own reflections on the themes of BCM&K, separately on both the problem statement and the solution provided by Dharampal.

#### **The problem Statement**

The problem, as Dharampal suggests, is that there is no Indian frame of reference to evaluate any activities in the social sphere of Indians. Need for the reference frame cannot be denied. Such a frame makes the base of the principles on which the society is built. It provides a way to differentiate the right from the wrong. It gives a platform to make decisions in complex situations. It is therefore essential to have a reference frame that is founded strongly in the psyche of the society. It is needed to answer certain foundational questions such as what is the fundamental premise on which we base discussions regarding social issues. It is important to agree upon some basic principles that will serve as the foundation for such debates.

It can be easily accepted that no social theory could be created in vacuum, without a reference frame about the presumed interrelations between people and society. The framework is expected to answer the questions such as which moral principle to get higher pedestal when they are at conflict with each other. Through the process carved by such a frame, we could make informed judgements in tune with the ethos of our society. Let us explain this point further with an example. Indian education system is riddled with several problems such as drop-out rate, deteriorating quality of education in rural parts, the role of

vocational or technical education *etc.* What principles do we consider as a base for these discussion? There has not been much debate on the purpose or direction of education for the social well-being, but rather only on the efficacy of patchwork solutions such as new education policy or right to education act. Many scholars in the past have opined on these topics in isolation. But it is never attempted to discuss and lay foundational principles on which such a debate can be based.

It can hardly be doubted that such a frame must be strongly rooted in the minds of the people. What use it has if it is not accepted by the people but enforced by top down approach through systems such as state machinery? Hence it is essential, as Dharampal suggests, to study Indian consciousness. Indian social mind is not at all a clean slate, but rather a scribble-pad on which many centuries have written their historical accounts. It is therefore a very formidable task to come up with a reference frame that is useful for the current Indian society, even a vague, sketchy one. However, we must have a start that is distinct from the present system if we want to achieve something that is intrinsically different.

It is pertinent to comment here on the role of Indology since Dharampal is very dismissive of this faculty. To gain a better perspective, we must first attempt to understand the western way of studying a subject. According to the western philosophy of learning and research, a student is an external agent that studies the subject. He is a passive observer and his act of study does not affect the state or the property of the subject. It is a dispassionate study as a third person. On these lines, Indology is a study of India, by an outsider. Its purpose is purely to gain knowledge, not to apply it to anything. It is this approach that makes it useless for the present purpose. We would like to transform Indian consciousness while studying it. The task is to study the present and the study of the past is a tool for it, not the subject in itself. Therefore we agree with Dharampal that the works in Indology have to be used with particular care regarding the outlook they have to the subject and consequent usability. However, many Indological studies can prove supplementary to our task in the matters of ambiguity and they will be used at those places. Another important contribution Indology can make is the dialogue between the rest of the world, as noted by Prof. Amala Dass (Clooney, 1995). This work of building a reference frame cannot be performed in isolation from the rest of the world. It is therefore essential to have good bridges across the cultures. Works in Indology can provide us a different perspective through the interaction with the world and help us develop a better frame of reference.

### **Dharampal's Solution**

This cannot be doubted that the path chosen should be primarily people-centric and that too for the people of present India. Hence it must be sought how Indians look at themselves today, what attributes they see that characterize them, what are their aspirations for the society as a whole in the present era. Top-down approach in this case would be first assuming some pre-set values (such as liberty, equality, family values) and then building the entire system around it, throwing off everything that does not fit into the picture. Dharampal suggests a similar approach. He prescribes to take cues from Indian scriptures and extract value system from that mass to build the reference frame around those values. However, It is possible for the solution in such a system to be so divergent from reality that it will never be accepted by the people. The bottom-up approach in this context starts from the people, picks upon their customs and traditions and attempts to make some reference frame around it. The solutions of this approach sometimes can be unacceptable because they are unstable, unsustainable or intangible.

We therefore propose to accept a new approach that can be called bottom-up-reverse approach. We suggest to start from the information obtained directly by studying the people, filtered appropriately. Such cleaned information can then be pitted against the notions of the right principles depicted in Indian canonical texts for various situations and contexts. The principles that will emerge from such a both-ended exercise will be deemed fit to have place in the reference frame. The proposal, however encouraging in this simplistic formulation, is actually difficult than both the approaches presented above. The information to be obtained is vast and full of intricacies that are specific to region, language and social strata and hence difficult to filter. This approach will require understanding of the thought process of Indians that has been developed over last few millennia. These initial works may result in volumes of information on how Indian society organizes various social functions. This task is similar to what Dharampal performed for nineteenth century India that is to be repeated for the present India.

In the next step, we may require scholars of Indian literature, Sanskrit and other ancient languages and similar disciplines, including Indology. Since the Indian way of defining and judging the social behaviour is that of coherence but not of exact congruence, there are multiple interpretations of the same principle existing in people's minds. Scholars should therefore debate and re-debate on what is the most appropriate for the given situation, carefully noting all the different



viewpoints. The outcome of this will finally lead to some principles to build the reference frame. At this point will come the job of the leaders from all the spheres of social life to build a reference frame that will correctly implement these principles laid by this process and take it to the people.

It will be erroneous to assume that these tasks need to be carried out in sequential manner and at the end of this enterprise will we have one single frame that will be eternal. This task has to be performed continuously in a gigantic loop since the society is a living and continuously evolving entity. Common people need to express clearly their conformance with the frame in place and also their displeasure and inconvenience with any part of it. This expression will provide a stimulus to bring the continuous update of the frame.

#### **4. Current relevance**

BCM&K was published in 1991. But the task prescribed in BCM&K is not seriously attempted even after nearly three decades since then. This is the serious concern that the authors want to raise here. The concern is the lack of initiating seed, not the speed of unfoldment that will take its own course. The questions raised in BCM&K about why all the development plans didn't work in pre-nineties India or didn't find any connect with Indian masses are still relevant. It is worth pondering in this context why people of India were typically suspicious of the government and distanced from political affairs in general until recently. Authors opine that one prominent reason for this behavior is the top down socialist approach of the Government, viewing people as subjects. Dharampal precisely points to this approach that can cause alienation of the masses from various programs designed and run for them.

This distance appears to be reducing recently. People are seen to be actively participating in various activities and movements launched by the present government loading themselves willingly with more responsibilities. They are ready to suffer today because they are given an image of a better India that they can relate to. They willingly give up the gas subsidies, are ready to face distress of demonetization and structural reforms such as GST. More recently we see this through the restraint and public discipline people have shown during long COVID lockdowns. It is well-known that the health facilities are inadequate and medical staff is highly outnumbered. But we have managed to halt large spread of COVID contagion only through public lockdowns. Within the framework of the ideas of Dharampal, this behavior can be attributed

to the break-off from the traditional top down approach, not viewing people as subjects any more, but as responsible citizens. This changed behavior can be ascribed to inclusiveness that the current Indian government has brought to its schemes.

Thus the commoners and the leaders of the society are already at work, within our terminology of bottom-up-reverse approach. They are providing the raw data in enormous amounts that can substantially help building the reference frame we are looking at. The gap is of the scholars to work upon the data available and provide theoretical structure. Churning of all kinds of ideas and concepts that can advance the process of building an indigenous frame of reference should happen within intelligentsia. Current is a ripe time to vigorously initiate the activity of searching our national soul. Every step will take us to an enriching future, for the people of India and for the entire humanity.

## References

- Clooney, F.X. (1995). Four Responses to Prof. Dharampal's "Bharatiya Chitta Manas and Kala". In F. X. Clooney (Ed.), *Journal of Hindu-Christian*, 8.
- Dharampal. (2007). *धर्मपाल समय लेखन (हिन्दी)* (I. Katdare, Ed.) Punarutthan Trust.
- Dharampal. (2013). *भारतीय चित्त मानस व काल*. (P. Mande, A. Modak, V. Gogate, & G. Dabke, Eds.) Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal.
- Dharampal. (2016). *The Collected Writings of Dharampal*. (C. Alvares, Ed.) Other India Press.
- Gandhi, M.K. (2014). *Hind Swaraj: Indian Home Rule*. Sarva Seva Sangha.
- Gupta, P.K. (2007). Introduction. In P. K. Gupta, & P. K. Gupta (Ed.), *Remembering Dharampal* (pp. 1-6). Society for Integrated Development of Himalayas.
- Paranjape, M. (2001). Decolonising English Studies: Attaining Swaraj. In A. Pal (Ed.), *Decolonisation: A search for alternatives*, (pp. 287-313).
- Prasad, C.S. (2007). Revisiting Dharampal: Reflections on History in Contemporary India. In P. K. Gupta, & P. K. Gupta (Ed.), *Remembering Dharampal* (pp. 45-58). Mussoorie: Society for Integrated Development of Himalayas.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> We want English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English. And when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englistan. This is not the Swaraj that I want. (Gandhi, 2014).

## Area Studies and International Relations: Linked or Delinked

**P.L. Dash\***

Ever since their inception in mid 1950s as school of international studies and expansion in early 1970s, as Area Studies Centers in Indian Universities, they have had their share of pitfalls and roadblocks along their journey of progress over the decades. Right from the beginning there was an inherent link between the two. Harking back to the years passed by, it is assumed that many area studies centers have largely failed to address the objectives initially set before them. Some centers have shifted to diluted objectives in other areas of study such as Defense and strategic studies and international relations. The moot point is that as studies expand, newer horizons lead to opening up new centers in other areas and experts shift their focus to these spheres. Expansion is not a reasonable failure; it is necessarily dilution of the origin, and invariably expansion of horizon of the knowledge. The country gains but the original discipline disappears and area studies centers interact and mingle with nothingness, sending their areas of studies into neglect. A country of India's magnitude can ill afford the luxury of losing an entire center with departmental status in a university.

Primarily originating within the discipline of political science, secondarily as offshoot of international relations, its tertiary branch out is into defense and strategic studies. It is only in Central Universities all three independent branches of area studies, defense studies and international relations thrive. Most state universities have shown step-motherly attitude to area studies centers, considering their existence as

---

\* 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.

non-existent, preferring to expend money for school education rather than for higher research, which they claim, has little relevance to their states. Since primary focus of these centers is research, there is a conflict of interest between what the centers stand for and what the state governments expect from them to achieve. It is in this melee, the area studies centers are crushed to a halt. Efforts are being made to merge and close the existing area studies centers in state universities. Few important points need serious reflection and consideration in this context.

The very conceptual interpretation that area studies centers are synonymous with international studies is grossly erroneous. While international studies are broad, area studies are about area specific countries. The thrust and focus of both as independent discipline sizably differ as much in relation to theory as to other empirical thrust, including language knowledge of the area under study. Apart from theories, the subject focus of international relations, is centered on developments of events in international arena, the functioning of international organizations, the practical aspects bilateral and multilateral relations, emerging international commerce, globalization and many other related aspects. The area studies, on the other hand, focus on internal dynamics of a given country or a group of countries in a given region. Foreign policy of that country is just one aspect of that composite study, and not its major thrust. The major thrust is on the internal dynamics of development of the society, polity, economy, system of governance, management and conduct of commerce, strategic depth and security concerns, demographic dynamics and many other aspects, some of which are covered in international relations too. The divide must be clearly comprehended. It is unfortunate that foreign policy overwhelms all other branches of internal dynamics of development in area studies program instead of being a corollary part of it as an extension of internal policy. The solution lies not in merger or closure, rather on the focused study of the area chosen.

Two factors that severely handicap the growth of area studies are quality of the faculty and language knowledge of the area under study. It is unfortunate that we do not have any area experts in the study centers, knowing languages of Africa, languages of Central Asia, the Caucasus and Eastern Europe. Within the university system coordination between foreign languages departments and area studies is remote. Hardly any area expert does work on literature, thereby leaving to

unknown zones the study of literature as a mirror of the society. Wherever language specialists headed area studies centers, their focus remained narrowly concentrated on language oriented issues; thus ignoring history, politics, economics, geography and the society. Absence of vision resulted in wrong choice of cadres, who in turn pursued, haphazard projects of their preferences rather than furthering the core objectives of the center. The impact of mandatory reservation policy on faculty selection in the area studies program is debatable. More or less all centers are affected by these twin ailments of faculty quality and language knowledge, none of which is insignificant. The outcome is poor performance and poor production.

Somewhere we have missed conceptualizing area studies as an integral entity of the university system with distinctive identity. It is not closure or merger of area studies into anything, but creation of an agglomerated school of area studies. Under the fulcrum of this school would function area studies centers. Such schools could be modelled variously; not necessarily within the university system, not exactly as teaching departments, not impliedly as symbolic centers, where a page on any remote language cannot be translated by faculties, maybe preferably along the line of IDSA. How many area experts have publications in the language of their area? The School of Area Studies ought to bring out a solid monthly journal, and if not possible, a quarterly publication That would be the mirror of India's area studies program.

There is an acute need of opening many schools of international studies across the country. However, such schools are not and will never be competent to study the area except its foreign policy aspects. The UGC policy of operating area studies center within the schools of international studies on the model of JNU does not alienate the two; it rather proves an organic link between the two. The same professors are area experts and foreign policy specialists as and when it suits them. The result is amalgamated output that has distinctly diminished the overall stature of area studies. Whatever balance one may strike between domestic and foreign policies of any given country, larger interest of India would be served if focused studies are undertaken exclusively on foreign policy and diplomacy by the school of international studies, leaving all and sundry issues for area experts to study. Conceptually both schools are inherently different and they should address different issues, function differently, serve different purposes and cater to the needs of different sections. Precisely, schools of international studies

should focus on foreign policy and diplomacy, leaving aside internal dynamics of development of the area to school of area studies to undertake. Long back, this author had a memorable occasion to meet a Russian lady at a gas filling station, while travelling in the lovely woods of Siberia on way to Lake Baikal. Stopping at the filling station for fuel, in course of conversation, she vividly recalled Raj Kapoor and his films. Today I wonder how many area experts work on films in eponymous languages of the specific area they study? Perhaps none in India.

For years together, many area studies centers have been working understaffed. The scenario in state universities are difficult and different from those in central universities. For years a number of faculty positions are lying vacant and vice-chancellors are least keen to fill them up. Sometimes there is a total ban on recruitment imposed by the state government due to fund crunch. As a result, area studies centers are constrained to function with just one or two faculties instead of the sanctioned strength of ten or eleven positions. This is the scenario in Mumbai university for almost past two decades. Lack of commitment coupled with continually dwindling faculty positions is the major reason of decay in the area studies system. The outcome is poor image of the centers and university in the country and abroad. With unlimited possibilities for expansion to newer areas such as maritime studies, peace research, dispute over river water sharing, border conflicts, energy security, population studies, ethnic conflicts, etc., understaffing of area studies centers is a miserable predicament that requires urgent remedy.

The cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary ethos of area studies centers have become major casualties. We have miserably failed to attract students from such disciplines as geography, sociology, economics and emerging branches of knowledge such as management, gender studies, demography, environmental studies, etc. As a result, centers are crowded with history-politics-international studies disciplines, leading to lopsided research focus. This has told on the overall health of the centers in terms of their cross disciplinary growth. Among the primary causes are skeptical attitude and apathy of established social sciences departments to encourage their students to co-opt area studies papers as alternative to subjects in their parent departments.

Our pool of expertise is poor, student pool is still poorer and infrastructure remained the poorest. Many aging colleagues are computer illiterate. There is no provision for improving or upgrading their

expertise. Sometimes, colleagues retire from services without a single visit to the area they had been studying. Youngsters are reluctant to take up area studies due to lack of job opportunities. If area studies centers across the US, UK, Japan and Germany could celebrate their glorious existence, why cannot we in India? We have tried to evolve our own area studies model not very effectively; time has now come to emulate successful models. Here the twin pattern followed in the US is exciting: 1. advanced research centers without teaching focus within or without the university system and 2. Research centers as university departments with teaching responsibility. A distinct line must be drawn between the two with regard to responsibility and accountability, while little distinction be made with regard to pooling expertise to cooperate with one another.

The faculty pattern needs to be addressed. We need more full time researchers on specific areas; and less teachers, who come leisurely for 3-4 hours to university and never publish anything worthwhile. Project specific researchers, engaged in studying the area, could be pulled to teach part time and such flexibility must be incorporated into the system. Hire and fire should be the norm, permanent secured job without accountability should be the exception. The current UGC pay structures for university teachers assure promotions to higher grade after a specific number of years, even if you do not contribute to domain knowledge. This need to change. More research fellows and associates, more assigned, timebound, requisitioned projects commanded by a skeletal senior faculty at the top to guide them is the need of the hour. The theme of research ought not be chosen by the fellow, but be decided by a committee, where representatives of the MEA, UGC, ICSSR, ICCR, ICHR and corporate funding agencies must look into the angle of India's national interests before deciding a topic and giving grants. All assigned projects should be timebound, maximum for three years, with provision of yearly review by the same committee, must aim at a comprehensive report on the topic chosen that would result in an academic publication as the end result. Provisions should be made for some projects to be specifically available to serving diplomats, journalists, bureaucrats and corporate executives.

A rigorous selection procedure at MA and Ph.D. levels needs to be in place and institutionalized, maybe at the all India level to select candidates, who would be assured of a stipend for two/three years. The UGC NET is proving to be redundant because it is selecting assistant

professors through an exam rigorously designed to test knowledge through tick marking objective type questions. It does not test eloquence or competence of a university teacher with a flair for writing well. We need to design a test that would examine three aspects: flair for writing, gift of the gab to express and debate any issue with a robust commonsense. The UGC NET tests none of them. The brighter the student, the better would the area expertise and still better will be final output. Currently, except where exclusive entrance tests are in vogue, not very bright students are coming to area study centers, partly because there is lack of job opportunities and largely because they have nowhere else to go. Other social science departments with whom area studies centers work in tandem offer not their best and brightest students. Thus area studies get students largely rejected from other places and that is no way to improve the centers as independent institutions. This is not entirely a happy situation. There is no way to choose the best from the banal.

As a responsible democracy with 1.3 billion population, Indian academia must exercise vision for a century ahead, whereas currently we foresee future in the prism of a decade or two. We ought to envision what would benefit future Indians in an era of ongoing globalization and information being available at the tip of the finger. When economy, commerce and trade are getting precedence over politics, we need to address those economic issues for which our area studies centers are equipped neither with expertise, not with infrastructure. Industry-academic interactions are negligible, empirical area visits are irregular and business does not constitute a part of the syllabi. Agriculture as a part of the economy of the area we study never constitutes a focus area. Similarly, resource location, distribution and transportation issues are not addressed on the pretext of unavailable data. So, many areas are either ignored or not even touched. We only talk about burning issues and leave it there without charting out further course of action. There is no appropriate follow-up, let alone implementation. We need to train our gun pointedly at area study centers and improvise ways how to delink it from the beclouding fulcrum of international relations; precisely to delink specialists from generalists.

Should we prioritize our area studies objectives currently, many existing non-performing centers, which are one man show in many ways, would be consigned to nothingness or oblivion. Quality of a center depends on the caliber of its human resources. The concerns are



how to deal with deliberate academic truancy across the country, where in a center a few colleagues work hard and well, while many do not do any work, publish nothing, guide no research students but thrive because their jobs are permanent and they cannot be terminated. They remain our systemic symbol of complacency, malfunctioning and non-performing assets that should forthwith be done away with. A periodic consultative committee comprising vice chancellors, representative of the Education ministry and UGC should be constituted to suggest ways of improvement and development of area studies and this must be ingrained in to the area studies system. Appropriate ways be devised by this committee as much for day-to-day functioning of the centers as for reviewing performance of scholars. In a nut shell, rigorous accountability be linked to sanctioning of grants and funds, stipends and fellowships, internships and resource allocations. This consultative committee also should decide on relevant course structures, suggest ways to create data and literature base on specific areas of study.

Time has come to create a centralized area studies database, electronically accessible to interested users on worldwide web. Efforts must aim at not only collecting and collating data, material and statistics but also disseminating knowledge on various disciplines in a given area of study. This could be a centralized repository of knowledge as well as a mechanism to coordinate among all Indian area studies centers, private or public. Area journals could be published at one place but can be shared through this medium worldwide for dissemination.

The Indian area studies centers stand at the crossroads of development, on the precipice of their transformation. The failure to come out of the shadows of international relations and defense studies would ring a death knell for area studies as a distinct academic discipline. The inevitable changes in consonance with changing time and ethos must take place with a view to making the area studies a vibrant academic discipline to do in-depth study. The present center heads have a lot to answer in this regards in as much as their vice-chancellors.

# Tea Plantation Workers' Participation as a Political Community in Assam

Priyanka Neog\*

## Abstract

Post-colonial period ended the oppressive Raj of the Planters and there was a gradual improvement in the life of the working labourers. There was progress in education too. Improved educational environment provided the breeding ground for the emergence of a small section of educated people from amongst the workers' community with sufficient knowledge, consciousness and political know how, who could provide the working mass with adequate leadership in the country's new democratic set-up. The article explores the growth and evolution of the tea plantation workers of Assam as a political community. The study aims to delve into some of the pertinent issues of this section of toiling labourers and their constant engagement in the realm of state's politics. Their everyday negotiation, activism, and how their participation in this space shapes them or how they shape the politics for their good.

## Introduction

There are approximately 755 organized tea gardens in Assam, the small tea growers accounts for nearly 1,20,000. The garden workers account for nearly 17% of the state's population, contributing to more than half of the total tea produced in the country. Interestingly, they play a decisive role in nearly 34 constituencies in upper Assam. "No wonder then, the community — which otherwise live in poor conditions with one of the lowest human indices — suddenly gains focus whenever the state faces

---

\* Priyanka Neog is a PhD research Scholar in the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110067.

an election.”<sup>1</sup> This community of people has long been neglected by the respective governments. The Human Development Index measures this section lowest amongst most of the communities, in terms of literacy, health, political representation, representation in Public Services, and so on. The facilities entitled to the workers under the Plantation Labour Act like electricity, drinking water, health, educational facilities have not yet found its practical implementation. Literacy rate of this community is the lowest in the state accompanied by school drop outs and inadequate provisions for higher education. Economic crisis in the family is one of the reason for which the children are sent to the gardens to work as wage earners and thereby perpetuating the continuation of child labour. Their wage is the lowest amongst all industrial enterprise accounting to Rs 167 per day. Because of these reasons it is believed that their participation in the political affairs of the state is very crucial. To ameliorate this group, political representation and their participation is of utmost importance. Political representation can be a means of getting their voices heard and representation in turn demands active participation. In this pursuit, the trade unions, political leaders, political parties play a critical role.

### **Trade Unions: An Active Agency of Political Mobilization**

The trade unions in the tea gardens of Assam play an active role in mobilizing the workers at the ground level. These unions effectively try to mould the worker’s beliefs and preferences in favour of their concerned parties and thus are vital for any party to win the periodical elections. Some of the trade unions are- Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangh (ACMS), Assam Bagicha Mazdoor (ABM), Assam Chah Mazdoor Union (ACMU), Assam Sangrami Chah Shramik Sangha (ASCSS), Bharatiya Chah Mazdoor Sangha (BCMS), Assam Chah Shramik Parishadand (ACSP) so on. Of the above mentioned unions, the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangh affiliated to the Congress party succeeded in establishing a strong foothold in the tea gardens of the Brahmaputra Valley. The Congress was always in an advantageous position (until the last (2016) assembly election) because of the unconditional support it received from the ACMS. Though the party has faced various ups and downs in different phases but the tea workers remained their trusted voters ever since the party and ACMS have entered the garden enclave. “The organizational supremacy of the ACMS and the legacy of its initial decades of leadership have helped sustain its dominance over other unions in almost the entire Brahmaputra valley.”<sup>2</sup>

They mobilize and unite the workers and pledge to protect and work for their welfare such as wage hike, bonus, medical facilities, abolition of child labour, measures for proper educational system and improved cultural environment etc. Besides undertaking measures for developing cordial relation between the employers and the employees, it makes sure that the assembly or the parliament takes up their issues and make necessary legislation accordingly. The ACMS has such a far reaching impact on the workers that they follow their instructions without a question. Because of such dominance, the Congress increasingly relied on the ACMS especially in matters of electoral politics. This crucial relevance of the ACMS has helped and provided the platform for the new emerging leaders to be a part of the government.”Thereafter there has been an increasing scramble among the Tea Garden Labourers to occupy an office either in the ACMS or its branches so as to acquire the capacity to bargain with the INC for its nomination to fight election with Tea Garden Labourers (TGLs).”<sup>3</sup> Thus the ACMS acts as a saviour to the Congress by acting as an effective medium between the ground level garden voters, the aspirant leaders and the Congress party. Of late, the BJP-RSS affiliated unions have penetrated in the gardens and are trying hard to destabilize the Congress’s hold in the garden estates.

### **Tea Workers’ Activism and Participation in Electoral Politics**

Post-independence the first general election of 1952 marked the entry of people from the community by winning assembly seats in Sarupathar, Dumdoma and Gossaigaon by ChanuKheria, Malia Tanti and Mathias Tudu respectively. Chatragopal Karmakar became the first Member of Parliament (MP) from the community. Later, Gajen Tanti became the Cabinet Minister when Sarat Chandra Sinha was the Chief Minister of Assam. In the Borbora Ministry of 1970’s, Silvius Condopan was elected as the MP from Mazbat constituency. Eventually there was a gradual inflow of people from this community in the political landscape. The members of the community had also significantly involved themselves in various movements and agitations across Assam. The 1960s language movement witnessed various students and leaders actively participating, in which a student from Mangaldoi sacrificed his life for the cause of the Assamese language. Likewise, the members also extended full cooperation and support during the Assam Movement.

The consciousness that arose amongst this working class, the realization of the extent of violation of their rights and in turn the sheer

negligence by the respective governments led to their entry in the political battle ground. Post Assam Movement, the success of the Congress party could be attributed to the continued support of the tea workers who play a important role in most of the tea growing districts. The representatives of the tea workers who contested from the Congress in the assembly election and turned out victorious were Prithivi Majhi, Dileswar Tanti, Barnabash Tanti, H. Bhumji, S. Condpan, U.N. Sanatan, R. Dhanowar, Boloram Nag, RupamKurmi, J.C. Nagbongshi. The Hiteswar Saikia ministry comprised of four tea community members in the cabinet rank. In the same year, (1991) tea workers support to the Congress was again well reflected in the Lok Sabha victory of the party. The tea population in the 1991 Lok Sabha election rejoiced the inclusion of the MP from Dibrugarh Pawan Singh Ghatowar in the Union Cabinet under the Narasimha Rao government. In the AGP led alliance ministry of the 1996 assembly election, Joseph Toppo, from the Dhekiajuli succeeded in making its presence felt in the union as the minister of state. The MLA from Sarupathar, Binod Goala became a cabinet minister. Although the election results were in favour of the AGP, but the Congress was able to maintain its hold in most of the assembly seats in the tea belts. In 1998 elections too, Congress candidates emerged victorious. Because of these reasons Congress never misses any chance to satisfy workers, if not with development and welfare but with alcohol, food and money just before the election as claimed by many opposition parties.

“In the Brahmaputra valley, 11 ‘tea tribe’ candidates were elected, including 9 from the Congress, and one each from the AGP and the BJP in the 2001 election”<sup>4</sup> This election marked a significant event in the political history of the tea workers as Prithivi Maji was elected the Speaker of the Assam Assembly. Similar was the situation in the 2006 Assembly Election where out of 126 seats the INC won 71. They could successfully achieve victory in the areas where tea workers are predominant. In the same election AGP and BJP too have representatives from the community also have won the election. In the 2009 Lok Sabha Election Paban Singh Ghatowar and Joseph Toppo were elected as MP. The 2011 Assembly Election again brought victory to the Congress. Most of the ‘tea tribe’ candidates who won in the previous election in the tea belts were able to retain their position in the 2011 election also. It is evident that all the winning tea community representative Congress MLAs could defeat the other parties in the

constituencies which are dominated by the tea workers and thereby reiterating the fact that the tea workers votes are indispensable for the Congress to win and can act as a game changer.

Eventually the tea garden population realized that the loyalty with which they voted for the Congress had not yielded fruits. They were simply used as vote bank only in the time of elections. Their grievances against the Congress were well reflected in the 2014 Lok Sabha Election where Congress managed to win in only three constituencies, while BJP could make inroads into the plantation arena and gained seven constituency seats. Swayed by the Modi wave and also as an alternative to years of Congress futile rule the people of Assam along with the tea workers population voted against the Congress in the 2016 assembly election. While BJP won 60 seats, INC could only capture 26, AGP-14 and AIUDF - 13. Most of the areas where tea workers play a decisive role in the elections and which were the traditional winning hub of the Congress voted against the Congress and helped mostly the BJP candidates win.

Considering the post independent elections in Assam, we could draw the conclusion that the presence of the community in the political field is not minimal. Various candidates especially from the tea belts have adequately represented their community and have held respectable positions as MLAs, MPs, some were part of the Union and State Cabinet and also Speaker and Deputy Speaker in the state assembly. Analysing the trends of the parties particularly, the Congress which was the only party this section was affiliated to, we can clearly get a picture of the importance of their votes. They can have a great impact on the outcome of the elections. Keeping in view only the tea belts, the Congress was able to win majority seats as long as they had the support of this section of the 'ignorant' mass. Thus, one cannot deny the fact that this section of people has a significant role to play in the electoral politics of the state.

### **Students' Unions: Voice of the Community**

The ATTSA (Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association) and the AASAA are the two visible students' union actively engaged in the uplift of the community. These student unions are not affiliated with any political party. They act as pressure groups representing the tea tribes and the adivasis and try to address their demands and grievances on the state's political arena. During the Assam agitation ATTSA provided support to

AASU by helping the agitation penetrate the plantations and spreading the message of the movement. It acts as a watchdog against the corrupt and power hungry politicians and trade union leaders and at times severely criticizes those who betray the community's interest. From time to time they have taken up the workers cause like wage hike, welfare provisions in the garden, labour-management issues, grant of paid holiday on Sundays, educational facilities, reservation in government jobs, inclusion in the ST list etc. so as to drive off the overall backwardness of the community. The people too have developed faith in the student unions for their sincere hard-work and loyalty. The objective of the student union is primarily the upliftment of the community by ensuring social justice and economic development and eradication of social evils. "AASAA was opposed to a mere professional identity viz. 'Tea and Ex-Tea Tribes'; rather they preferred to identify themselves as the Adivasis."<sup>55</sup> Apart from these two prominent student unions there are other newly emerging students' wings in the state fighting actively for the betterment and development of the community. A thing worth mentioning here is that most of the political leaders representing the tea plantation workers community were earlier active members of these student organizations and were in the forefront of every protest and agitation demanding their rights and due privileges. Having acquired political power, their self-interest prevailed over the interest of the community and ultimately the same old process of using the community as vote bank continued. They only use such organizations as platforms to gain popularity initially and eventually they turn out to be leaders with power without any good for the poor. They get engrossed in optimizing self-interest over the welfare of the poor people of their community.

### **Politics of Vote Bank and Lack of Accountability on the Part of the Representatives**

From the formation of the Congress ministry in 1952 till the coming of BJP led alliance to power in 2016 and in between various other parties forming government, all had more or less considerable number of representatives nominated from amongst the community. In spite of the fact that the community has adequate number of leaders but still the voters' voices and demands are not well reflected. Anne Phillips in her book "Politics of Presence" have discussed the view of 'politics of presence' where there is the demand that those representing should

themselves be a member of the community they speak for. But this presence is insufficient unless there is accountability to those whom they represent. Increased presence of the under represented groups will act as an additional gain for democracy and in turn justice will be rendered. The increase in representation of the excluded groups will ultimately contribute to the success of democracy.

In the case of the tea plantation workers too, effective presence of the community in matters of political negotiations is of utmost importance. The need for sufficient voices from the community to put forward their demands seems inextricably linked to their development. It might be because of this reason that the tea labour' community is demanding greater representation in the Assam Legislative Assembly as well as in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. They have the feeling that having more people from the community in the political arena would provide them with greater bargaining power. But if we analyze the number of the members of the community participating in the electoral politics it is evident that they have good representation. Although it is not considered enough but it is sufficient and can serve the purpose. They have their representatives elected every year to the assemblies since independence (across party ideology).The problem arises when their representatives, whatever may be their number, do not adequately represent their needs and demands. The whole issue centres on the problem of lack of accountability on the part of the representatives. The representatives after using the workers for political gains never actually address their problems whole heartedly. The politics of vote bank is very much visible in their case, be it their leaders or the party whom they have traditionally supported and put their faith in. Because of these reasons even after having substantial presence in the political arena, this community of people were/are the most oppressed and exploited and have remained underdeveloped with little welfare amenities available to them.

### **References**

- Assam Assembly Election Results in 2011, <http://www.elections.in/assam/assemblyconstituencies/2011-election-results.html>. (accessed May. 30, 2017).
- Assam Assembly (Vidhan Sabha) Election and Results 2016, List of Assamby Constituencies. <http://www.elections.in/assam/assembly-constituencies/>. (accessed May. 11, 2017).



- Assam Assembly (Vidhan Sabha) Election Results 2016, MLAs List, <http://www.elections.in/assam/assembly-constituencies/2016-election-results.htm>. (accessed May. 11, 2017).
- Assam Assembly Election Results in 2006, <http://www.elections.in/assam/assemblyconstituencies/2006-election-results.html>. (accessed June. 1, 2017).
- Assam General (Lok Sabha) Election Results 2014, 2009 and 2004, <http://www.mapsofindia.com/parliamentaryconstituencies/assam/general-electionresults.html>. (accessed June. 1, 2017).
- Behal, Rana P. 2014. *One Hundred Years of Servitude*. New Delhi: Tulika Books.
- Bhowmik, Sharit. K. 2005. "Tea Plantation Workers' Strike: Workers Lose out on Wages." *Economic and Political Weekly* 40 (38): 4103-4105.
- Goswami, Sandhya. 2003. "Vote against Misgovernance: Reflection on a By-Election." *Economic and Political Weekly* 38 (14): 1362-1364.
- Guha, Amalendu. 2012. *Planter Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam, 1826-1947*. New Delhi: Tulika Books.
- Misra, Udayon. 2003. "Assam Tea: The Bitter Brew" *Economic and Political Weekly* 38 (29): 3029-3032.
- Pisharoty, Sangeeta Barooah. 2016. "High Stake for BJP and Congress in the Fragrant Tea Gardens of Upper Assam." *The Wire*, April 3. <https://thewire.in/27255/high-stakesfor-bjp-and-congress-in-the-fragrant-tea-gardens-of-upper-assam/>. (accessed May. 11, 2017).
- Sharma, D. P. 2002. "Labour and the Politics of Identity: Study of the Tea Garden Workers in the Brahmaputra Valley (1985-2001)." Thesis submitted for the award of Doctor of philosophy to Jawaharlal Nehru University.
- Sharma, Jayeeta. 2009. "Lazy natives, Coolie Labour, and the Assam Tea Industry." *Modern Asian Studies* 43 (6): 1287-1324.
- Thapa, Rudraman. 2007. "Politics of Tea Trade Union: A Study of the Assam ChahMazdoor Sangha." *Journal of Politics* XIII: 75-90.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Pisharoty, Sangeeta Barooah. 2016. "High Stake for BJP and Congress in the Fragrant Tea Gardens of Upper Assam." *The Wire*, April 3. <https://thewire.in/27255/high-stakesfor-bjp-and-congress-in-the-fragrant-tea-gardens-of-upper-assam/>. (accessed May. 11, 2017).
- <sup>2</sup> D.P. Sharma, *Labour and the Politics of Identity: A Study of the Tea Garden Workers in the Brahmaputra Valley (1985-2001)*, 219
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 215.
- <sup>5</sup> Rudraman Thapa, *Politics of Identity among the Tea Tribes of Assam Ethnicity in Assam* Deka. K.M. & Phukan. K.N. (Ed.) (2001), 141.

# Myths and Culture-History of Arunachal Pradesh: Studying Etic-Emic Paradigm

**Dr. Prasanta Kumar Nayak\***

Myths stand core to believing and practicing their religion, indigenizing their culture, homogenizing their society and professing their insularity bereft of external extraneous intervention. No society can exist without myth. Only a world without humans is a world without myths. Mythology is the subjective truth of people communicated through stories, symbols and rituals (Sinha, 2016). Myths hold narratives told in the society and are truthful accounts of the past. They are accepted on faith, taught to be believed and can be cited as authority in answer to ignorance, doubt or disbelief (Bascom, 1981: 98). Myths and legends of many of the tribal communities of North East India are available not in the prose form but in the verse and song form (Dutta, 2002: 92). Many societies cluster their myths, legends and history together, taking into account myths and legends replicating accounts of their remote past (Eliade, 1998: 23). Malinowski goes on to highlight how myth apart from qualifying itself to be explanatory, also serves as a warrant, a charter, and often even a practical guide to magic, ceremony, ritual, and social structure (Dhananjayan, 2007: 51). People believe, accept, practice and transmit it as they find it to have transmitted down to them since ages past. They receive it as it is, realising its relevance on culture with changes incorporated in due course. This way the ochre of myth transmitted to them from outside hardly gets twisted, rather a localised element gets added from inside the society where manifested. This is how an etic-emic or outside-inside dispensation of myth gets contextualised. On such background, the culture-history of Arunachal Pradesh under an etic-emic perspective is subject of discussions.

---

\* Dr. Prasanta Kumar Nayak, Associate Professor, Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh-791112. Email: prachipkn@rediffmail.com

The emic approach investigates how local people think, perceive and categorize the world, their rules for behaviour, what has meaning for them, and how they imagine and explain things. The etic (scientist-oriented) approach shifts the focus from local observations, categories, explanations, and interpretations to those of the anthropologist. The etic approach realises that members of a culture often are too involved in what they are doing to interpret their cultures impartially (Kotak, 2006: 47). Although emics and etics are sometimes regarded as inherently in conflict and one can be preferred to the exclusion of the other, the complementarity of emic and etic approaches to anthropological research has been widely recognized. Emic knowledge within a culture is determined by local custom, meaning, and belief and best described by a 'native' of the culture, whereas etic knowledge refers to generalisations about human behavior that are considered universally true. The present study is going to scrutinise myths on three important dimensions of cultural practice of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, i.e., beliefs in cosmology, divinity and human-bovine-bond to elicit the etic-emic characteristics.

Myths do have their own significant discourse. The state with twenty-five major tribes and a number of sub-tribes is known for its diversified culture. Such diversity is seen among tribes even if residing in close proximity. Believing in the God's grace behind the creation of the world affirms that God is there behind everything. To tell how man lost eternal life on earth, and then was given an after-life, is to impart the dogma of the immortality of the soul. This is how the beliefs on the foundation of ancestor-worship, as well as the ritual of burial and mourning come to be established. Myths certifying origin of man at one time from the animals clarifies of a totemic relationship in family-clan, and anything related to the animal species can naturally be controlled through ritual and magic (Stretski, 1992: 139). Myths of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh too substantiate the above analysis of a cultural system or its features from the perspective of being an active participant in that culture, justifying thus the emic characteristics of such myths contributing to the innate culture that the state has so far been upholding.

### **Belief in Cosmology**

Most myths of Arunachal Pradesh seem alike while believing cosmological phenomena- the creation of the universe, origin of human beings, origin of water, fire and sky. The Akas living in the western

part of Arunachal Pradesh believe by a legend to have descended from heaven to earth by means of golden, silver, iron and bamboo ladders according to their status (Pandey and Tripathy, 1997: 37). Here, we find a concept of cosmology where the Earth (visible) is seen linking with the Heaven (invisible) by an intermediary, ladder and the nature of ladder determining the kind of tribe to be born on earth. An Adi myth (the Adis live in central part of the state) prescribes that there was utter darkness in the beginning and a union between the sky (*Melo*) and the earth (*Sedi*) gave birth to things. The Adis accept that Sedi-Melo made Donyi (Sun), Polo (Moon) and gave birth to Diling, Itung, Tuye, Yepe, and Pedo-Nane, which imply the widespread mother of all spirits, creatures, winged animals, reptiles, and individuals (Koje, 2015: 30). Some of the sub-tribes like Pasis, Panggis, Shimongs and Milangs too believe in this myth of origin (Pandey and Tripathy, 1997: 30-31). Verrier Elwin also studies a Minyong (a tribe of the central part) myth and corroborates the creation of *Sedi*, the Earth, and *Melo*, the Sky as wife and husband and also *Donyi*, the Sun, and *Polo*, the Moon (Elwin, 1993: 28).

The Galos of the central part believe Jimi as their creator who gave birth to *Mrdo* (the sky) and *Sichi* (the earth) and their union led to creation of human race. The Apatani (a tribe of the central part) myths like *Kolyung*, *Kolo*, *Wachi* and *Lipyu* talk about earth and sky getting mingled with the sun and water, and giving birth to gods, called Chatung and Chanbha who conjugated with goddess Chankangrima and Dokarimang giving birth to Tani (Abotani), their first ancestor (Elwin, 1993: 38). So goes the Nyishi myth (Nyishis too reside in central part) considering them to be common descendants of Abotani. Having descended from Abotani, they at first settled at a place called Supung, which lies somewhere in the far-eastern Himalayas, probably across the border in Tibet from where they came down, crossed the Subansiri and Kamla rivers and made their settlements all over the hills (Pandey and Tripathy, 1997: 50). The Tagin myth corroborates the origin of the first human being, Tani after a number of generations from a stone called Lingku (Mitkong et al, 2006: 12).

A myth of the Mishmis living in the eastern part mentions about men and gods living together long ago on earth, and the gods being more powerful oppressed human beings mercilessly to the dislike of the Supreme God in the Sky, Inni Taya who out of anger sent the Gods of the Wind, Earthquake and Fire to destroy everything on earth. Only one man, Lyama-Meru and one woman Ani-Meru who could survive,

lived as husband and wife and their union led to the origin of Mishmis. A Singpho (tribe of the eastern part) myth tells about the union of Phan Ningsang and Mathum-Matta giving birth to man and woman and from them came the Khamptis and Singphos (both, tribes of the eastern part). Mathum-Matta put them all in a place called Majoi-Singrabhum beyond the Himalayan Mountains and decided to send few of them to the plains due to over-population. That is how the Khamptis descended to their present habitat by the golden ladder (Pandey and Tripathy, 1997: 42) like the Akas.

There are two sets of myths seen in India running parallel to each other; one, unified and codified particularly of the Vedic and Puranic, referred sometimes as the 'classical' or 'higher' myths and the other, scattered and uncoded, referred as the 'lower' myths. B. B. Kumar justifiably connotes them to be classical and folk traditions, rechristened as 'Great' and 'Little' traditions (Kumar, 1993: 34). The 'tribal' myths could be classified as under the 'lower myths' (Dutta, 2002: 96). The innate message that the myths cast is hardly borrowed from the influence of outside myths, rather has been transmitted down for generations to the present times. It is quite original and indigenous kept insulated by the tribes of the state. The argument raised by Birendranath Dutta goes to suggest that the tribal myths as the 'lower myths' contribute substantially for the 'higher' myths to grow and great Indian culture to sustain (Dutta, 2002: 96). Indigeneity of the tribal myths hardly could be thought of getting influenced by the 'higher' myths. They are very much emic in character and hence retain the strength even to influence or enrich its etic-counterpart.

### **Belief in Divinity**

The concept of divinity has been putting everyone in wonders. Man in the ancient past observed and realised the cosmic process happening. Hardly had he the knowledge of construing the incredible nature and the scientific background to the cause of phenomena. Stupefied, he wanted to attribute everything to an unseen power, the divinity. Etiology gained currency. Divine names were assigned to different phenomena as experienced by man, whether natural or unusual, transient or intransient, earthly or heavenly, and abstract or concrete. Believing by the theory of 'classical' or 'higher' myths, the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon were assigned different nomenclature which the uncoded 'lower' myths of the localised genre never subscribed to. The tribal myths of Arunachal like elsewhere in India do have such

rudimentary rubrics on the divinity of things around them. They mythicise even the animate and inanimate.

Myths testify the totemistic origin of the tribes and clans. A Wancho (tribe of the eastern part) legend talks of a girl being fertilized by the wind that led to the origin of the tribe. The Mishmis, Khampis, Nyishis and Noctes have their myths of origin (Kumar, 1993: 12). The Nocte community of the eastern Arunachal ascribed the creation of the earth and life to the Supreme God, Jongban who sent his follower Lotha Khunbao down to the earth to teach people the art of speech. A Minyong myth links up Sun to daytime and Moon to night. It too talks about stars born out of splinters of the Sun after being shot by a frog (Elwin, 1993: 51). A Bugun (a tribe of the western Arunachal) myth reads about a girl, Halia and the boy, Haklum living in the sky who in due course led to the origin of thunder and lightning. It may be pointed out that the ideas contained in these myths are also found in stories current among various other tribal groups in different parts of North-East India (Dutta, 2002: 116). These myths stand core to their religion and culture and there is nothing in them to be believed imported from the etic forces.

Similarly the Tagin (a tribe of the central part) myths talk about the origin of rainbows, rain, storms, lightning, rivers, stars, sky, earth and fire. They too assign different divine names for them like, the water-god as Beru-Kangu, rainbow as Oritage, lightning as Doriak, thunder as Dogum, storm as Degum, sky as Neni or Nyido, earth as Seching, stars as Karbu and Ringbu, and rivers as Dejing Kangme (Mitskang et al, 2006: 23-29). So goes the Apatani myth attributing everything, animate and inanimate to the Donyi-Polo (Sun and Moon God). They call rain as Mudo, rainbow as Nyime-Yaru, lightning as Dolya, thunder as Yapung Gene, storm as Tari, sky as Yapung, earth as Supung, stars as Takar, and evil spirit as Wei (Riniya, 2020: Personal Interaction), whereas the Galos term rain as Nyido, rainbow as Agre-Goge, cloud as Dome, lightning as Dorak, thunder as Dogum, storm as Dogum-Dor, sky as Tale, earth as Sichi or Jwt, stars as Takar, and evil spirit as Uyi (Dabi, 2020: Personal Interaction). Even the Adi and Nyishi versions of the terms seem alike with little tonal variation. Such myth-based belief in animates and inanimates and indigenisation of names used among different tribes attest enough of emic criterion of the culture.

The religious system of Arunachal can be classified into four religious patterns: the Donyi-Poloism followed by the Adis, Galos,

Nyishis, Apatanis and Tagins who believed themselves to be descendants of Abotani; the Buddhism followed by the Monpas, Sherdukpens, Mijis, Membas, Khamba, Mishmis and Khamptis; the Hinduism followed by the Noctes and Mishmi; and the Christianity. And culturally, they are spread into three broad divisions: the Buddhist pattern of Tibeto-Burman tradition of western Arunachal; the central pattern of the central Arunachal having close cultural-linguistic affinities characterized by the Mithun culture; and the eastern pattern of Tirap and southern part of Arunachal characterized by the influence of neighbouring cultures. Such heterogeneity zeroes down strongly to homogeneity among them. The dynamics in tribal culture discussed hardly could have sustained for long and continued till date without a powerful innate binding force. No etic mythicised forces could have done so to an insular tribal culture like that of Arunachal Pradesh.

### **Belief in Human-Bovine-Bond**

The age-old human-bovine bond is beyond one's own perception. History of different human civilizations has unfurled its affirmation and established its deeper strength to the growth of human society and culture. Myths per se, being a part of religion have endowed this bond a great embalming effect all across time and space connecting through transformation of one into another and even attributing the beasts godliness while linking genealogy of mankind to divinity. Since the myths being a part of religion have been considered primitive science, or more precisely pre-scientific counterpart to science spelling out and assigning the details of causality of events to gods (Segal, 2015: 13), humans have solicited their own origin and progress in the divine benediction and accredited their self-identity and existence to the nature and bovine stock. Initialization of predator-prey relationship between them led man to find utilitarian aspects in animals and in due course myths and folk-tales grew around them.

We see mythology corroborating such bond. The Greek, Native American, African, Indian and South-East Asian mythologies characterise different animals to have been associated with human world. Myths in abundance explicate human-bovine relationship. The butterfly in the Greek, the Maori of New Zealand and the Aztec or Mayan Cultures represents the soul, because it symbolizes the transformation and the change in its metamorphosis ([www.almadelaide.com](http://www.almadelaide.com), 2020). The ancient Egyptian mythology speaks of *Heqet*, a frog-goddess (a

woman with a frog's head) representing fertility and the Greeks and Romans associated frogs with fertility, harmony and with licentiousness in association with Aphrodite (Cooper, 1992: 106-08). The Celtic world (Indo-European) believes of a frog having the power of purge. So also go the Chinese and Japanese myths attributing frog with good fortunes. The Indian mythology associates frog with rain and fertility concepts. It appears in Indian fire-myths and in their astral mythology too (Wassen, 1934: 613-58).

This human-bovine bond as reflected in myths is experienced when creatures are seen as symbols of the divinities. Athena, the Greek Goddess of wisdom was represented by an owl. Poseidon (Neptune), the Ocean God is demonstrated by dolphin. The Chinese myths ascribe godliness to the Monkey King, Sun Wukong, a trickster God like the Greek tricksters Hermes, Odysseus, and Prometheus and attach cultural values (Lou, 2016: 24-31). The Shinto-Buddhism in Japan believes in a monkey legend. Indian mythology portrays the Goddess Durga with her companion a tiger, Laxmi with an owl, Saraswati with a swan and Lord Ganesh with a mouse. The Harappan Culture qualifies the *Pasupati* as the God of Animals. We worship the Lord Hanuman for bravery, commitment and devotion to justice. So is the position of cow, believed as the "Holy Cow" and nourisher of earth. The legends too describe about Kamadhenu, the miraculous divine bovine goddess and Lord Krishna as the Lord of Cows. Tales and myths on monkey and human connections have importance in Hindu and Buddhist tradition in India, China and Japan. The tribal myths of Arunachal Pradesh too corroborate such connections.

Myths on transformation of souls are even popular among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The Adis consider both men and creatures from the ancient past alike, even they used to trade marriage relationship (Pandey, 1999: 54). One of the Adi myths talks of a damsel Donyi Ari, daughter of Topo Poduk getting married to a frog who got later transformed into a human (Koje, 2015: 55-56). The Tani myths talk about two sisters, Beni and Seni and two brothers Narbu and Sebu of whom the latter getting transformed into a 'mithun' and lived in the jungle (Mitkong et al, 2006: 19-20). A Sherdukpen tale describes about a girl turning into an elephant, and another about the yak born from the egg of a great bird and human beings giving birth to snakes, monkeys, tigers, cows and dogs. An Aka myth on an unhappy wife getting transformed into an animal, a Mishmi tale of the origin of the bear, and the Miji, Adi and Minyong stories on the origin of the first monkeys



attribute to an act of incest (Elwin, 1993: 390). Same kinds of myths on transformation of souls are also prevalent among other tribes of the Tani group. The shamanistic tribes living in different parts of the state too believe in such kind of myths and tales.

The mithun, the state animal is considered most essential resource for an established culture seen among the Tani group of tribes; Adi, Apatani, Galo, Nyishi and Tagin. It symbolises the deep hidden tribal soul and conveys religious centrality having its utilitarian connection with their socio-economic and cultural life. It is viewed as a symbol of wealth, prestige and was customarily utilised as a medium of trade, and it intends to settle disputes of bride price. Since dogs share human emotions, they are considered sagacious and great companion to man. The Adi tales talk about dogs sharing essential emotions of jealousy, priority and cleverness with humans since the ancient times. The human-dog bond is age-old and several myths are associated with this across different cultures in India. The Tagin myths too establish the origin of different creatures like mithun, tiger, fish, water birds, mongoose, frog, snakes, bat, rat, deer, bear, dog, crocodile and butterfly (Mitkong et al, 2006: 3-146).

All these myths and tales described in connection with the human-bovine bond among the tribes go to suggest the value system bequeathed to the tribes from their ancient past. Myths of such nature not only attach utilitarian importance of the bovine stock to the belief system, economy and tradition of the tribes but also reflect of a local material culture and their culture-specific traits and motifs. They are neither borrowed from the etic sources nor diffused from within. They have been running across time and space and projecting their significance to the insularity of homogeneous culture. They are intrinsic and core to their culture practiced. If language is as old as the civilization, myths are too as old as the language of a race. If tribes of Arunachal Pradesh speak different dialects which vary from tribe to tribe even if living in close geographical proximity to each other and have different myths and culture, their myths could also be as old as their own indigenous dialects. They hardly have any alien features with their indigeneity.

Anchoring multilingual and multicultural demographic hues, the region conglomerates a plethora of ingenious tribal practices quintessentially animist at the core. Myths have stood instrumental to animism. Philologists believed myths to be instinctive sentimental descriptions of nature, its creation and phenomena. Dream and vision were too conceived as the necessary repertoire of myths. They testified

the psychological, metaphysical and sociological beliefs of a society, its culture, value system, cross-culture ethos and the innate current for homogenisation of diversified social practices. In the context of Arunachal Pradesh, if we examine the migrational history of the tribes, one goes for sure with the idea that they migrated to their present settlements from the north, north-eastern and south-eastern directions and not the ones the people of the mainland India have come from. Most of the ethnicities that claim today to be the autochthons trace their ancestries and affinities to the east of India, mostly to Southeast Asia. If this is so, they hardly had connections and assimilations with people of the other areas. Hence, the kind of culture they developed was distinct and insular, hardly had to be manipulated and extrapolated. The myths that their culture based upon were too believed to be unique, distinct and varied from others contextualising indigenous tribe-centric beliefs and affinities. They can be argued as their own souled directives guiding the tribes across time and space in every step of manifestation of their history and culture. There is no any extraneity with their myths. Rather they, as the emic forces have contributed to the totality of Indian culture. Not that these myths of the tribes have not been threatened by outside modern forces. They are there. But myths are also there running parallel to strengthen their history.

### References

- Bascom, William R. (1981), *Contributions to Folkloristics*, Meerut: Archana Publications.
- Cooper, J. C. (1992), *Symbolic and Mythological Animals*, London: Aquarian Press.
- Dhananjayan, A. (2007), "The Curse and Absolution: A Study on the Role of Origin Myths among the Nomads with Special Reference to Boom-Boom Maattukkaarakar Community", *Indian Folklore Research Journal*, Vol. 4, No.7.
- Dutta, Birendranath (2002), *Folklore and Historiography*, Chennai: National Folklore Support Centre.
- Eliade, Mircea (1998), *Myth and Reality*, Illinois: Waveland Press.
- Elwin, Verrier (1993), *Myths of the North East Frontier of India*, Jorhat: Purbashree Offset Printers, 1958, Reprint.
- Information collected from an Apatani lady, Nani Riniya, Staff of the Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020.
- Information collected from Dr. Tajen Dabi, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

- Koje, Nasi (2015), *Study of Oral Discourse through Adi Folk Tales of Arunachal*, New Delhi: Abhijeet Publications.
- Kottak, Conrad (2006), *Mirror for Humanity*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Kumar, B. B. (1993), *Folk-lore and Folk-lore Motifs*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications.
- Lou, Huanliang (2016), "A Comparative Study of the Chinese Trickster Hero Sun Wukong", *Project Report*, Degree of Master of Arts, Graduate Liberal Studies, Duke University, May 2016, pp. 24-31; Retrieved 12 October 2020 from <https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/11824/Huanliang%20Lou.pdf?sequence=4>
- Mitkong, N., A. Megu, B. Paul & B. K. Borah (2006), *Oral Literature of the Tagins on Creation of Universe: Arunachal Pradesh*, Itanagar: Directorate of Research.
- Pandey, B. B. (1999), *Creation of Universe*, Guwahati: Purbadesh Mudran Publication.
- Pandey, D. & Tripathy, B (1997), *A Comprehensive History of Arunachal Pradesh (From earliest Times to 1947 A.D.)*, Pasighat.
- Retrieved 11 October 2020 at 826 hours from <https://www.almadelaide.com/memory/metamorphosis-personal-collection#:~:text=From%20ancient%20cultures%20such%20as,the%20change%20in%20its%20metamorphosis.&text=The%20Greek%20word%20%22psyche%22%20originally%20had%20two%20meanings.>
- Segal, Robert (2015), *Myth: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: OUP; Also retrieved 8 October 2020 at 1520 hours from [https://www.amazon.com/Myth-Very-Short-Introduction-Introductions/dp/0198724705/ref=pd\\_lpo\\_14\\_t\\_0/136-3350062-2426561?\\_encoding=UTF8&pd\\_rd\\_i=0198724705&pd\\_rd\\_r=ad99dba5-6b0c-4091-b3b3-6bfe19ba06d7&pd\\_rd\\_w=H8HGf&pd\\_rd\\_wg=vSrbV&pf\\_rd\\_p=7b36d496-f366-4631-94d3-61b87b52511b&pf\\_rd\\_r=Y559S1W06XC8DSMS1E3Y&psc=1&refRID=Y559S1W06XC8DSMS1E3Y.](https://www.amazon.com/Myth-Very-Short-Introduction-Introductions/dp/0198724705/ref=pd_lpo_14_t_0/136-3350062-2426561?_encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_i=0198724705&pd_rd_r=ad99dba5-6b0c-4091-b3b3-6bfe19ba06d7&pd_rd_w=H8HGf&pd_rd_wg=vSrbV&pf_rd_p=7b36d496-f366-4631-94d3-61b87b52511b&pf_rd_r=Y559S1W06XC8DSMS1E3Y&psc=1&refRID=Y559S1W06XC8DSMS1E3Y.)
- Sinha, Namyra (4 July 2016), "No society can exist without myth", says Devdutt Pattanaik", *Hindustan Times*, Retrieved 13 April 2020, Accessed on 14 May 2020.
- Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7zv5ft.11>; Accessed on: 06.05.20 at 1131 hours.
- Strenski, Ivan (ed.) (1992), *Malinowski and the Work of Myth*, Princeton University Press.
- Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7zv5ft.11>; Accessed on 06.5.20 at 11.23 hrs.
- Wassén, Henry (1934), "The Frog in Indian Mythology and Imaginative World", *Anthropos*, Bd. 29, H. 5./6. (Sep - Dec, 1934), Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, pp. 613-658; Retrieved 10 October 2020 from [https://www.jstor.org/stable/40446982?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/40446982?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

# Upanishads as Catalyst of Indic Studies Across the Globe

**Dr. Shruti Kant Pandey\***

## **Prologue**

India has been the land of eternal acumen, acute mysticism and eccentric chastity. Evidences have confirmed existence of the earliest oral literature, philosophical contemplation and knowledge dispersion among the disciples even in the Vedic periods. F.W. Thomas, a professor at Oxford University and renowned Indologist opened that, "Education is no exotic in India. There is no country where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful influence". Endorsing the statement Dr. F.E. Key remarks that, "To achieve their aim not only did brahmins develop a system of education which, survived even in the events of the crumbling of empires and the changes of society, but they also through all those thousands of years, kept a glow of torch of higher learning" It is worth mentioning that the successive lineage of scholars and philosophers from the very beginning of human beginning continue to be existent in the customary institutions such as gurukulas and ashramstill the day.

The tradition of Vedic Samhitas has been prospering since their inception into Upvedas, Vedangas, Pratishakhyas, Brahmans, Aaranyakas, Upanishads, Smrities, Sutras, Darshans, Dharmshashtas and the series is still expanding. The Vedas, which are predominantly known to be four in number viz. Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samveda and Atharvaveda evidently had 1,131 branches prevalent in various parts of India. These variations had separate sets of auxiliary texts including

---

\* Dr. Shruti Kant Pandey, Assistant Professor and Head, Amity Institute for Sanskrit Studies and Research, Amity University, Sector 125, Noida (U.P).  
Mobile: 09871418453.

Pratishakhyas, Brahmanas and Aaranyakas. The fact marks not only the vast omniscience of the Vedic literature but vibrant deliberations thereon. This denotes abundance, importance and acceptance of the Vedic scripture in the contemporary scenario.

In course of time, the theme, details, depth, dimension and perspectives of the Vedic scriptures have expanded covering panoramic dimensions of human life. However, philosophy continued to encompass the center-stage of the Indian thought and literature. In certain texts; the component of philosophy is quite apparent whereas elsewhere, it is immersed into the content depicting human values, ethics, morality, code of conduct, dutifulness and so forth. Upon exploration, it appears that core of Indian theology is concentrated in the Upanishads, which hold the most impressive presentation of the Indian philosophical tradition. They succeed the cumulative tradition of thought expressed in the Vedic literature including the six schools of theist philosophy in a simplified and behavioral form. It is therefore, Upanishads are treated as the most revered texts of philosophy. This study is dedicated to explore the worldwide spread of these texts which has earned gratitude to the Indian philosophical tradition worldwide.

### **Ins and Outs of Upanishads**

Verbally, Upanishad means to sit close to the teacher, who is an enlightened soul. This vicinity between the source and the seeker is not of time or space but of conjunction of inner dimensions of conscience. It is the condition when the essence of spirituality gets encompassed through the souls and one lamp enlightens the other. All this happens not through the words but via silent infusion of the focal dimensions of consciousness. At such intermittent moment of spiritual transfusion, words don't just carry wisdom but transmit deeper expressions which verses usually fail to carry. Hence, Upanishad is not just the philosophical lesson by a teacher to the taught but transference of the supreme state of spiritual enlightenment to the one who seeks it as the sole aspiration. Aadi Shankaracharya, derives the meaning of Upanishad from a unique standpoint. He admits 'Up' and 'Ni' as prefixes before the root 'Sad' which means to loosen or to destroy. Thereby, he admits Upanishads as the texts which destroy ignorance and lead towards enlightenment.

For the commoners, the word Upanishad means a set of books which deal with the introduction to the universal as well as individual

consciousness, their interrelation, means to attain unity with the supreme soul, nature of creation, role of god in creation of the universe, qualities of inner dimensions of human being, illustrations of seers expressing spiritual discourses for their disciples and the like. Upanishads appeared as the unique sources to articulate the transcendental messages of the Vedic Samhitas. These are also termed as Vedanta viz. culmination of Vedas or the Vedic tradition. In this sense, they represent the theosophical crux inscribed in the Vedic literature. Gradually, these became so persuasive that apart from ascetics; seekers of all stages and sects kept quenching their spiritual thirst since centuries.

### **Premience of Upanishads**

Upanishads are undoubtedly the most revered philosophical texts in the history of mankind. Their ability to introduce spirituality not only as a branch of learning but as a way of living is widely appreciated. It is no surprise that amongst a wide range of Vedic texts, Upanishads became pioneers in introducing the Indian spiritual wealth to the other parts of the globe. Till the day, they stand atop amongst the most translated, discussed and annotated volumes amid the varied range of Vedic scriptures. Apart from contributing towards the spiritual enlightenment; Upanishads have also become the worthiest sources for innumerable literary volumes in India and abroad. Various dignitaries and institutions including Swami Ramtirth; revered internationally famed indologist, Swami Vivekananda; the founder of Ram Krishna Mission, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi; the initiator of Transcendental Meditation Movement, AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad; the founder of ISCON movement, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi; the father of the nation are among the personalities who have harvested the fruits of popularity of Upanishads across national boundaries.

Professors of Upanishads share everlasting feeling of spiritual ecstasy crossing all the mundane boundaries of time, space, region, religion, language, caste, creed and literacy. It is the message which does not recognize any discrimination, inequality, deprivation, division and level of conscience. Message of Upanishads is of the humanity, by the humanity and for the humanity. The key of joy of this message is the feeling of nothingness rather than having the ego of being everything or superior to others. Spirituality along with recognition of the actual-self is the key to solve all the issues and challenges the humanity has ever faced or is facing this day. We, as Indians must be obliged to the

seers and scholars who preached and preserved such divine wealth not for the inquisitives of this holy land but also for the spiritual seekers of the world.

German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, who in a peculiar context predicted that “Christianity would never be able to take root in India in a substantial way. On the contrary, Indian wisdom will flow back upon Europe, and produce a thorough change in our knowing and thinking”. Certifying the predominance of Upanishads, he stated that these texts impart a kind of knowledge that is universal and applicable to any modern religion. These are none other than the Upanishads; which transformed the perception of the world intelligentsia towards India, Sanskrit and Vedic scripture. These have not only been the medium of enticing philosophers of the three continents viz. Asia, Europe and America but have attracted spiritualists from the rest of the lands as well. Hence, contribution of Upanishads in sprouting and catalyzing Indic studies in the west is undoubtedly unique.

### **Rise and extent of Upanishads**

The precise period of origin of Upanishads is indefinite particularly in the native ideology. Yet, the prevalent timeline of their emergence dangles somewhere between 6000 to 200 BCE. The earliest of them viz. Ishopanishad is none else than the 40<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Krishna Yajurveda, whereas their lineage is still incessant. Though, their number has reached 350 but authentically the 10 Upanishads with Aadi Shankaracharya’s commentary thereupon are universally acknowledged as the most fundamental. Secondly, the 108 Upanishads listed in the Muktikopanishada (ostensibly inscribed in 656 CE) are also considered as authentic. The structure of Upanishads is largely poetic, dialogistic theoretic and discourse oriented. The following chart explains the distribution of Veda-Upanishad conjugation quite elaborately:

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Name of Veda</b>	<b>Distribution of prominent Upanishads</b>	<b>Names of Fundamental Upanishads</b>	<b>Distribution of authentic (108) Upanishads</b>
1	Rigveda	01	Eitreyā	10
2	Yajurveda	04	Isha, Katha, Teitteriya and Shwetashwatara	16
3	Samveda	02	Kena and	

4 Atharvaveda	03	Chhandogaya	50
		Prashna, Mundaka and Mandukya	32

---

### **Rise of Upanishads at Western Horizon**

Aside from the east, the influence of Upanishads may be seen upon the thought and philosophies of celebrated western theorists. Scholars have identified numerous points of confluence between Indian and western philosophers of repute upon pivotal issues of theological studies. Swami Tathagatananda of the 'Vedanta Society of New York' has mentioned several surprising facts in his book titled 'Journey of Upanishads to the West'. According to him "to the extent India, with her spiritual culture of the Upanishads, reminded Greece that liberty of the soul was also to be striven for along with the liberty of the body. India was able to do her bit for the enrichment of Greece and through her for the enrichment of the rest of Europe as well." He ascertains that much before Alexander's invasion in 326 BC, Pythagoras, the noted mathematician from Macedonia visited India in the sixth century BC. The evidence of this travel reflects in his 'theory of harmony of spheres' which conforms to the coherence among the constituent components of the universe as reflected in the Upanishads.

In a review article on the same topic Dr. Anil Baran Ray of the University of Bardwan, West Bengal has mentioned that Socrates (469-399 BC), the prominent Greek philosopher is also said to have met an Indian philosopher during his discussions with scholars in Athens and was greatly moved by the Upanishadic notion that individual soul can only be properly understood in the light of an understanding of the universal soul, who is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe. His closest aide Plato (427-347 BC) reflects his acknowledgement of 'Maya' the elusive power of nature in his notion of the 'myth of the cave' and his idea of omniscience, almost similar to jnana yoga or the way of knowledge stated in the Upanishads. The similarity between the language and style of Plato's works and Upanishadic language as well as style of expression was also noted by the Indologist Max Mueller. He even observed that most of Plato's *Republic* was a paraphrasing of Indian ideas. The Greek inclination towards Indian philosophical thought continued till the modern times. It is a well-known fact that Demetrius Galanos (1760-1833) who claimed himself to be 'the Plato of this age', lived in Varanasi, India for considerably long period of 40 years. The



fascination of this pioneering Indologist for Indian philosophy and mysticism of Upanishads is well known among scholars in India and the west.

### **Upanishads' transference from India to Europe**

During the medieval ages; Persian was not only the language of administration but also the medium of interdisciplinary studies in India as well as in the Europe. Therefore, European explorers and scholars often collected manuscripts from various parts of India and collected them in their native countries. In 1671, Francis Bernier a French traveler to India did the pioneering job of bringing a copy of *Sirre-a-Akbar*, the Persian translation of fifty-two Upanishads made by Prince Dara Shukoh (1615-1659) the eldest son of Shahjahan (1592-1666) to France. His efforts were taken forward by Anquetil Duperron (1731-1805) who worked arduously for about 40 long years to bring out *Oupnekhat*, an exotic translation of *Sirre-a-Akbar* into the Latin and got it published in 1801-02. The reflection of the philosophy of Upanishads reflected upon the personal life of Duperron who wrote in his reminiscences that 'I live in poverty and bereft of all worldly goods, all alone, but with perfect peace of mind. I await the dissolution of the body which is not far off for me and also with unceasing effort I aspire to God, the highest and most perfect being.'

It is evident that Upanishads were not considered only as the texts of spirituality but also treated at the means of the ultimate fulfilment of human life with the realization of the supreme truth. Following the trails of Duperron, Eugene Bernouf (1801-1852), another French translated the voluminous Brihadaranyaka Upanishad into French and Latin. Some other scholars who played vital role in promoting Upanishads in the West include Sir William Jones (1746-1794), Sir Charles Wilkins (1749-1836), Friedrich Von Schelling (1775-1854), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), Thomas J Green (1802-63), Friedrich Max Mueller (1823-1900), Sir Albrecht Weber (1825-1901) Ralph T. H. Griffith (1826-1906) Paul Deussen (1854-1919) and Arthur Berriedale Keith (1879-1944). The French appreciation of India's spiritual culture carried on through Sylvain Levi (1863-1935) found its culmination in modern times in Romain Rolland (1866-1944) and Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer was so impressed with the Chhandogya Upanishad that he declared Upanishads to be the most beneficial and elevating study

that the world had ever produced and that ‘it has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death’.

### **Upanishads’ Role as Exponent of Indology**

Max Mueller’s efforts include 51 books either translating texts or writing commentaries upon them by devoting 25 valuable years of his life. He declared the objective behind this exposure of oriental literature to make the west more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal and truly human in thought and actions as well. He often questioned the proponents of material development in the west that “what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” After his meeting with Swami Vivekananda in London on 28 May 1896, he decided to write a book titled *Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings*, which was published in 1898. His fascination towards Indic texts is reflected in the quote viz. “one correct version of any celebrated Hindu book would be of greater value than all the dissertations of essays that can be composed on the same subject”. Paul Deussen, who claimed he to be the successor of Max Mueller, enriched Upanishadic studies in the West with his experience rich publications including *Sixty Upanishads*, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads* and *Spirit of the Upanishads*. He claimed that the messages of Upanishads have significance reaching far beyond their time and space. They have an inestimable value for the whole mankind.

Britain was not aloof to the Upanishadic fever that rolled over other European countries. The famous Indologist Sir William Jones (1746-94) who founded the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1784 was so impressed by the ancient Indian scriptures that he openly declared Newton’s theology and philosophy to be the extracts of the Vedas and other Indian works. He was the first one to translate Upanishad viz. Ishavasya Upanishad into English. Sir Charles Wilkins (1749-1836), a close associate of William Jones translated Bhagwad Gita into English in consensus with Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of India and a great patron of the Asiatic Society with a sound assertion that “the study and the true practice of Gita’s teachings would lead humanity to peace and bliss”.

### **Upanishads’ Expansion beyond Europe**

In USA, the first light of Indology reflected in the writings of Ralph W Emerson (1803-1882), who after going through Shrimad Bhagwadgita

and Kathopanishad converted his divine feelings into his famous poems titled 'The Celestial Love', 'Wood-Notes', 'Brahma', 'American Vedantism' and so forth. These works depict his gradual immersion into the notion of the Supreme Being as expressed in the Upanishadic texts. Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) was another American who stood on an equal footing with Emerson in his appreciation of Indian spiritual legacy. He articulated his experiences upon studying Indian scripture as 'What extracts from the Vedas I have read fall on me like a light of a higher and purer luminary.' Walt Whitman (1819-1892) has often narrated his gratitude towards Upanishadic messages through the book titled Leaves of Grass where he writes about the superiority of the ego in human being, immanence of God and intrinsic nature of transcendental knowledge. The outcome of writings of these eminent litterateurs culminated in the establishment of the American Oriental Society in Boston in 1842 and in the Harvard University in 1891. These institutions later developed as prominent centers of Indology in the USA.

### **Conclusion**

Upanishads have been the messengers of Indian spiritual wealth to the world. They have mesmerized all those who by any means have touched it from any angle even a bit. The list of self-acclaimed disciples of Upanishads is quite long and scholars from all parts of the world are included therein. Max Mueller expresses their superiority in quite concise fashion by stating "It is surely astounding that such a system as Vedanta should have slowly been elaborated by the indefatigable and intrepid thinkers of India thousands of years ago, a system that even now makes us feel giddy as in mounting the last steps of the swaying spire of a Gothic cathedral. None of our philosophers, including Heraclitus, Plato, Kant, or Hegel has ventured to erect such a spire. In the beginning there was but One, and in the end also, there will but One, whether we call it Atman or Brahman." In nutshell, Upanishads are lighthouses of humanity and have enlightened all the seekers of spirituality across the globe since their inception on the auspicious land of Aryavarta.

### **References**

- Chaube Vrajbihari, Vedic Vanmayaka Itihas, Katyayana Vedika Sahitya Prakasana, 1972.
- Dayananda Swami, Rigvedadi Bhashya Bhumika, Aarsh Sahitya Prachar Trust, Delhi, 1998.

- Goyandka Harikrishnadas, Ishadi Nau Upanishad, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, U.P, 2016.
- Jha Madhurita, Gita ka Nishkaam Karmyog ka Siddhant, Speaking Tree, NBT, 2010.
- Mishra R.C., Moksha and the Hindu Worldview, Psychology and Developing Societies, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2013.
- Parvtiya Liladhar Sharma, Bhartiya Sanskriti Kosh, Rajpal and Sons, New Delhi, 1996.
- Radhakrishnan Sarvpalli, The principal Upanishads, Harpar and Brothers, New York 1953.
- Rather A. Zahoor and Upadehyaya Vibha, Research article 'Concept of Vedic Education and Importance of Moral Education' published in *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (ISSN: 2279-0845)*, Vol. 20, Issue 12, Dec. 2015.
- Sharma Pandit Raghunandan, Vedic Sampatti, I print, Seth Shurji Ballabhdas Trust, Mumbai, 1956
- Tathagatananda Swami, Journey of the Upanishads to the West, the Vedanta Society of New York, 2000.

# Indo-Uzbek Trade Along 'Great Indian Road'

**Sunita Dwivedi\***

India and Uzbekistan were in close contact mainly along the old Silk Road- an extension of the 'Great Indian Road' which defied the icy barriers of the Hindukush, the Pamir and the Karakoram ranges. A chain of ancient cities along the modern north-south M-39 highway from Khorez to Termez along the River Oxus is an indication of the route taken by trade caravans coming from as far as the Aral Sea, Caspian and the Black Sea regions. On their way to and from India upto recent times, the traders are known to have halted at the cities of Khorezm, Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand and Termez which were the chief trade entrepots on this northern highway between the valley of the Oxus and the delta of the Aral Sea.

Significantly the highly celebrated Central Asian scholar E. Rtveladze talks of the great route linking India with the countries bordering the Black Sea and the Mediterranean through Central Asia. He called it the 'Great Indian Road' used exclusively for transmitting Indian goods along the river Oxus upto Khorezm and along the Uzboi channel to the Caspian Sea.<sup>1</sup> This was the main northern highway along the foothills of the Himalayas since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC of Mauryan times [also called the *Uttarapath*, approximating to the modern Grand Trunk road] running from Patliputra to Kabul. It met the ancient Khorezm-Termez road [the modern M-39] at Balkh on the boundaries of the river Oxus.

---

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

Other tributaries of this great road ran from Ferghana in the valley of the Syrdarya, through the Pamirs into Kashgar where it met the Leh-Yarkand route coming from Ladakh [Kashmir] and the ancient Karakoram Highway coming from the Upper Indus valley through the Khunjerab Pass and the routes coming through the Wakhjir and Baroghil Passes. On its north-eastern extremity the Termez highway M-39 merged with the Chuy and the Ili Valley routes to reach Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, running upto Urumqi in Xinjiang, China. On its north-western extremity the route could follow the Arys river to join the Otrar-Kyzylorda route onwards to the shores of the Caspian. Westwards it could enter Margiana along the Trans-Caspian route, now modernised as the M-37 highway to Mary, Nisa and Ashgabat in Turkmenistan.

**Navigation on the Oxus Route:** Ancient records inform about the extensive navigation on the river Oxus. This was part of a water route from India through Central Asia and still further to Trans-Caucasia and the Black Sea. The route ran along the Indus, Kunduz darya and then along the Amudarya [Oxus] and Uzboi to the Caspian Sea.<sup>2</sup> Apart from boats, animal skins were widely used to cross the river. Rafts made from skins of bulls was also popular. The largest port being Termez and boatmen and boat builders are said to have lived close to the embankment in southern Termez. While the journey by land from Termez to Khorezm is said to have taken about a month, by the Oxus it was three times shorter.<sup>3</sup> Ibn Batuta [travels in 1334 AD] inform us that the journey along the Oxus to Khorezm downstream is only ten days. At Khorezm, Batuta describes the Oxus as *'one of the four rivers of paradise freezes over for five months in the cold season like the Volga. In summer it is navigable for ships as far as Termez, the journey downstream taking ten days.'*<sup>4</sup> When Spanish envoy de Clavijo was on his way to Samarkand from Nishapur and Balkh [in 1404 AD] a special permit was needed to be ferried across the Oxus. The passage across the river was strictly guarded and controlled and a good toll money was taken from passengers.<sup>5</sup>

The tributary valley of river Oxus also offered trade routes to the Surkhandarya valley [Highway-41 or Dushanbe Road] leading to several pilgrim and trade cities viz. Arytam, Oqtepa, Chegra, Ismail-tepe, Makedon, Jarkurgan, Qomkurgan, Dalverzintepe, Khalchayan, Denau etc. A look at other tributaries of the Oxus viz. Kunduz, Kokcha, Murghab, Harirud will give us an idea of the reach of the Great Indian

Road into Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and China, rather a connection with whole of Asia and even with eastern Mediterranean.

**Connecting Uzbek Corridor:** The Uzbek route functioned as a connecting corridor between India and Central Asia via Afghanistan. Even now it is the chief route connecting Termez with the city of Hairatan in Balkh via the Friendship Bridge. A look at Godfrey T. Vigne's journey in the company of Lohani merchants in year 1836 from Punjab to Ghazni and thence to Bukhara will give us an idea of the voluminous trade between India and Uzbekistan through this corridor reached through the Bolan and Gomal passes in the Sulaiman mountains.<sup>6</sup> Alexander Burnes too in his *Travels into Bokhara* informs about the caravan route through the Bolan Pass through Afghanistan to the markets of Bukhara.<sup>7</sup> Burnes also mentions the popularity of Yarkand route into Bukhara by the valley of the Syrdarya river Jaxartes and via Kokand as it was travelled by a caravan in 45 days while the route through Badakshan to Bukhara is circuitous and takes 65 days.<sup>8</sup>

**Indian Merchants in Uzbekistan:** The spread of Indian settlements, religion, scripts and languages in Uzbekistan presupposes the presence there of Indian merchants and craftsmen who were drawn to the prospect of a lucrative long distance trade. Several inscriptions in Brahmi and Kharosthi from sites in the Bactrian cities of the Oxus Valley can be seen at the museum of Termez. We are informed about scribes in Termez, both Indians and local, who had excellent knowledge of north-western Prakrit and a thorough command of written Kharosthi.<sup>9</sup>

We learn of many ancient settlements where Indian are recorded to have been living. We can draw evidence from scientific excavations that Indian workforce, scholars and traders had reached almost all countries of Central Asia from Sauran and Otrar in Kazakhstan to Sarazem and Penjikent in Tajikistan; from Nisa and Merv in Turkmenistan to Dalverzintepe, Bukhara, Samarkand and Ferghana in Uzbekistan and to in the Chuy valley of Kyrgyzstan. The documents recovered from the Toprak Kala in the Khorezmian desert reveal names of inhabitants that sound similar to Indian names. Perhaps Indians were employed as agriculturists in the delta region of the Oxus in the Kyzylkum desert.

Indians travelled to ancient Khojuoban, 25 miles north-west of Bukhara on the verge of the desert, and most likely to all neighbouring desert settlements. This is evident from the writings of travellers like Burnes. He mentions inscription on stone in letters resembling Hindi (possibly Brahmi) at Khojuoban. Burnes also talks of numerous antiques

representing figures of men and animals cut out of cornelian and other stones found there. 'Some of these bore a writing – tha resembled *Hindee*.' He saw innumerable small turtles/tortoises sculpted from stones brought from the higher ranges of the Himalayas.<sup>10</sup>

Another settlement lay at the village of Kakshibaghan [garden of birds] near Tawawis on the road to Bukhara.<sup>11</sup> Strangely a village having similar name Kakshi vihara [home of birds] was situated near the Gridhakuta mountains in Rajgir. It is no surprise that Indians migrating along the Oxus River had settled across the Oxus at Kahshibaghan, near Bukhara, where they had also built an idol temple.

The city of Kanka, an ancient settlement in Tashkent appears in the Mahabharata along with the names of other central Asian tribes and was known to Indians in very early times as it lay on the trade route and kept in touch with India by way of trade.<sup>12</sup> We also learn about Indian artists from Pushkalavati [Charsadda] going as far as the city of stone, believed to be Tashkent to decorate monasteries.<sup>13</sup> Even during Timurid era [14<sup>th</sup> century] the best craftsmen from India were put to work on the fabulous monument of Ak Serai, near Samarkand and they resided in hamlets in the suburbs of Samarkand.<sup>14</sup>

**Flourishing Trade on Indo-Uzbek Routes:** Alexander Burnes writes [*Travels into Bokhara- A Journey from India to Cabool, Tartary and Persia 1831-1833*, vol. 1] that Indian traders were a visible community in Uzbekistan and lived in serais of their own.<sup>15</sup> The fact that Burnes recorded the presence of 300 Hindu traders in Bukhara speaks of a flourishing Indo-Uzbek trade. Even upto the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century the Indians were exporting cotton, pashmina shawls, salt, sugar and spices.

The great route across the Oxus Valley carried goods not only from India but from as far as Tibet, Yunnan and Sichuan. The goods from south-western China were received at the eastern and north-eastern extremity of India via two routes today represented by the Kolkata-Kunming highway and Nathu la- Lhasa road respectively. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC Chinese envoy Chang Ch'ien discovered in Bactria some bamboo articles and textile goods which had arrived via India along the eastern routes from Sichuan.<sup>16</sup>

The Termez- Balkh road was a flourishing trade route since the time of the great epic *Mahabharata*. There are references in the Indian epic [dated between 2<sup>nd</sup> BC- 4<sup>th</sup> century AD] to gifts of woollen blankets, sheepskin, weapons and precious stones brought from Vahluka [Bactria]



to Yudhisthira, the King of the Kurus at Indraprastha [ site of modern Delhi].<sup>17</sup>

**Trade along Surkhandarya valley:** The antiquities dug out at Dalverzin Tepe in the Surkhandarya Valley of Uzbekistan indicate the volume of trade between India and Central Asia. The gold treasure found in Dalverzin Tepe had Indian inscription in Kharosthi which indicated the weight measures of the bars. Among the adornments, were delicate necklaces and inlaid badges. The travellers are said to have carried huge amount of gold as currency for trading with their counterparts in Central Asia. Indian ivory chess figurines belonging to 1<sup>st</sup> century BC were also excavated from the site.<sup>18</sup>

**Trade along Ferghana Valley:** One of the richest trade valleys of Uzbekistan- the Ferghana Valley also connected with the Indian Road through the Leh- Yarkand route. The north bound Leh-Yarkand connected with routes coming south-east from Ferghana into Kashgar and Yarkand in the Xinjiang region of China. There is evidence of movement of missionaries, celebrated Buddhist bronze idols and written manuscripts in Brahmi along the Ferghana-Osh route into the Chuy Valley of neighbouring Kyrgyzstan. It was this route that linked the cities of eastern Uzbekistan with the regions of Kashmir, Ladakh, Himanchal Pradesh, Punjab and Uttaranchal. Thus giving the Leh-Yarkand route a strategic position on the Asiatic Circuit of the Silk Road between Uzbekistan and India.

The enormous valley ran east to west for about 300 kilometres and formed a wide corridor through which flowed the Syr Darya. Historically, this corridor was an important trade route for goods and people travelling from India in the south through the passes that descended into Kashgar, the hub of trade routes coming over the Himalayas and along the Tarim Basin routes from China. The routes led to the Trans-Caspian regions, Middle-East and Europe. The valley was the foremost trade hub of Central Asia, renowned for its high quality Kuva glass, Margilani silk, Ferghanasteeds, grains, fruits, wine, fur and leather goods. Owing to its rich, fertile soil, pleasant climate and abundant water from its two rivers Naryn and Karadarya that joined to form the mighty Syr Darya, the richest crops grew here and Ferghana was often referred to as the 'Food Bowl of Central Asia' and the 'Valley of Gold'.<sup>19</sup>

**Trade along Zerafshan Valley:** The Surkhandarya route going northwards from Dalverzintepa through Denau could reach the 'gold scattering' Zerafshan Valley cities of Sarazm, Penjikent, Samarkand

and Bukhara. The valley had long established trade with the Indus Valley. Rich in mineral ores from its own mountains, abundant water from its river, crops from its fertile land and wood from its dense forests, the Zerafshan valley became one of the largest trade depots and metallurgy centres on the Central Asian Silk Road.<sup>20</sup>

The ancient settlement of Sarazm on the border of Uzbek-Tajik has given evidence of Indian trade in seashells used in buttons and bracelets. The settlement was discovered in 1976 and is dated between 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. [A. Donnish Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography. *Sarazm. 2006*].

**Lucrative Trade in Animals:** The India-Uzbek routes were frequented by animal traders. The colossal Indian elephants were brought to the cities of Uzbekistan as we see in *Clavijo- Embassy to Tamerlane [1403-1406]* that at the high gateway of Timur's Dilkusha palace in Samarkand stood great elephants for the entertainment of the Spanish envoy Clavijo and other guests.<sup>21</sup> Their ivory tusks were embellished with exquisite carvings for use in temple rituals and making chess pieces and decorated combs found at Dalverzin Tepe and Afrasiab and displayed at the museums in Samarkand and Termez.

Rich horse traders making exorbitant profits were also donors at the monastic centres and even contributed towards building viharas. We learn of one such vihara the '*Haya vihara*' – the Horse monastery at Fayaztepa, Termez. Horses were traded as far the eastern coasts of India at Kaveripatnam.<sup>22</sup> Other routes coming from the Ferghana region into Leh [Ladakh] too brought in horses. The route also tapped imports of hides, furs and dry fruits from the Caspian, Aral Sea, Khorezm, Bukhara and Samarkand regions.

Speaking of horses Kautilya's Arthashastra denotes Bahlika [Bactria] and adjoining regions as centres of horse trade.<sup>23</sup> According to historian Romila Thapar, the occasional depiction of horses along the Karakoran Highway leading into the Upper Indus dated to the start of the Christian era, suggests an early trade of horses with India.<sup>24</sup> According to historian Scott Levi, India was the largest market for horses upto as late as the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Italian traveller Niccolo Manucci estimated that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century over one lac horses were annually imported to India from Bukhara, Balkh and Kabul.<sup>25</sup> Muzaffar Alam informs that horses were the main component of trade in relations between India and territories beyond its the north-west frontier.<sup>26</sup> Indian traders from Bengal, Gangetic plain and Deccan were seen in Kabul and Peshawar

on their way to Khurasan, Transoxiana, and Turkistan. Some merchants also settled in Astrakhan, Bukhara and Samarkand.<sup>27</sup> A ready market existed in India for the 'divine and blood sweating' Ferghana horses, Ferghanian wine, Margilan silk, fruits, moulded glass, metal ores and glazed pottery among other things.

**Spices, Salt, Indigo, Textile:** The Spanish envoy Clavijo also informs that every year to the city of Samarkand came much merchandise from India and other nations. The markets of Samarkand were amply stored with merchandise that included spices like nutmegs, cloves, cinnamon, mace and ginger imported from India among other countries.<sup>28</sup>

Godfrey T. Vigne's travels from the Ludhiana to Bukhara through passes in the Sulaiman mountains during the year in 1836 is also a commentary on the flourishing Indo-Uzbek trade.<sup>29</sup> We learn about *kafilas* to Bukhara with coarse goods of Moghiana [on Chenab], salt of Punjab, indigo coming all the way from the 'Neel kothis' of Bihar and Bengal, the chintz of Hindustan. One *kafila*, the largest consisting of Lohanis travelled from Hyderabad, Kolkata, Benaras, Delhi, Jaipur and other large cities of India. The bulk of their load consists of *kimkab* or golden cloth of Benaras, English chintzes and calicos, gun locks and similar articles. Indian goods also included red tobacco or *suruk*, red silk or *kaish*, carpets and embroidery. The *kafilas* travelled back in October bringing horses, cochineal, nankin, gold thread, raw silk and other items from Bukhara; pomegranate, almonds, raisins, ruwash from Kabul.<sup>30</sup>

The great trade hub of Bukhara recorded a steady demand for Indian indigo. About 500 camel loads of indigo entered Bukhara every year. Alexander Burnes writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century informs export of sugar, Dacca muslim, Benaras brocade and white turban cloth from Punjab. The goods were passed onwards to Samarkand, Kokand, Yarkand and Urgench. Indian shawls worth lacs of rupees also passed into Russia from Bukhara.<sup>31</sup> The silk that came to India was produced on the banks of Oxus. It was wound and manufactured at Bukhara into a stuff called 'Udrus'.

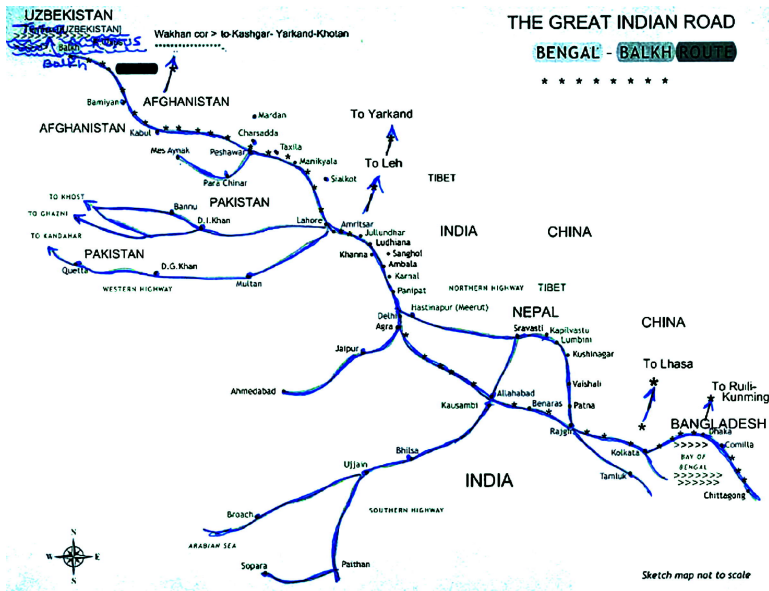
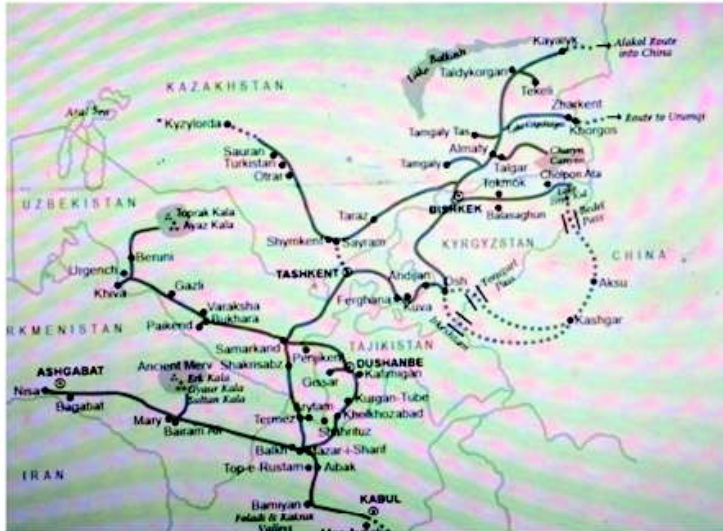
In conclusion we can say that the Bengal-Balkh road in conjunction with the Khorezm-Termezroad formed the great corridor that provided both India and Uzbekistan a vast commercial reach from the Ganga across the Oxus upto the shores of Aral and the Caspian Sea on the one hand and to the borders of China on the other. Having the potential of

drawing voluminous trade, reinvigoration of this corridor is the need of the hour.

## Reference

- <sup>1</sup> Rtveladze Edvard., *Civilizations, States and Cultures of Central Asia*, (Tashkent: Forum of Culture and Arts of Uzbekistan Foundation, 2009) p. 40-41. See also: [https://archive.org/stream/cyrusnasr\\_yahoo\\_Wol/Wolski%20\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/cyrusnasr_yahoo_Wol/Wolski%20_djvu.txt) [*Anabasis 1 (2010)*]; *Studia Classica Et Orientalia*; E. Rtveladze (Uzbekistan)/*The great Indian Road: India-Central Asia-TransCaucasia*
- <sup>2</sup> Rtveladze Edvard., p. 248.
- <sup>3</sup> Rtveladze Edvard., p. 252-253.
- <sup>4</sup> Gibb, H.A.R *Ibn Batuta-Travels in Asia and Africa* (Manohar Publishers and Distributers, New Delhi, 1929, 2001, 2006), p. 168.
- <sup>5</sup> Guy Le Strange: Trans from Spanish. *Clavijo- Embassy to Tamerlane 1403-1406* [New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1928] p. 200, 201.
- <sup>6</sup> Godffrey T. Vigne; *A Personal Narrative of a Visit to Ghuzni, Kabul, And Afghanistan and of a Residence at the court of Dost Mohamed with Notices of Runjit Singh, Khiva and the Russian Expedition*. (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 2004) p. 32.
- <sup>7</sup> Burnes Alexander., *Travels into Bokhara-A Journey from India to Cabool, Tartary and Persia 1831-1833*, vol. 2 (Delhi: Asian Educational Service, 2009) p. 409.
- <sup>8</sup> Burnes Alexander., p. 236, 423-443.
- <sup>9</sup> Mukhamedjanov, A.R., p. 287. And Litvinsky B.A: *Cities and Urban Life in the Kushan Kingdom; History of Civilizations of Central Asia Vol II*; (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd, Delhi, 1999, UNESCO 1994) p. 308.
- <sup>10</sup> Burnes Alexander: p. 319-320.
- <sup>11</sup> Barthold, p. 98. Ibid., p. 72.
- <sup>12</sup> Roy J.N. and Kumar B.B. [Ed] *India and Central Asia: Links and Interactions. India and Central Asia: Classical to Contemporary Periods*; New Delhi, Concept Publishing, 2007. p. 16.
- <sup>13</sup> Litvinsky B.A. *Cities and Urban Life in the Kushan Kingdom. History of Civilizations of Central Asia*. Vol. 2 Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Delhi. 1999. p. 309.
- <sup>14</sup> Guy Le Strange: p. 488.
- <sup>15</sup> Burnes Alexander: p. 286.
- <sup>16</sup> Mukhamedjanov, A.R., *Economy and Social System in Central Asia*, *History of Civilizations of Central Asia Vol II*; (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass

- Publishers Pvt. Ltd, Delhi, 1999, UNESCO 1994) p. 286.
17. Mukhamedjanov, A.R., p. 287.
  18. Buryakov Y.F., K.M. Baipakov, K.H. Tashbaeva, Y. Yakubov. *The Cities and Routes of the Great Silk Road*, Tashkent. 1999. p. 57-58; See also The Ministry of Culture of Uzbek SSR. The Khamza Fine Arts Research Centre, Soka University. *Antiquities of Southern Uzbekistan*. Soka University Press, Japan. 1991. p. 51.
  19. Buryakov Y.F., Baipakov K.M., Tashbaeva K.H., Yakubov Y. *The Cities and Routes of the Great Silk Road (On Central Asia Document)*. International Institute of Central Asian studies Samarkand. Sharq. Tashkent. 1999. pp. 62-63; Tucker, Jonathan. *The Silk Road Art and History*. Timeless Books, New Delhi. 2003. pp. 271-274.
  20. Dwivedi Sunita: *Buddha in Central Asia*, Delhi, Rupa Publishing, 2014, p. 116.
  21. Guy Le Strange., p. 219.
  22. Warmington E.H., *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India*, (Delhi: Munshi Ram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1995) p. 262.
  23. Kangle R.P., Edit *Kautilya Arthashastra* (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1960-1965) 2.30.29, p. 172.
  24. Thapar Romila: *The Penguin History of Early India from Origins to AD 1300*; 2002; Penguin Books; New Delhi; p. 222.
  25. Levi, Scott C., *India, Russia, and the Eighteenth-century Transformation of the Central Asian Caravan Trade*; India and Central Asia Commerce and Culture, 1500-1800; (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007). P. 101-102.
  26. Alam Muzaffar., *Trade, State Policy and Regional Change Aspects of Mughal-Uzbek Commercial Relations, C 1550-1750*; India and Central Asia, Commerce and Culture, 1500-1800; (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007) p. 69-70.
  27. Alam Muzaffar., p. 71, See also p. 78-79.
  28. Guy Le Strange., p. 287- 289.
  29. Godffrey T. Vigne; p. 24-32.
  30. Godffrey T. Vigne; p. 32.
  31. Burnes Alexander., p. 409, 434.



# Coverage of Rape Cases in Media with Special Reference to 'Nirbhaya' Gangrape

**Dr. Afaq Ahmad\* and Seema Shukla\*\***

## **Abstract**

Press is considered the fourth pillar of any democratic setup. India is a democratic country; therefore, newspapers in Delhi play an agenda-setting role in the country. The cases of rape are ubiquitous phenomenon and reported every day in newspapers. A 23-year-old female was brutally raped and murdered by six adult men and one 17 years old juvenile in the year 2012 in Delhi. This brutal gang rape attracted media headlines not only in India but across the world due to its horrific nature in which the crime was committed. The present research paper attempts to understand the representation of rape in newspapers with special reference to Delhi gang rape case. The researcher has also conducted comparative analysis of representation of high-profile rape cases and normal rape cases. To analyze the reports the data were collected from three Hindi and three English newspapers namely Dainik Jagran, Hindustan, Dainik Bhaskar, The Times of India, The Tribune and The Hindu published from Dehradun. The researchers used electronic version of editions for the study. All the news items were read and re-read carefully and analyzed thematically. The study shows that newspapers highlight those stories and give extensive coverage to those rape

---

\* Dr. Afaq Ahmad, Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab-144 411, India; Email: afaqmasscom@gmail.com

\*\* Seema Shukla, Research Scholar, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab-144 411, India.

incidents which have elements of sympathy, public apathy and exposure of such incidents by means of protests.

### **Introduction: Background of the Study**

According to Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code rape is a sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent. Several thinkers feel that rape is a result of patriarchal ideologies and masochistic desires of males (Tripathi, 2014). In most of the rape cases the perpetrators are known to victims or they get assaulted by their own family members. Rape was not contemplated as a crime in earlier days in India. It began to be considered as punishable crime in India in 1860 when Macaulay introduced punishment for rape for the first time (Dhagamwar, 1992). Gradually, over time, IPC provisions related to rape has gone under several amendments and the punishment to the rape accused has been made harsher (Sakhrani, 2016). The major landmark amendments have been done after the Phulmonee rape case (1891), the age of girl in consent sex has been increased from ten to twelve years (Moschetti, 2007). The punishment for custodial rape was introduced after Mathura rape case, 1972 (Sakrani, 2016). The Nirbhaya rape case (2012) forced the Indian legislature to bring about major changes in rape law. Criminal Law Amendment 2013 introduces Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act, 2013 to protect women from sexual harassment at work place (Tripathi, 2014). The Kathua rape case eventually led to amendments in the POSCO act. Death penalty was introduced as a maximum punishment for a gang rape of girls of age below 12 years. (*Centre approves death penalty for rape of children below 12 years under POCSO Act. All about the amendment, 2018*). According to the National Crime Record Bureau 2017 Annual Report, 32,559 rape cases were reported across India in 2017 (NCRB, 2017). The Indian society witnessed many rape cases and helpless victims. The victims belonged to any age; any caste or religion, only one thing is common in all victims that is they all are females. Some victims got justice, received compensation and rehabilitation. Some got justice after their death but some victims are still fighting for justice. Rape is an omnipresent phenomenon (Wasco, 2003), therefore, the stories of rape crimes are published in newspapers daily as they are a part of common place occurrence now (Khullar, 2017). Rape coverage in the newspapers (dailies) influences the society in many ways. Delhi gang rape received global attention and it happened due to the wide and extensive coverage of case in print media (Kaur, 2013). Most of the reports are only focusing on the social status and caste of victims and accuser. They



sensualize the story and put dramatic elements to make the story more interesting. Yet the coverage of reports has played a major role in the case of Delhi rape case (2012) but still stereotyped reports on the unnoticeable rape cases are published in the newspapers (dailies). According to Smriti Singh (*Times of India* reporter) the newspapers do an extensive coverage on those stories which have some elements which attract the people belonging to India's upper or middle classes and who are familiar with the language of newspapers. She also quoted an incident in which an 80 years homeless old lady got raped by a rickshaw-puller and received brutal injuries like Nirbhaya, but the story got published on page 6 or 7 and in single column. Public attention plays a crucial role in setting any agenda. In the case of Delhi rape case the coverage of incident by global newspapers like The New York Times, Le Monde and The Guardian have also intensified the judgment process and made the security of Indian women as international agenda (Jolly and Khan,2016).

## **2. Research Methodology**

In order to analyze the reporting pattern of rape cases in Indian Newspapers, three Hindi newspapers (Dainik Jagaran, Hindustan, Dainik Bhaskar) and three English newspapers (The Times of India, The Hindu, Hindustan Times) were studied over a period of three months (1 January 2019 to 31 March 2019). The report of Audit Bureau of Circulations (2018) says that Dainik Jagaran, Hindustan, Dainik Bhaskar in Hindi and The Times of India, The Hindu, Hindustan Times in English are the highest circulated newspapers in India. For the understanding of portrayal of Delhi rape case four English newspapers (The Times of India, The Tribune, Hindustan Times, The Hindu) were studied from 17 December 2012 to 31 March 2013) and (1 January 2019 to 31 January 2020).

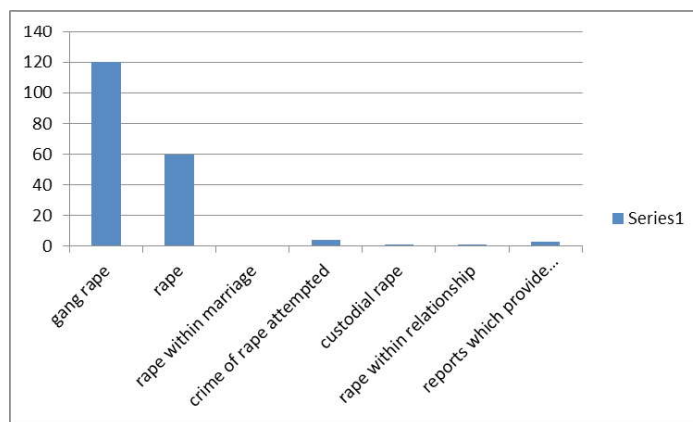
All the news items were read and re-read several times. The researchers conducted thematic study of the data collected under the study period. The coding of the topics and watchwords has been done physically. The two types of coding reliability intra-coder reliability and inter-coder reliability are used in this paper. To manage intra-coder reliability, the data was observed several times over a period of time to increase a more profound knowledge, and to land at the normal topics. The inter-coder reliability was managed by taking help of researchers involved in similar kind of research.

### 3. Results

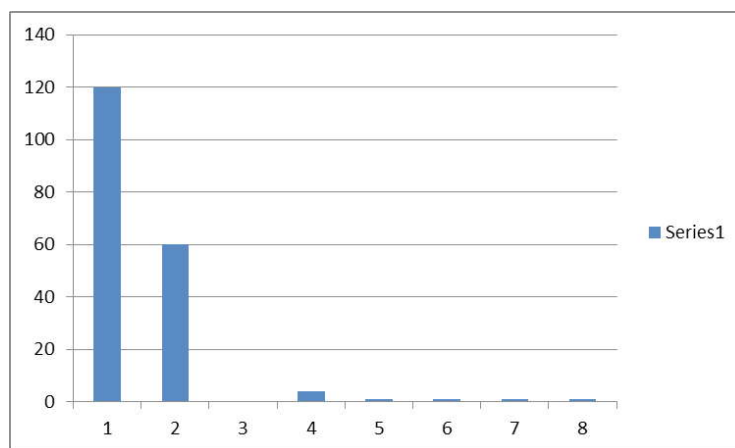
#### 3.1 Reporting of Rape Cases in Indian Newspapers

Rape news is a very common element of Indian newspapers. Each edition of newspaper has at least one report on rape crime. The number of words used in the reports varies from 200 to 500 words and it never gets published on front page during the period under study. The reporting pattern is incident-based reporting. During covering rape-cases generally the reporters adhered to Section 228A of the Indian Penal Code under which they cannot disclose the name of rape-victims, but in two most sensitive cases Delhi rape case and Kathua rape case some newspapers have broken the laid and published the victim's identity. The newspapers generally does extensive coverage of high-profile rape cases or the cases which increase their circulation. The reports highlight the caste of victims if she belongs to lower cast (dalit). The reports are mostly focused on the crime itself without giving substantial coverage to the role of police after lodging F.I.R. and reactions of family or others. The reports on rape crime were divided into different types like gang rape, rape, rape within marriage, crime of attempted rape, custodial rape, rape within relationship, reports which provide information about legal provisions associated to sexual violence against women and other report which discussed about female safety. The total reports published were approximately 193 in English newspapers and 188 in Hindi newspapers. In which 60 per cent of stories are focused on incident-based reporting in English newspapers and 83 per cent of stories are focused on the information of how crime happened in Hindi newspapers.

#### English Newspapers (Reporting Pattern)



### Hindi Newspaper (Reporting Pattern)



In dailies (newspapers) sexual assault or rape is placed in crime and court reports and generally got placed at the bottom of the inside pages. Maximum number of reports highlights it as a crime story not as a social issue. The stories rarely got place on the social or political pages.

### 3.2 Covering of High-Profile Cases: ‘Nirbhaya’ Case Covered by Newspapers

The newspapers have done extensive coverage of Nirbhaya case. In the beginning it was only limited to incident-based reporting. Later on, the coverage included follow-up stories, editorials and letters to the editor. Approximately fifteen thousand stories were published in a month on Delhi gang rape case. The stories were covered with different points of view and aspects of life. Some stories were focusing on the description of rape and crimes existing in the national capital. Some stories were telling the pain of a rape victim. Many articles and editorials dedicated to discuss the after effect and verdict of the case. (Nawindmonte and Roja, 2018). The Times of India dedicated its front page on the suggestive prevention framework for rape cases with the headline ‘Enough Talk, Let’s make women safe’ on December 19, 2012. The article suggested the ‘6-Point Action Plan’ to reduce rape cases in India. The six actions were Harder Punishment, Sensitize Police, Fast Track Courts, Better Patrolling, Use Technology and Database of Public

Transport Personnel. The Hindu has also organized a public forum bolstering the fight against sexual violence. The Hindu was the first newspaper to publish the news about the incident of Delhi gang rape. Professional media including newspapers spread the news globally within two days (Jolly and Khan, 2016). By December 18, 2012 the news of Delhi rape case was distributed globally. A large number of reports published regarding the occurrence of the event, protests over the incident and the deterioration of the victim's physical well-being and eventual death on December 29th, 2012. The reports published in newspapers successfully created a social movement and tried to change the attitude of common public towards the incidents related to rape (Phillips et.al, 2015). In the process of monitoring and covering the Delhi rape case newspapers published stories on different topics like personal life of victim, public protest, female's safety, police handling and legislative. These reports increased the understanding level of readers towards sexual violence. The reporting pattern helped the common public to perceive the power of media. The main purpose of language used in reports was to glorify the details. Some journalists wrote imaginative stories by using leaked police reports. The reporters used the words like 'lust' to portray the crime. Delhi rape case came out from the boundaries of the crime and court reports and exceeded the word limit of 200 to 500. Some motivated words such as "juvenile," "gang rape," and "brutality" were used to attract the reader's attention. The reports also followed the chronological order of incidents in Delhi gang rape cases. The pictorial representation such as a semi naked girl's image that was covered her body by her hands or a shadow of man was used to illustrate the Delhi rape case. Various reports published on the statements of different politicians and close relatives of the victim. One report published in The Hindu (28 December, 2012) described the remark of Abhijit Mukherjee, son of President of India. He remarked the protest of women against the Delhi rape case as "dented and painted". The report discussed the detailed statement of Mr. Mukharjee on the protest. Later part of the report mentioned the apology of Abhijit Mukherjee. Many reports covered the comments of big personalities on the Delhi Gang rape. Some famous personalities were Mohan Bhagwat, RSS Chief, Harsimrat Kaur Badal (Member of Parliament, Bathinda, Punjab) and Asa Ram Bapu. The Tribune published a number of reports discussing the Indian legislature and strengthening of rape laws in India. The paper published a series of

reports with the titles like there is a need for serious intent' to address the issue of rape (27 December, 2012, The Tribune) and called for 'harsh punishment' (29 December, 2012, The Tribune). The death sentences were also published in all the newspapers. In the series of follow-up stories, the Hindu published a news report providing the information of death of Ram Singh. The report says that Ram Singh found hanging in his prison (March 12, 2013, The Hindu).

The newspapers are still doing follow-up stories on Nirbhaya gang rape case after eight years of the incident happened. On seventh January, 2020 a report on the verdict of Delhi High court on Delhi gang rape was published (2020, The Time of India). This report talked about the death warrants against all the convicts of Nirbhaya case. The report was also telling the time of execution of all accused. The report also covered the people present in the court at the time of judgment. The reactions of victim's family were also covered in the news report. They covered the whole incident of filing mercy plea by the accused and rejection of it by High Court and Supreme Court. Hindustan Times published a report on a request of lawyer Indira Jai Singh to forgive convicts. The Times of India highlights the reaction of Nirbhaya's mother on the comment of advocate Indira Jaising (18 January, 2020). Hindustan Times published a news on the plea of Nirbhaya rape accused plea with the headlines of 'Nothing more urgent than this': CJI on Delhi gang rape convict's plea'. The report put lights on the mercy plea of rape accused. (January 27, 2020). A report published in The Hindu titled 'Supreme Court to hear Nirbhaya convict's plea today' highlighted that a three-judge Bench would hear the petition filed by Mukesh Singh one of the accused. The report also mentioned the name of all three judges. The Tribune has done the detailed coverage of Pawan Gupta's plea (one of the accused of the Delhi rape case), in which he claimed that he was juvenile at the time of the crime. The report provided the information that the Supreme Court rejected the claim of Pawan Gupta. The issue of black warrant was also mentioned in the report (January 31, 2020). The newspapers are still following the case of Delhi rape. They are publishing multiple reports on the case. Some reports are discussing the reaction of the family members of the victim, some are focusing on the judicial system of India. The drama surrounding the execution of the death sentence of the three alluded also received prominent front page coverage, including parents of Nirbhaya. The execution was presented as justice done to the victim and then disappeared from media.

### Comparative Analysis of Reports Published in Newspapers Under Study

News Items	Newspapers' Report on Unnoticeable Rape Cases in India	Newspapers' Report on Delhi Rape Case
Headlines	Women gang raped, girl gang raped, three booked for raping minor, man held for minor rape	Nirbhaya' (fearless), 'Amanat' (treasure), 'Damini' (lightening) and 'Jagriti'
Followup stories	More than 85 per cent of the rape and sexual assault cases have no follow-up stories	More than 15 thousand stories published on Delhi rape case
Frequency of reports	Reported only once	Several times in a day
Got space in newspaper	Single-column stories, 4-6 sentences	More than two columns
Pictorial representation	No pictorial representation	With pictorial representation
Page where the report published	Published on page number 6 or 7	Front page coverage

### Discussion

Media coverage of rape cases have numerous impact in the public arena. It often shapes public opinion by which readers consider sexual assault as a ghastly crime and develop sympathetic view for sexual violence survivors. The Delhi rape case was covered in newspapers extensively and presented rape-victim as a blameless victim. The figurative expression like 'fight', 'struggle' and 'battle' are used to show the survival journey of the victim. The names like 'Nirbhaya' (fearless), 'Amanat' (treasure), 'Damini' (lightening) and 'Jagriti' (awareness) are used to create positive image of Delhi gang rape victims. The story covered in all aspects and also provided the follow-up stories of the incident. The newspapers portrayed the Delhi rape case in such a way that it transformed into a social movement. It also changed the point of view of common public about rape. Thus, it is pertinent to mention that newspapers played as a catalyst to generate public opinion in Delhi rape case. But it is not true for all the stories of rape cases. The newspapers choose the stories to highlight or do extensive coverage

which has some dramatic elements in portraying crime stories. The newspapers used dramatic elements to attract the attention of readers. The reporting pattern also shows that rape is a vastly under-reported crime. The newspapers do only incident based reporting for unnoticeable rape cases without understanding that incident-based reporting is superficial in that it insufficiently examines the causes and prevention of rape from a gender justice perspective. The Indian press needs to take a hard look at its coverage pattern of sexual violence to maintain the higher standard of journalism. They also need to think that noticeability of rape case is dependent on the constant coverage of rape cases in newspapers. The extensive coverage on news can change the attitude and opinion of public towards the case.

### **Implication**

The rape is the most horrible and atrocious crime against females and in India it's increasing day by day. The Indian females of any age group are facing sexual assault. Even a two months old female child is not safe. It is very painful and shameful situation that most of the time the accused are from within the family. This research study will help the NGO and other organization to understand the importance of media (newspaper) in creating awareness and social attitude towards crime of rape. This study is an attempt to understand the role of newspapers in creating awareness and generate a public opinion, thus this study can be used to prepare guidelines for newspapers, how they need to report rape cases. The limitation of our study may affect the applicability of the findings in other situations in that the study was undertaken on a convenient sample; hence, there may be bias due to non-randomization.

### **References**

- Biswas, S. (2018, April 17). Why India's rape crisis shows no signs of abating. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-43782471>.
- Crime in India - 2017. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://ncrb.gov.in/StatPublications/CI/CI2017/cii2017.html>
- Desk, I. T. W. (2018, April 23). Centre approves death penalty for rape of children below 12 years under POCSO Act. All about the amendment. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/centre-approves-death-penalty-for-rape-of-children-below-12-years-under-pocso-amendment-1217116-2018-04-21>
- Dhagamwar, V. (1992). *Law, Power and Justice* Sage Publications.3,(315)
- Enough talk, let's make women safe. (2012, December 19). Retrieved from

- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/enough-talk-lets-make-women-safe/articleshow/17671332.cms>
- International Affairs. (2017, January 6). Rape Culture in India: The Role of the English-Language Press. Retrieved from <https://shorensteincenter.org/rape-culture-india-english-language-press/>.
- Kalra, G. and Bhugra, D. (2013). Sexual violence against women: Understanding cross-cultural intersections. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 55(3), p.244.
- Kaur, R. (2013). Representation of Crime against Women in Print Media: A Case Study of Delhi Gang Rape. *Anthropol*, 2,115. doi: 10.4172/2332-0915.1000115
- Khullar, A. (2017, February 23). The Indian media needs to rethink how it reports rape. Retrieved from <https://herald.dawn.com/news/1153682>.
- Links to international organisations. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.rcne.com/links/international-organisations/>
- Moschetti, C. O. (2007). The restitution of conjugal rights: making a case for international feminism. Retrieved from [https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/bitstream/handle/11343/35060/84090\\_WHR\\_journal\\_article\\_for\\_UMER.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/bitstream/handle/11343/35060/84090_WHR_journal_article_for_UMER.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
- Nawindmonte, R. (2018). A Study of Nirbhaya Case. *International Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics*, 5,120.
- ‘Nothing more urgent than this’: CJI on Delhi gang rape convict’s plea. (2020, January 27). Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/delhi-gang-rape-convict-mukesh-singh-seeks-urgent-hearing-in-sc-against-mercy-plea-rejection/story-TvmX7w9h5EaYnciq3tccsM.html>
- Phillips, M., Mostofian, F., Jetly, R., Puthukudy, N., Madden, K., & Bhandari, M. (2015). Media coverage of violence against women in India: a systematic study of a high profile rape case. *BMC Women’s Health*, 15(1). doi:10.1186/s12905-015-0161-x
- Sakhrani, M. (2016). Reading Rape Post Mathura. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 23(2),260-285. doi:10.1177/0971521516635347<https://www.cwds.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/nirbhaya.pdf>
- Tripathi, S.C.(2014). *Women and criminal law.2*. Central Law Publications, New Delhi, pp.34-157
- Wasco, S. M. (2003). Conceptualizing the Harm done by Rape. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 4(4), 309–322. doi: 10.1177/1524838003256560
- Women’s Studies Resources Nirbhaya. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.cwds.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/nirbhaya.pdf>
- The Times of India: Archives | January 2020. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/archive/year-2020,month-1.cms>



# Comunidades of Goa: A Re-reading of Select Goan Literature in the Light of Land Laws and Their Effect on Human-Land Equation

Smita Sail\* and Dr. M.G. Priya

## Abstract

The advent of farming has undeniably transformed the bond humans shared with land. Permanent settlements and ownership of land were the direct outcome of farming. But the sense of ownership that existed in the past is vastly different from the one found today. Goa, a Southwestern coastal state of India, boasted of a unique self-sustaining system of governance where land was held under common ownership of a village community – the ‘gaunkari’ – which remained largely unaffected by periodical changes in the ruling dynasties. As described by Gomes Pereira in the opening lines of his book, *Goa-Gaunkari: the Old Village Associations*, “Gaum is a village. Gaunkar was its freeholder and gaunkari, his association, a small Republic.” (1) It was primarily an autonomous body, the system governed by the unwritten codes of village assemblies that functioned independently. But the advent of the Portuguese and the following imperial hegemony of Portugal over Goa for over 450 years permanently altered the social fabric of this coastal state.

---

\* Ms. Smita Sail, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Amrita School of Engineering, Bengaluru, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, India.  
E-mail: s\_smita@blr.amrita.edu. Mobile: 08904632400.

\*\* Dr. M.G. Priya, Assistant Professor (SG), Department of English & Humanities, Amrita School of Engineering, Coimbatore, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, India.  
E-mail: mg\_priya@cb.amrita.edu. Mobile: 08921595129.

This paper shall deliberate on how the colonial regulations and the institute of Inquisition maneuvered changes in the relationship the natives shared with the land, and how the liberalisation of Goa gave the final blow to the erstwhile eco-friendly system. Was this system reduced to a tool in the hands of missionaries? Why and in what form did the Portuguese government retain this system? Would this system, if retained in its original spirit, have controlled the rapid disappearance of agricultural land, and would it have been more effective in maintaining social justice and equality? These are the points discussed in this research paper. The paper attempts to recreate the unforgettable episodes of Goa's annihilative history in the context of land and human equation through the delicate narratives on Goa's colonial past and post liberation era as envisaged in select novels of Mahableshwar Sail, Gopalkrishna Pai, Lambert Mascarenhas and Maria Aurora Couto.

### **Introduction**

Goa to become India's 25<sup>th</sup> state on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1987. Prior to its statehood it was a union territory for 16 years after its liberation from the Portuguese hegemony on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1961. If one wants to become familiar with Goa's original spirit of community living, one has to revisit the remnants of the history and study *comunidades* as they existed in their original forms before the colonization of Goa by the Portuguese. Unique to the land of *Gomantak*, *comunidades* were originally village assemblies known as *Gaunponn* or *gaunkari*. These assemblages were later rechristened by the Portuguese as 'comunidades' which means community (a group sharing common understanding and interest). *Gaunkaris* were essentially the groups of families, classes or castes united to exercise ownership jointly over the land. Pereira draws commonalities between similar practices of collective farming like *Tiem* of pre-Confucian China, *Zadrugas* of Slavs and *Obshchina* or *Mirs* of Russia to indicate that these kinds of assemblies would have resulted from the primitive need of associating for defense and workforce. (*Goa-gaunkari...*, 2) In this paper the system is variously addressed as *gaunkari*, *gaunponn*, *comunidades* or village council.

Feudalism did not exist in Goa in its exploitative form as in other parts of India or the world. This can be greatly attributed to two things: one, in Goa the population was not entirely dependent on agriculture.

They had several other means of livelihood like fishing, carpentry, masonry, ship building, and other semi-skilled professions. The other reason for the absence of *zamindari* regime was the *gaunvkari* system, where the Goan landlord, no matter how rich, did not enjoy the absolute monopoly. Very little land was owned individually, and most of the farm land was auctioned by the members of the *comunidade* annually or once in three years. Since the land was held jointly, the produce was used for paying off services rendered by barbers, potters, blacksmiths, priests, and for the maintenance of temples and other public properties such as community well. The remaining profit or so called '*jonm*' was shared by the members. The members were called '*gaunkars*' or '*jhonkars*' and were in modern sense shareholders. All members were *jhonkars*, which meant they were entitled for a share, but not all *jhonkars* were members. In a *gaunkari* council there were other shareholders like *Kulkarnis*, who served as clerks and accountants; and *Kulacharis* who served the members of the council and were given a share in return to their services. They were only entitled for a share in the profit but had no voting or decision making rights. These bodies were essentially autonomous and functioned independently, but came under the dominion of the ruling king who would provide them security in return for taxes. The village councils were responsible for collecting taxes.

*Gaunkari* was not only an agricultural association, but also a legislative and administrative body. They primarily looked after the agricultural, religious and social activities of their villages. The villagers jointly worked in maintaining *khazan* lands (the marshy land reclaimed from the sea and converted into farm lands), repairing the *bunds*, and enabling plantations. "*Khazan* lands have been subjected to planned and contour-integrated topo-hydro-engineering by local communities to produce reasonably sustainable productive agro-ecological and agro-economical systems," (1) writes Nandkumar Kamat in his research paper titled "History of *Khazan* Land Management in Goa: Ecological, Economic and Political Perspective". *Gaunkaris* took over the responsibility of maintaining the cultivability of these low lying lands prone to salinity by constructing and maintaining a complex engineered system of three tier *bund* or embankments which is often referred to as an 'ecological marvel'.



*Three tier embankments: flap doors that help to regulate water movement to protect khazan lands*

“The Village communities, called ‘*gaunkaris*’ or *comunidades* had appointed voluntary bodies called ‘*Bous*’ for specific tasks related to *khazan* land protection, besides, the kings had appointed revenue and land tax collectors called ‘*Bhojakas*’ and ‘*Ayuktakas*’ to mobilise the revenue from *khazan* land production” writes Nandkumar Kamat. (History of *Khazan ...*, 3)

Kamat lists following as the major land management tasks under the *comunidades*:

1. Construction, maintenance, repair and supervision of bunds
2. Construction, maintenance, operation and supervision of sluice gates
3. Dredging and de-silting of rivulets and backwaters
4. Regulation of intake of saline water and distribution of irrigation water
5. Leasing out of farms and fishing rights and the bunds for cultivation
6. Fixing up of penalties for breach of rules
7. Minor farm development works (History of *Khazan ...*, 3)

It is not certain if *gaunkari* was a homogeneous association with members of common descent, so called '*vangod*' or a heterogeneous constitute of different '*vangods*'. There are instances of village councils of mixed classes, but the members of higher castes such as *Kshatriyas* and *Brahmins* enjoyed more privileges. The male member of the *gaunkar* family was by virtue of his birth entitled for the membership when he attained the age prescribed by the council. It was a patriarchal setup where the membership was available only to the male descendants.

*Age of Frenzy*, a novel originally written by Mahableshwar Sail in Konkani and later translated by Vidya Pai, captures the changing form and function of *comunidades* under the Portuguese. It significantly demonstrates how the *gaunkari* system was used by the Portuguese in attaining their sovereignty and evangelism. We find a description of *gaunponn* and the key role it played in maintaining sustenance of villages. We learn about the structure of the village council as Appu Shenai comes forward to question the hegemony of the Portuguese soldiers who come to collect taxes. (Sail, 13) He introduces himself as the '*village kulakarani*', who served as a village accountant, looking after the accounts and handling the taxes and revenues paid to the ruling kingdom. Then we come to learn about *mhal goankar*, the head of the council (Sail, 14) who in this case is Khapru Nayak of Sirvaddo. In the course of the plot, we come across a specific instance of village council meeting, locally called '*gaunki*'. The chief *Gaonkar* calls for the meeting of the council when they learn that a troupe of Portuguese have come into their village. The meeting happens under a *peepal* tree. The following description is provided: Thirty six *gaonkars* were seated on the stone platform around the *peepal* tree..." (Sail, 67)

In the opening of the novel *Age of Frenzy*, the author brings out an important aspect of land distribution on the basis of services rendered. Venku Nayak's family had been elected to perform the rituals and conduct all the festivals on behalf of the Nayak family for that particular year. Any family that was given this responsibility got to cultivate a stretch of farmland in which two *khandis* of paddy seedlings could be sown. Since this allocation was rotational, people got to share the extra yield in turns. We also learn about the concept of joint ownership through the way fictitious village *Adolshi* organizes its common funds. We are told that village funds were used for paying taxes and for organizing annual temple festivals and other rituals.

### **Origin of the Comunidade**

There is no documentation regarding the origin of this system. There are varied theories that assign the credit of its establishment either to the *Gavde* community or the *Kol* tribes who are regarded as the first settlers; or to the Aryans, who allegedly migrated from the North. Since such a concept of villages owning land jointly was not found in any other part of India, the researchers refuse to accept that it could have originated among the native settlers. But at the same time, there are *gavnkari* communities in Salcette which are exclusively formed by members of *kunbis* or *gauddis*. *Zolmis* use the surname *Gaunkar*. Kashinath Damodar Naik, in his book *Gomantakachi Sanskritik Ghadan*, originally written in Marathi, traces the proof of establishment of *gaunkari* system among the Aryans. He cites sage Jaimini, who in his *Mimamsa Sutra*, suggests that no king had the right to give away all the land as it belonged to the subjects too. There are several other instances which suggest that land was commonly owned in pre-vedic times and the concept of land distribution to individuals is relatively new. (Naik, 91)

### **The Effects of Portuguese Conquest**

Afonso de Albuquerque, after his conquest over Goa, decided not to interfere with the existing village councils. He looked at Goa as an important port that would help them in fostering their commercial ties with Asia and the *gaunkaris* as a means of steady income through taxation. As P. D. Xavier observes in his book *Goa a Social History: 1510-1640*, “to please and placate the Goans, Albuquerque allowed the village administration to continue in the hands of the age-old *gaunponn* or *comunidades*... the *comunidades* eliminated the loathsome work of revenue collection from each household by the government agency.”(9) *Comunidades* thus served as agencies of tax collection for the regime. This non-interference policy ended with the introduction of the charter named *Foral d'os Afonso Mexia*, dated September 16, 1526. This Charter laid down 49 Clauses after the thorough survey of the *gaunkari* system. The Foral, in its original spirit, was meant for safeguarding the interests of the *gaunkaris*. For example, as illustrated by B. H. Baden-Powell in his book *The Villages of Goa in the Early Sixteenth Century*, the 8<sup>th</sup> Clause secured the position of the *gaunkars* and *kulkarnis* as they were hereditary leaders. It stated that no *gaunkar*

or *kulkarni* could be removed from office irrespective of the gravity of his mistake. (264) At the same time he provides a piece of information in the footnote which could explain how the Foral came to be misinterpreted and misused in favour of the converts: “Whiteway tells me that in the Archive there is a note stating that on the margin of the original Foral was found an (old) addition, to the effect that in one village (‘Sancoale’ of Salsette) it was the ‘custom’ to allow the nearest Christian heir to take the property (on paying arrears) in preference to others; and that failing such a convert, the natural heirs should take. In either case the absconder, if he returned, was allowed to recover his position.” (264)

The Foral had not clearly laid down the nature of relationship between the state and the village councils, leading to manipulation by several in power. Pereira documents in his book *Goa-gaunkari: The Old Village Associations* that “based on *Foral* and the subsequent laws, the local authorities forced the *gaunkars* to sign in some provinces the declaration that the councils were in possession of their properties under lease and in others the declaration that they hold land under emphyteusis.”(63) This interpretation of the Foral allowed them to interfere in the functioning of the village councils and also to exploit them.

As illustrated by Pereira, the village of Durgavaddi came into possession of the College of Our Lady of Populo of the Congregation of St. Augustine following the termination of the council for want of *gaunkars*. In 1609, the villages of Revora, Nadora and Pirna were auctioned and given away on grant under the pretext that they were deserted by their *gaunkars*. (44-45)

There are several such instances of villages granted on emphyteusis in Tombo Geral, a record of more localized survey of the territory compiled in 1544. It is one of the very few land and revenue records available that gives a systematic documentation of the Crown’s rights over property, rents, revenue and manpower. Pereira cites an example from Tombo Geral where, on the instructions of Viceroy Antonio de Noronha, in a letter of 1573, a village named Cola had been given on grant for three generations on the condition that the grantee during the first generation would marry a certain orphan. This is said to have been done because the *gaunkars* had rebelled and refused to pay the *foro* (tax). (*Goa-gaunkari...* 16) The Documents like *Foral* and *Tombo Geral* were used to reaffirm the sovereignty of the crown over ‘Estado India’.

Several historical records confirm that Alfonso de Albuquerque seized many lands of the comunidades and granted them as rewards to those who rendered their services. Writers like Gopalkrishna Pai, Mahablehwar Sail and Lambert Mascarenhas reconstruct these discriminatory practices that created a deep divide in the existing Konkani community. Gopalkrishna Pai's novel *Swapna Saraswatha* traces the trajectory of migration of *Saraswath* community under the threat of conversion and torture under the institute of Inquisition by the Portuguese. It recounts the story of nine generations spread over a period between 1510 to about 1760. He describes the transition of Goa with the proliferation of Portuguese who settled here after usurping the properties belonging to the natives. He talks about how the Portuguese officials who married converted Muslim and Hindu women were given privileges and were gifted lands. Sail's novel *Age of Frenzy* is replete with instances of rewarding new converts with land and gold coins. In one such episode, he demonstrates the attempts made by the officials to reduce the locals to subservient roles. A troupe of over forty led by Captain Diego Barrett enter the Adolshi village forcefully and encroach the demigod *Betaal's* shrine. The villagers whose 'Fifty-two generations... have lived in this village, blessed by the god', as claimed by the village chief, Ghana Shenai, now feel threatened by the presence of those 'white-skinned foreigners'. The *gaonki* that they call for is disrupted by the Captain. The ensuing conversation between the *Mhal Gaonkar*, Ghana Shenai and the Captain throws light on the intimidating nature of their control. On learning that the villagers have ousted the new converts from the council, Captain fumes, "You can't hold a meeting without them. This is against the rules. The King of Portugal has declared that Christian converts will be the most important members of the *gaonki* system... the names of the Christian villagers must be on top of the list. Their opinion must be sought first. Their houses must be re-thatched and repaired first. No Hindu may bid higher than a Christian in an auction..." (48) The Portuguese colonization of Goa is believed to have been ruthlessly tied to their agenda of obtaining religious hegemony, and it came to acquire a notorious reputation with the introduction of the institution of Inquisition in the year 1560. A. K. Pirolkar, in his book, *The Goa Inquisition*, investigates the measures taken by the Highness to deprive the village councils of their rights and privileges. He cites the order dated December 11, 1573 by the Governor Antonio Moniz Barreto which reads, "From now onwards, the *Gauncares*



of the lands of Salsete shall not meet in assembly nor pass resolutions without the Christian *Gaunkars* being present... and the resolution passed should be null and void.” (125-126) Lambert Mascarenhas’ novel *Sorrowing Lies My Land* that spans from 1910 to about 1950, is set in a village of Salcette where all landlords are Christians, and the *mundkars* or the tenants are chiefly Hindus, illustrating how the Portuguese had entrenched deep into the villages of Old Conquest. The novel depicts the Christian community that is divided in its loyalty to the Portuguese crown. Mascarenhas makes it open that the villagers who were loyal to the crown were appointed to bureaucratic roles: “While the Regedores in the days of the Republic were merely official ornaments, they now became the official spies of the government... Ascanio Alvares was appointed the new Regedor of our village. Realizing that they needed completely subservient and servile person to aid them...” (184)

The historical records and the novelists’ perspectives uniformly manifest the disregard and intolerance shown by the Portuguese Government to the rules and the customs of the locals. In most cases, it can be noticed that the village council rights were transferred to the institutes recommended by the Portuguese administration mainly on the grounds of insufficiency of *gaunkars* or resistance by the members of the council. Where did the council members disappear if they did, and why did they show resistance? These are the obvious questions that arise in the mind of the researcher and the answer to both lies in an indepth study of the pages of history.

The two pronged missions of trade and evangelism left deep imprints on the tiny State of Goa, which has forgiven and forgotten the atrocities of the past to live in absolute communal harmony. Attempts made by individuals like Maria Aurora Couto to search their roots throw light on the repercussions of the means used by the Portuguese to attain their twin mission on the relationship the people of Goa shared with its land. Maria Aurora Couto, in her book *Goa: A Daughter’s Story*, observes that the Brahmins of Goa were probably acquiesced into conversion mainly because conversion was one means of retaining their power and land. As observed by her, “the conversion policy of the Portuguese succeeded in large measures because the laws penalizing those who did not convert were linked directly to the ownership of land.”(154). She speaks elaborately about how people chose to change their faith to retain their ownership of land. This is hinted at in the

opening of Sail's novel, where the Captain asks the villagers if they would convert if someone offered them land and wealth in exchange. (*Age of Frenzy*, 16)

The corridors of Goan history hold several instances of forceful conversions and destruction of Hindu temples. One such incident finds an entry into *Age of Frenzy* where the Portuguese officials target the Chamundeshwari temple, the most revered place of worship in Goa. This temple owned farmlands not only in Chornem village where it was located, but also in other surrounding and distant villages. Francis Barrett, the then Viceroy of Goa, wanted to raze it in order to get a claim over the wealth that belonged to it. Portuguese targeted the commonly owned land to increase their revenue or to distribute the land among the new converts. The readers get to see the foreign interference in the *gaunkari* systematically destroying the locals as depicted by the author Sail: "the four hundred and fifty acres of farmland and orchards that belonged to the temple now belong to the church. All your duties and obligations will now be directed towards the church." (42) The Portuguese allowed the *gaunkari* system to run as it did, but on a condition. It is believed that those who wanted to continue to farm the temple land had to convert to Christianity, and all the land and orchards that belonged to the Hindus were confiscated by the State. The first family in Adolshi converts in order to obtain the ownership of the land: "We get four *khandis* of paddy from fields that belong to Chornem temple. Five generations of our family have tilled those fields and that takes care of our needs through the year." (47) There is a depiction of a heart wrenching incident in the novel where the Chief *Gaunkar*, Ghana Shenai, is forced to relinquish the fertile land belonging to the village to the King, and he is subsequently replaced by a Christian *mhal gaonkar* (headsman). (78)

Sail also recreates the discriminatory practices and unreasonable taxation policy of the regime that broke the spirit of the people and compelled them to either migrate or to convert. The law passed by Viceroy Constantin Braganza decreed that the fields not tilled by the owners themselves would be confiscated by the State. Except Christians, no landowner would be allowed to employ workers to work in their fields, and imposed annual tax of hundred Xerafins on the Brahmin landlords. This act affects mainly the Brahmins whose caste forbade them from ploughing the fields. Three families take up ploughing forsaking their beliefs, but the rest decide to leave Goa, and one family

of crippled Devrai accepts Christianity.(159) Eventually the same law comes with more severity to haunt the Brahmin *gaunkar*, Ranu Kenkre, who gives into conversion along with all his farm workers. (170) Sail's observations resonate with what Remy Dias writes in his paper, "Some Aspects of the Consumption History of Estado Da India: 1900-50": "The Portuguese resorted to extracting as much revenue from the rural masses, particularly when the Estado's trade profits had been reduced to a trickle. The Portuguese made convenient modifications in the land-controlling institutions like the *comunidades* and *Dessaidos*, besides others, for integrating rural Goa to their advantage." (75) Such incidents expose the cruelty behind the inhuman ways of conversion and control adopted by the Portuguese regime in Goa.

The helplessness that compelled many to accept the alien faith and the resulting anguish and identity crisis is seen in the outburst of Shanu Desai, who had taken the fateful decision of converting to save his farmlands. Advising against conversion, he says to his wife's brother, "Assume that we are dead... don't get trapped into anything, don't stay back clinging to your fields and orchards. If necessary, uproot yourself and go far away. Don't do what we have done." (48)

The intensity of the emotional turmoil of the first generation converts is reiterated by Maria Aurora Couto as she says, "This was not the case of the Hindu foe whose tradition remained unbroken.... The catholic was however deracinated by the methods of conversion..." Couto observes in her book that the converts were discriminated and considered untouchables. She observes "Hindu tenants were part of Catholic manorial staff. The reverse was seldom the case." (94) We see a glimpse of this coexistence in the setting created by Menezes in his *Sorrowing Lies My Land* where Hindu farm heads work for Catholic land owners.

Sail and Gopalkrishna Pai paint a morbid picture of the abandoned villages, fields and livestock as people migrated out of Goa for fear of conversion and Inquisition. Mass migration was seen not only among the Hindus, but also among the new converts who fled to escape the wrath of Inquisition, towards the infidels who lapsed to the practice of their old customs and rituals. A. K. Pirolkar gives a detailed account of the cruelties exercised by the Holy Office in the name of religion in his very famous and outspoken book *The Goa Inquisition*. As a result of mass migration, the lands taken over by the Church remained uncultivated. The *gaunkari* system was in shambles as the converts had

abandoned their religion but not the caste hierarchy, leading to clash between the converts from higher castes and those from lower castes. Couto provides an evidence of a *namos* (the minutes of the council's meeting) of the meeting of the *gaunkars* of the comunidade of Aldona held on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1595 that lists the names of the members along the names of their fathers to identify their caste. For example, one *gaunkar's* name is listed as Bostiao do Costa, son of Santu Kamat, Kamat being a Saraswat Brahmin. (Goa...115)

The interference of the Portuguese regime in the functioning of comunidade is seen in the series of legislative changes introduced between 1526 and 1961, when they lost their control over the State to the Indian government. Code of Comunidades of 1882 was an attempt to codify the administration of *gaunkari*. The amendment of 1904 was made to include *non-gaunkars* as members of the council with equal rights as *gaunkars*. The revision of 1933 introduced the system of sub-letting which insinuated the middlemen into Goan agricultural structure, but it was revoked in 1938, seeing the repercussions. The revision of 1961 introduced final set of amendments to bring more regularity, and this was also seen as an attempt to curtail the growing mutiny and save the Portuguese sovereignty over Goan lands in the wake of freedom movement. The most striking change mentioned in the report was "The foro which the comunidades were paying to the National Exchequer have been abolished. By doing so, the historical truth was restored, which was stressed by Cunha Rivara – by acknowledging that the property of the comunidades belong to them, as of their full ownership..."(2)

Major setback to comunidades came with the abolition of 'Bous' that was made up of the tillers of all the *khazans*, and was responsible for maintenance of bund. The 1961 Comunidade Code prescribed that all the expenses of *khazan* land management were to be borne by the comunidades, and that tenants were responsible only for cultivation of plot leased out to them and paying the fixed rent. The comunidades failed to manage it all alone, leading to neglect of these embankments and subsequent decline in fertility of the *khazan* lands.

In *Sorrowing Lies My Land*, Lambert Mascarenhas draws a sorry picture of Goa's social and political decline during the Portuguese regime. It is a heartbreaking critique of the systematic annihilation of Goa's society, culture and bonding. It traces the disintegration of one Christian family in the backdrop of changing political scenario between

1910 and 1955. He writes, “In May, practically every Goan who was forced to leave Goa in search of employment in every corner of India or abroad came back to satiate his yearning for this land...” (14)

This leads one to the question – why the Goans were forced to migrate? And what did the colonizer do for the land for nearly 400 years?

It is evident from the existing records that under the Portuguese rule *comunidades* continued to oversee the distribution of all kinds of lands such as *khazan* land, barren land, and forest land, and also took care of managing irrigation work and maintenance of bunds and tax collection for the State as well as for churches. The interference of the Crown, heavy taxes and transfer of excess funds to missionaries left them dispossessed and famished. Couto borrows the term ‘Religious Feudalism’ to describe the economic exploitation of Goa’s resources by the Portuguese; religious feudalism, because the revenue was diverted to fund their evangelistic mission in rest of the world. (Goa...154) Remy Dias, in his research paper “Some Aspects of the Consumption History of Estado Da India: 1900-50”, brings up the insufficiency of food during the Portuguese regime, particularly rice which is the staple food of Goans. He assigns the deficit of food to “the burden of sustaining large number of foreigners”. (86) He remarks, “It is against this background of insufficient food grain and heavy taxation burden that many people started migrating to British India in search of gainful employment.” (86) The 1910 census of Goa recorded 57,157 natives as absent from Portuguese Goa. British India registered 63,765 individuals as present in its territory. Apart from this, there were Goans who migrated to the other Portuguese colonies, mainly Africa. Lambert Mascarenhas builds on this theme of exodus of Goans in his novel *Sorrowing Lies My Land*, where the narrator loses his five sons to migration.

### **Post-liberation State of Comunidades**

Goa was liberation from the Portuguese dominion on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1961, after a brief military operation by the Indian Government. The policies of the elected government were indifferent to the *comunidades* as they failed to see the difference between Feudalism and the *comunidades*. Goa had a sizeable number of tenants, but not all tenants tilled the lands of the landlords. There were tenants of the land that belonged to the *comunidades*, the land that were not privately but publicly owned property. The external administrators with no insight

into the *comunidade* system of Goa failed to acknowledge the difference, and the Goa, Daman and Diu Agricultural Tenancy Act 1964 proved fatal to the system. With this Act, the ownership of commonly owned lands passed on to private individuals, depriving the village councils of their revenue, power and identity. This Act relieved the *comunidades* from their duties of *khazan* land management. Tenants, who now acquired those lands as owners, lacked the knowledge and required skills for management of *bundhs*, leading to irreparable deterioration of this very important safeguarding measure adopted by the villagers across Goa.

Land Acquisition (Goa, Daman and Diu) Act, 1980, was implemented by Legislative Assembly of Goa on 9<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1980 with a few amendments to the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, introduced by British India and later retained by the Government of free India. This Act gave the monopoly over the *comunidade* land that was not tenanted, forested or was barren to the government of Goa. Similar amendments and legislations further weakened the system with a final blow from Goa Legislative Diploma No.2070 dated 15.04.1961 (Second Amendment) Bill 2001 that reprieved the illegal constructions and encroachments of *comunidade* lands.

The Goa, Daman & Diu Legislative Assembly set up a Committee to examine the present day relevance of the *comunidades* and Code of *Comunidades* in 1975. Some members recommended abolishing *comunidade* system considering that the Tenancy Act had rendered it void. *Comunidades* which were left with only barren and hilly land were now not in a position to contribute to the agriculture of the village. The members who showed dissent to removal of *comunidades* were of the opinion that the abolishment would strike a severe blow to the principles of local self-governance. The *comunidade* system survived the test of time but in a diluted form, heavily controlled by the government. Code of *Comunidades* introduced in 1961 continues to be applicable, but the system has turned powerless due to loss of cultivable land on account of Tenancy Act and Land Acquisition Act.

Rampant corruption, government's failure to implement Section 38(4), under which using stagnant water for fish farming or pisciculture on agricultural land is cognizable offence, did further damage to the agricultural lands. The *comunidade* system was further rendered powerless with Section 37 of Tenancy Act that transferred the management of uncultivated land to the government. The lobbying of

pissiculture mafia, and the government's recommendation to transform these *khazan* lands into fish-farming pockets is a big concern and likely to reduce agricultural land considerably. The article "Goa's Disappearing Khazan Farms Dying a Slow Death", written by Indrajit Bose, draws attention to the dilapidated condition of the bunds, its sluice gates and drainage canals that protect the lands from the saline water ingress.

Following could be concluded as the reasons for the decline of *gaunkari* system in Goa:

1. Economic Depression
2. Intrusion from outsiders
3. Religious persecution
4. Fleeing of *gaunkars* (migration of farmers to other parts of India)
5. Post liberation policies

### **Present Status**

Once, most of the village land belonged to the village councils, the *comunidades*. But with time, due to encroachment, a lot of land passed on to private parties. After the implementation of the Agriculture Tenancy Act 1964, all the land that was acquired as a grant or on emphyteusis by the tenants became their personal property. At present more than fifty percent of the cultivable land is privately owned, with second majority of land with the State, and only fifteen percent in possession of *comunidades*.

The Hindu report "Own Together Live Together" by Matias Echanove and Rahul Srivastava proposes *gaunkari* or *comunidade* system of joint ownership as a solution to the modern problems of illegal encroachments by immigrants, real estate mafia and rapidly disappearing farmlands. It is hailed as a system that allowed "non-native villagers from the region as well as outside the region to settle there", which could have solved Goa's present issues of illegal settlements of immigrants. Here they deliberate upon the spirit of collective responsibility that exists at the heart of the *comunidade* system, while debating that private ownership rights have increased risk of real estate problems.

There are 223 *comunidades* in existence today. When the Portuguese arrived there were 408; when they left in 1961 some 226 remained. *Comunidades* in their present diluted form are too powerless to defend their interests, and are reduced to a mere showpiece of a faint

reminder of Goa's rich agricultural heritage. Saving the comunidades in the same form as they existed before the Portuguese conquest and inquisition is of paramount importance for reviving the ancient land-human balance and the ecological strength of Goa.

### Works Cited

- Baden-Powell, B. H. "The Villages of Goa in the Early Sixteenth Century". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, April, 1900. Pp 261-291 <goa.fflch.usp.br> Accessed on Sept. 10. 2018.
- Code of Comunidades: Legislative Enactment No. 2070 dated 15th April, 1961*. Government of Goa. Panaji-Goa: Revenue Department, First Edition June, 2012.
- Couto, Aurora, Maria. *Goa: A Daughter's Story*. India: Penguin Random House India, 2005. (Print).
- Dias, Remy. "Some Aspects of the Consumption History of Estado Da India: 1900-50." *Goa in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: History and Culture*. Ed. Pius Malekandathil and Remy Dias. Panaji Goa: Institute of Menezes Braganza, 2008 (Print).
- Kamat, Nandkumar. (2004). History of Khazan Land Management in Goa: Ecological, Economic and Political Perspective. <[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283475605\\_History\\_of\\_Khazan\\_land\\_management\\_in\\_Goa\\_ecological\\_economic\\_and\\_political\\_perspective](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283475605_History_of_Khazan_land_management_in_Goa_ecological_economic_and_political_perspective)> [accessed Sep 27 2018].
- Mascarenhas, Lambert. *Sorrowing Lies My Land*. Panjim, Goa: The Other India Press, 1999. (Print).
- Matias, Echanove. "Own Together, Live Together." *The Hindu*, March 26, 2017.
- Naik, Kashinath Damodar. *Gomantakachi Sanskritik Ghadan*. Madgaon, Goa: Gomant Vidya Niketan, 2012. (Print).
- Pai, Gopalkrishna. *Swapna Saraswatha*. India: Manipal University Press, 2017. (Print).
- Pereira, Rui Gomes. *Goa-gaunkari: The Old Village Associations*. Panaji: Pereira, 198. (Print).
- Pirolkar, A. K. *The terrible Tribunal for the East The Goa Inquisition*. New Delhi: Voice of India, 1961. (Print).
- Sail, Mahableshwar. *Age of Frenzy*. New Delhi: Harper Perennial, 2017. (Print).
- Xavier, P.D. *Goa A Social History: 1510-1640*. Panaji, Goa: Rajhauns Vitaran, 1993. (Print).



# Indian Diaspora as a Soft Power Apparatus: Establishing the Diaspora Identity and its Influence in the Indo-US Bilateral Relations

**Kamni Kumari\* and Dr. Rajneesh Kumar Gupta\*\***

Indians have been living in the US for more than 150 years. They have worked hard and come up in their life. Their hard work helped build their importance as soft power. Yoga experts, Bollywood icons and the Diaspora people have spread 'Indianness' in the US. As such, this paper tries to study a new dimension of power i.e. culture as a power and its importance in the identity of Indians and particularly the Indian Diaspora. The success of Indian Diaspora has let India and Indianess to get admiration worldwide. Therefore, it is of importance to study soft power as a concept in our time vis-à-vis hard power. Now the power concept has been broadened and include the intangible sources as well and the term soft power is used to define this new concept of power. Castells (2007) has said, "Torturing bodies is less effective than shaping minds". Nye (2012) says it has become an old saying that it is better to be feared than to be loved. Now it is best to be both. Soft power has become a token of relation what hard power used to be. However, international politics still defines hard power as tangible and a relevant source of power. As war becomes costly, Joseph Nye has something to offer as an alternative. In this study analyses how Indian Diaspora as a source and agent of India's soft power is exerting its influence in bilateral relations of India and the US.

\* Kamni Kumari, Research Scholar in Centre for Diaspora Studies, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar-382029.

\*\* Dr. Rajneesh Kumar Gupta, Assistant Professor in Centre for Diaspora Studies, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar-382029.

The Indian diasporic community is relatively one of the most successful one's in the US. The success of Indian Diaspora produces attraction in the eyes of other countries, which helps a favorable public opinion and the image of India. Therefore, it is of great interest to study the soft power concept and its significance in today's time.

India has immense potential in terms of soft power. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has restructured and redefined foreign policy of India was the soft power as an element. He is very smartly tapping the diasporic community to project soft power of India.

### **Indian Diaspora's Identity and Soft power in the US**

The term soft power may be the new one but not the concept or idea. One can trace the concept of soft power in the works of some eminent scholars and theorists like Gramsci, Bourdieu, Weber, Foucault and some others.

India is blessed enough to be gifted with a rich "Soft Power". India is a source of profound ideas and values, that India and Indians have something to share with the rest of the world. India is a culturally diverse society but still there is a unity among diversity, which inevitably influences its outlook in the rest of the world and the way others see it. India is composed of a number of cultural patterns. Some of these qualities appeal to other countries and enable India to balance, contain, and synthesize outside powers whether the neighbouring states, or the extended neighborhood that India enjoys good relations.

Overseas Indians i.e. Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) today are amongst the best educated and one of the most successful communities in the world. The overseas Indian community across the globe, is recognized and respected for its hard work, discipline, non-interference and for successfully living in harmony with the local community. So in this research work an attempt has been made to study and understand the potentiality of Indian Diaspora in projecting the soft power of India. How Diaspora is working as a soft power asset and what are its underlying mechanisms that generate soft power?

Kumari (2016) argues:

The study of India's soft power and the role of Diaspora in enhancing India's soft power are very important in the current scenario. In this scenario, almost every

country is facing various security threats like, terrorism, external aggression, security threats from neighbouring states, so it is very important for a country to enhance its power of attraction or cultural, ideological power. The hard power though is very important for any country but solely this power is not enough until and unless the soft power is not complimenting it. The soft power is equally important for India to enrich/improve its bilateral ties with different countries, to fulfill its national interests of becoming a global power and its quest for getting a permanent seat in the Security Council of the United Nations Organization. The Indian Diaspora is playing a crucial role in fulfilling India's national interests by promoting India's culture worldwide.

### **Indian Diaspora's Identity from "Coolies" to "Cyber Coolies"**

The experience of Indians in the US till now can be very beautifully depicted through the lines of Lalit Mansingh, former Indian ambassador to the United States, who delivered a speech on December 12, 2003, to a crowd of Indo- American community at the annual awards function of the news magazine India Abroad. He said as cited by Munnar (2010):

I was looking for some kind of symbol, which would represent the success of Indians abroad, something that would symbolize what they have gone through in their long history. But look at it metaphorically. Indians have gone abroad, have lived in the most challenging environments in the world and they have done well. Indian coconuts have done very well abroad. Now, what is the coconut famous for? It grows on sandy soil, requires very little water, and requires virtually no maintenance. In other words, send an Indian anywhere, just let them be, with minimum nourishment and watch the tree grow taller and taller until it dominates the landscape. That is what I think the Indian Diaspora is like.

The Indian migrants have raised the brows of the US people because when they arrived in the US, they had very few resources, but through a combination of hard work, discipline and their knowledge skills, they have achieved the extra ordinary level of success. It was not an easy

going for the migrants to achieve such remarkable success. Their journey from nothing to everything was no less than any uphill battle for the Indians.

The land of the America was not the bed of roses for the Indians when they initially landed there. They were targeted brutally and racially. The Indian labourers attacked by the white labourers. Students mocked in the universities due to their race (Janardhan 2013). There were Protests against Hindus, who were buying land for farming, at the same time there were campaigns opposing the Asiatic immigration and this campaign described the Asians as the “Yellow Peril” and Indians as a “Tide of Turbans.” The fire of this hatred further fanned by the Political parties and some other organizations and media also played an important role in aggravation of this fire of hatred. Indians were willing to take up jobs for cheap wages, thus local labourers were unsecure of their jobs. Indians from Live Oak Whites in Marysville, California expelled. Seventy Hindu occupied houses attacked by a mob and these Hindus had been discharged from the Southern Pacific Transportation Company. In Bellingham, Sikhs forcefully expelled, by violent white mobs in September 1907.

Kumari (2016) writes,

India used to suffer from image problems and it had the image of a land of snake enchanters, black magicians, etc. India also suffered the image problem, caused internally by the dramatic changes taking place in the political-economic-social settings, and externally due to the effect of outdated stereotypes. Despite globalisation, global travel and the advancement of technology, particularly the internet, it is surprising that huge gaps and barriers still exist in the understanding between countries and cultures. Developing countries and those in the transitional economies suffer from little brand awareness or negative perceptions. These countries may have rich sources for soft power, but they do not have adequate resources (financial resources and knowhow) to turn this potential into reality. Governments around the world have increasingly recognised the need to tell the story of their nation to the target international audience, not in simplistic propaganda, but with subtlety and sensitivity.

Tharoor (2012) further opines, “The old stereotype of Indians was that of snake charmers and fakirs lying on beds of nails; now it is that every Indian must be a software guru or a computer geek.”

### **Tools and Mechanisms used by Indian Diaspora for Establishing the Diaspora Identity in the US**

Nation branding can be an important tool in the development of a nation’s soft power. A successful nation branding campaign will help create a more favourable image among the international audience, thus further enhancing a country’s soft power. Branding a nation requires the study of a nation’s soft power sources in order to exploit them effectively to promote the national image. Indian Diaspora can fulfill India’s aim of image making across the globe. Indian Diaspora is a biggest resource of India and it has helped India in changing its image from “coolies” to “cyber coolies” or from “snake enchanters” to “computer experts” (Tharoor 2012).

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing the Americans of Indian heritage at Madison Square Garden, New York said, “India was seen as a country of snake charmers. You have changed that” (Mandhana 2014).

Indians’ Journey from ‘Expulsion to Attraction’ was very challenging and they have faced this challenge with hard work, modesty and honesty. They have become the brand of India and are best known as the knowledge gurus. Shashi Tharoor (2012) says that foreigners think of every Indian as if he is a computer expert. He cites one example that during his visit to the US, one person came to him at the airport and asked him, is he Indian? When he responded yes, the foreigner told him that there has come some problem in his laptop and asked him can you please fix it? By citing this example, Tharoor (2012) is focusing the changed identity of Indians i.e. their transformation from “coolies” to “cyber coolies”.

Cultural diplomacy is a component of soft power and public diplomacy. With the emergence of cultural dimensions of international relations, the cultural diplomacy has been able to grab more recognition. In India officially the work of cultural diplomacy is done by the ICCR and such other organisations but unofficially our Diaspora is also doing the cultural diplomacy for India as through its work culture, easy adaptability, honesty, etc. it is working as an unofficial cultural diplomat to disseminate the Indian cultural values. It is establishing a respect for

India's culture among the masses of the host countries and this respect causes good public opinion for India which thereby leads to mutual understanding between India and the host countries.

In today's globalised world, the diasporic communities have emerged as one of the main protagonists in international relations. Diasporas have emerged recently as strategic assets for their home governments and they have added a further dimension to the soft power of a country. Thussu (2013) in his book says that Cohen (1997) used the term "diasporization" in the sense that in the era of globalization the Diaspora is becoming an increasingly important aspect of international relations.

Mahalingam (2014) discusses how much Diasporas have become strategically important and powerful beings in the foreign policy after they have become soft power source. He says:

Diasporas have emerged as powerful entities since they are recognized as 'soft power' in the realm of foreign policy strategy and also as an agent or catalyst of economic development of countries of origin beside their active role in the host countries. Diasporas being transnational communities have become important non-state actors as well as deciding factors in international political and economic relations.

Soft power is a foreign policy tool and Indian Diaspora has very well handled this tool. The success of utilization of soft power can be successfully utilized, depending upon two things: first, is the reputation of the states in the global system, second is the utilization of diplomacy between states. Even though the states have effective soft power elements, it is of no use until and unless states harness and publicise its soft power through diplomacy in productive manner. The Diaspora can be a very vital strategic instrument and channel of communication in order to achieve foreign policy goals and gains and this can be possible only if it has high economic and political influence in the host country. Indian Diaspora in the last few years has emerged as a vocal and valuable voice in the global sphere. It is clearly manifested by the growing presence of the Diaspora community in the top universities, multi-national and transnational corporations or companies, international media and multilateral organizations.

C. Raja Mohan (2003) argues, "The biggest instrument of our soft power is the Indian Diaspora." He further writes, (by giving the reference

of Mr. Yashwant Sinha during the BJP government in Vajpayee's Prime Ministership) as Mr. Sinha pointed out, "people of Indian origin are extremely important sources of support for the Indian Government in the execution of its policies through the influence and respect they command in the countries in which they live" (Mohan 2003).

The interest of the scholars, academicians and foreign policy experts is growing to understand the inter relationship of Diaspora with home country and the host country. Because it has been realised now that the Diaspora is not only important for economic development of the home country but it has an immense potential to play a very vital role in the smoothening of bilateral relationship of the home and host country.

### **Impact of Indian Diaspora's Identity (Soft Power) on the Bilateral Relationship between India and the US**

Before the analysis of Indian diaspora's soft power on the bilateral relations of India and the US, their past relationship should also be discussed. India and the US had not very cordial relation. America has always mistrusted India and it was suspicious about India's position that India was tilted towards Soviet Union. One cannot ignore the role of the Indian diasporic community in the US in transforming the historic hostile relations between the two countries. India had not a very cordial relationship with the US. The US always tilted towards Pakistan. However, after the end of the cold war, there has come a major change in the relations of the duos. When Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister of India in 1980s, his first visit to the U.S. in 1985 had many positive impacts on bilateral relations. Thereby, the marginal improvement in the bilateral relations came. The relationship between India and the US changed from estrangement to engagement. India started identifying the Indian American Diaspora as a potentially valuable connection between the two countries. This was one such impact of Rajiv Gandhi's visit (Chatterjee 2014). Indians living in abroad have emerged as a dynamic factor, shaping relations between 'host' and 'home' countries so is the case with India and the US. The impressive rise of the Indian-American community is an influential factor in the growing bilateral relationship of India and the US. They have changed India's image and navigated the US Congress in a pro-Indian direction. (Kapur (2004); as cited in Rubinoff (2005), where he suggested "any diaspora's ideational effects depends on its size, socio economic characteristics and its access to points in the power structure in the country of origin". With the

intensification in the skills, education, income and size of the Indian diaspora, their influence in the US has also increased. The top most physicians, scientists in NASA and computer experts in enormous size in silicon-valley are of Indian origin. They have changed the image and perception of the United States about their mother country.

The story of image transformation of India clearly depicted through the words of Rubinoff(2005), when he says:

In the time span of a single generation the image of Indians, in the United States and the subcontinent has been transformed from a malnourished skeleton in a filthy dhoti to a highly educated prosperous professional in a designer business suit who is a threat to Americans seeking American jobs-an impression reinforced by the impressive number of widely-read and acclaimed novels written in English by expatriates”

There are two important reasons for the emergence of Indian-Americans as a prominent community. The Indian population in the US has grown substantially. Data analysis of 2015 shows that Indian Diaspora in the US is of 2.4 million individuals (Zong and Batalova, 2017). The Indian Diaspora has emerged as a significant vote bank in US electoral politics. Indians are the second largest Asian American group in the US after the Filipinos. Second, the Indian-Americans have become immensely rich, due to the computer and Internet revolution. Due to their better financial position, they have become major sponsors to American political parties. Thus, Indians in the US are swiftly acquiring political power proportionate with their financial wealth. They are now self-assured to play the same role for their country of origin as other immigrant groups such as the Jews played for their homeland Israel in the US. Initially, the Indian community focused on lobbying for their own survival and security against the discriminatory Immigration laws, racial hatred, exclusiveness and religious and cultural isolation. But with the increase in their numbers as well as their increased strength in economic power, the focus of the Indian community’s lobby shifted from their own issues to the concerns of their mother country. As now they are capable enough to stand for India’s issues or problems. They are successful in doing so. There are several examples of Indian community’s lobbying for India’s interests in US, which needs to be discussed in detail. Not long ago, India was almost subjected to economic sanctions by the US Congress for perceived violations of



civil rights in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. However, the situation is different now.

In 1998, the US Congress passed a legislation diluting the former US President, Mr. Bill Clinton's sanctions imposed after India's nuclear tests. In its 107th session, the US Congress passed a resolution supporting a permanent seat for India in the UN. During the Kargil conflict, Indian immigrants flooded Congress office with e-mails urging speedy resolution of the conflict. Ultimately, the lawmakers abided by it and a few days later, in a White House meeting, Mr. Clinton mentioned Congressional pressure as one of the reasons in urging Mr. Nawaz Sharif to withdraw his forces. In a more recent event, Ms. Shirin Tahir-Kheli was considered as a front-runner to succeed Mr. Karl Inderfurth as the New Assistant Secretary for South Asia. The Assistant Secretary for South Asia is a key figure in steering the US' policy approach to the region. However, some members of the Indian-American Community launched an email-blitz to voice their concern at Ms. Tahir-Kheli's close Pakistani connections. Finally, Ms. Christina Rocca appointed the Assistant Secretary for South Asia and Ms. Kheli, the Head of the US delegation to the UN Commission on Human Rights (Bagoria 2004).

India and the US successfully signed a nuclear deal also known as 123 agreement. The Indian Diaspora played a very crucial role in the signing of this deal. Indian Diaspora lobby also exert influence on the Immigration laws. The Diaspora put lot of efforts in putting pressure on the US Congress to enact various immigration laws favouring the immigrants from Asia especially the Indians as for example, Immigration Act of 1965, 1990, etc. Due to these laws, Indians are the highest H1B visa recipients under which professionals or white collared jobs migrated from India to the US. Hence, their contribution in the image making and the soft power of India is worth noticeable (Bagoria, 2004 cited in Kamni, 2016)

The NSG Group put sanctions on India after Nuclear Proliferation in 1998, which later on removed after Indian community lobbied effectively with its caucus members. The Asian Indian community even presented a memorandum to the President Bill Clinton and explained him the reasons as to why India carried out the nuclear tests. Gary Ackerman who was the then chairperson of India caucus wrote to the President Bill Clinton and asked him to lift the sanctions imposed on India (Bagoria, 2004). The US President Bill Clinton himself mentioned

during his visit in India that we were under immense pressure of the Indian lobby to remove the sanctions.

The Asian Indian community has also been successful in pressurising the US President and thereby, he passed a resolution in Congress, which stated that Pakistan should stop cross border terrorism, infiltration and terrorist training camps on its land and in the region of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK). The Indian-Americans lobby succeeded to persuade the US administration to exercise pressure upon Pakistan to pull back its troops from Kargil in 1999; defeating the Burton Amendment and justifying India's nuclear tests in 1998 and the Kargil war in 1999. Many associations and organisations of the Indian community are still carrying the burden of Indo- Pakistan relations and always raised its voice to oppose the United States assistance to Pakistan. From the above points, it is clearly manifested that Indian Diaspora and its cultural power has an important role in the transformation and betterment of relationship from estrangement to engagement between India and the US.

### **Conclusion**

India is a diverse nation based on democratic values of *Vasudeva Katumba* secularism and it works with a blend of nationalist and internationalist approach. It has also attracted the world by playing a significant role in global fights against imperialism, colonialism and racism, etc. In this way, India fulfills one of the aspects of soft power given by Nye (2002) in which he mentioned that those countries are likely to gain soft power who have the universal recognized ideas and India's ideals of *Vasudeva Katumba*, democratic political system, pluralism, secularism, etc. are the universal ideas. Now if one talks about the second dimension of soft power i.e. the most access to multiple channels of communication and in the recent decade India has invested heavily in IT and other communication industries. Now India is fastly becoming the leader in IT industry. India's Diaspora has best shown the credibility of India in IT industry, as there are numerous prominent faces of Indian successes in the Silicon Valley, who have laid foundations of the computer revolution in America and the Indian presence in the U.S. software industry continues to strengthen persistently.

The Indo-US bilateral relation has covered a long journey from estranged democracies to engaged democracies. India-US relationship

is now witnessing a strong, trusted and mutual strategic partnership based on shared democratic values and increasing mutual interests on bilateral, regional and global issues. Though, geo-strategic and geo-economic factors are there which are pushing US to make better relations with India. However, this drastic transformation in the relationship from estranged to engaged democracies in such a short period would not have been possible without Indian-American lobbying. Therefore, it can be said that there is a positive relationship between changed identity of Indian- Americans and Indo-US bilateral relationship.

### References

- Bagoria, Mukesh (2004). *Indian Diaspora in American Politics in the 1990s*, Ph.D. Thesis, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University.
- Castells. M. (2007). Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society. *International Journal of Communication*, 1 (2007): 238-266.
- Chatterjee, A. (2014). The Catalyst? Indian Diaspora and India-U.S. Relations after the Cold War. *The West Bengal Political Science Review*, 17 (2): 241-249.
- Cohen, R. (1997). *Global Diasporas*, London: UCL Press. Cited in Daya Kishan Thussu (2013), *Communicating India's Soft Power: Buddha to Bollywood*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hayden, C. (2012). *The Rhetoric of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy in Global Affairs*. New York: Lexington books.
- Hindus Driven Out: Citizens at Marysville, California Attack Them- British Consul informed. *New York Times*, New York, 27 January 1908. Cited in Janardhan, V. (2013). Political Participation of the Indian Diaspora in the USA. *Journal of International & Global Studies*, 5(1):16.
- Kapur, D. (2010). *Diaspora, Development and Democracy: The Domestic Impact of International Migration from India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Cited in Aneek Chatterjee (2014). The Catalyst? Indian Diaspora and India-U.S. Relations After the Cold War. *The West Bengal Political Science Review*, 17(2): 241-249.
- Kumari, K. (2016). DIASPORA AS SOFT POWER: A CASE STUDY OF INDIAN DIASPORA IN THE US. *Soft Power Journal*, 4(2), 165-182.
- Lee, G. (2009). A Soft Power Approach to the Korean Wave. *The Review of Korean Studies*, 12(2):123 -137.
- Li, M. (2009). Introduction: Soft Power: Nurture Not Nature. Mingjiang Li (eds.) *Soft power: China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, United Kingdom: Lexington Books.
- Mahalingam, M. (2014). India's Diaspora Policy and Foreign Policy: An Overview. Retrieved July 28, 2020, from <https://www.grfdt.com/PublicationDetails.aspx?Type=Articles&TabId=30>

- Mandhana, N. (2014, September 28). Narendra Modi Taps Indian Diaspora in U.S. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/narendra-modi-taps-indian-diaspora-in-u-s-1411946161>
- Mansingh, L. (2003). The Story of the Indian Diaspora is Compelling and Inspiring.  
Cited in Mannur, A. (2010). *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture*. Temple University Press. Philadelphia.
- Mohan, C. R. (2003, January 6). Indian diaspora and soft power. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <https://www.mea.gov.in/articles-in-indian-media.htm?dtl/15256/>
- Nye, J. (2012). *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New Delhi: KW Publishers.
- (2004). *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New Delhi: K.W Publishers.
- Rubioff, A. G. (2005) “The Diaspora as a Factor in U.S.-India Relations”, *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 32(3), 169–187. <http://doi.org/10.3200/aafs.32.3.169-188>.
- Steven Cohen calls soft power as “reputational power” cited in Government of India, “India Rising: The Role of Indian Diaspora in accelerating India’s transition as a Global Power: Background Paper prepared by the Foundation for Critical Choices for India”, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Hague, Netherlands, 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2009.
- Tharoor, S. (2012). India as a Soft Power. *India International Centre Quarterly*, 38(3/4), 330–333.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2012). *Pax Indica: India and the World of the Twenty-first Century*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.
- Zong, J. and B. J. (2017, August 31). Indian Immigrants in the United States in 2015 | [migrationpolicy.org](http://migrationpolicy.org). Retrieved July 27, 2020, from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/indian-immigrants-united-states-2015>

## Book Review

# Revisiting the Political Thought of Ancient India: Pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra Tradition\*\*

**Dr. Shiladitya Chakraborty\***

Ashok S. Chousalkar recent book, *Revisiting the Political Thought of Ancient India: Pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra Tradition*, has been published at a time when governance has become one of the most hotly debated issues in many countries including India. This book is apposite for a welfare country like India where a lot of priority is being given to assembling an effectual system of governance. The book brings out the rich political ideas of ancient India which remain relevant even in 21<sup>st</sup> century India. This book is indeed a treasure for the scholars of ancient Indian political thought as it reconstructs a rather extraordinary account of the pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra tradition, much of which has been lost in history. It rediscovers and integrates the political ideas of the original and celebrated pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra thinkers who were the forebearer of Arthashastra tradition of ancient India.

*Revisiting the Political Thought of Ancient India: Pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra Tradition* is spread over ten chapters along with the usual preface, index, annexure, and a brief section about the author. The preface competently summarizes the content of the entire book. The annexure is perhaps one of the main attractions of this book as it systematically enlists the four sources of knowledge developed by

---

\* Dr. Shiladitya Chakraborty, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Kalyani.(West Bengal)

\*\* Ashok S. Chousalkar, *Revisiting the Political Thought of Ancient India: Pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra Tradition*. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., 2018, pp. 200. Hardcover: Rs 795.

ancient Indian thinkers and also the thirty- two methods of science or Tantra-Yukti referred by Kautilya in Athashastra. These thirty-two maxims help us in interpreting the textual topics and articulate the debates. The book also contains an index of all the major Sanskrit terms and concepts used by the author and it proves to be useful to the readers of this book. The bibliography section is rather rich and elaborate and is arranged into two broad sub-sections which include the primary sources and secondary sources. The primary sources include the original literary sources of ancient India like Vedas, Upanishads, epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana and, the different Buddhist scriptures of ancient India. Apart from that, the author refers to various secondary sources which include books and journal articles written in English, Hindi and, Marathi.

In the first chapter entitled – Introduction, the author introduces the book by highlighting the reason behind writing this book. Besides this the author discusses the different sources of pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra thought. The chapter throws light on the intellectual ferment of 6<sup>th</sup> century BC in ancient India which led to the emergence of new religious and philosophical ideas and initiated a process of free political thinking. The second chapter entitled – The Royal priest and the Black magic of the Atharva Veda deals with the nature of political life in the Vedic state and the role of the royal priest in it. The Vedic state was not a territorial state and was yet to develop rudimentary forms of political ideas and concepts. This chapter narrates the role of two groups of royal priests known as the Angirasas and the Bhrigus, who played a crucial role in such a rudimentary political system. It was believed that the Angirasas and the Bhrigus priests were capable of ensuring the security of the king and the prosperity of the Kingdom through the use of tenacious magical rituals known as Abhichara and Vedic hymns and prayers known as the Atharvan. The third chapter entitled The Origin of State and Early Political Speculation in Ancient India talks of this transition which created new opportunities for the growth of political science in ancient India. The changes in the production system and replacement of the old pastoral society by agriculture led to the gradual disintegration of the Vedic state. It initiated the process of urbanization leading to the emergence of the new territorial state system known as Mahajanapadas. These new territorial states which were the progenitor of the modern state developed all its constituent elements of sovereignty, territory, army, taxation and, public officials. The role of the purohita

class in running the affairs of the state gradually declined and new constructs like Dharma, Artha and Kama emerged to deal with the complexities and needs of the new emerging society. In chapter four entitled – The Origin of Arthashastra Tradition, the author discusses the meaning and scope of the term Arthashastra. He discusses the views of different historians on the origin of pre- Kautilyan Arthashastra tradition like that of Dr. K.P. Jaiswal, Dr. A.S. Altekar, Dr. U N Ghoshal. The author A. S. Chousalkar also discusses the different sources of pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra tradition like Shanti Parva of Mahabharata and Kamasutra written by Vatsyayana. In the fifth chapter entitled – The Lokayat Philosophy and the Early Arthashastra Tradition, the author analyses the epistemological and ethical position of Lokayata philosophy and goes on to examine the relationship between Lokayata philosophy and the early Arthashastra tradition. This chapter also discusses the basic tenets of Lokayata philosophy and the different stages in its development. This chapter ends by highlighting the similarities and differences between Lokayata philosophy and the basic tenets of pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra tradition. By doing so, the author tries to highlight the convincing link between the two great traditions. In chapter six - The Arthashastra Teachers, the author provides insight into pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra teachers who were mainly of three different categories. They included the ministers of the royal court or Amatya and wandering ascetic teachers or Parivrajakas and lastly the royal priests or Purohitas. The author highlights the teachings of the famous Arthashastra teachers like Manu, Parashara, Brihaspati, Pishuna, Shukra who preceded Kautilya. In chapter seven that is Political thought of Early Arthashastra Thinkers the author discusses in detail the political ideas of major pre-Kautilyan Arthashastra teachers. One finds the names of these teachers in different literary sources of ancient India like Arthashastra, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Apart from that the chapter also focuses on the Lokayata philosophy and the political discourse of Lokayata philosophers like Jabala, Brihaspati Brahmin and the political ideas narrated in Kootadanta Sutra of Digha Nakaya all of which have a distinct connection with the Arthashastra. In the Arthashastra tradition the concept of self-preservation during times of distress is very important.

In chapter eight - Vijnyan Bala and Apaddharma, the author discusses how one should protect own self and own kingdom during times of distress. This chapter is particularly engrossing as the author

discusses the unique concept of Apaddharma that is taking recourse to questionable means in the hope of self-preservation during times of distress. This chapter also discusses another interesting concept of Vijnyan Bala which held that a discerning mind should draw the right conclusions from personal experiences instead of blindly following the teachings of the scriptures. This shows the truly secular and pragmatic nature of ancient Indian political thought. In chapter nine - Ethics and Politics in the Arthashastra Tradition, the author discusses in the context of tri-varga or three goals of life (Dharma, Artha and Kama) the three main pre-Kautilyan ideological currents of Arthashastra tradition which includes Manu, Shukra and Bharadvaja. Manu as a thinker was closer to the dominant Dharmashastra tradition and sought to protect the validity of the three Vedas. Shukra and Brihaspati were more secular in their outlook and sought to separate politics from theology and believed in nationalism and imperialism. They tried to establish a Dandaniti centered theory of political science. The last school was that of Bhardwaj who had a more radical thought process. He was greatly influenced by Lokayata philosophy and believed in evidence of senses and the validity of reason. The last chapter of this book that is Supremacy of Politics deals with the nature of historiography of ancient Indian political thought. It discusses the three trends of ancient Indian political thought which include the liberal democratic perspective as developed by Professor Beni Prasad, the authoritarian realist perspective as developed by Professor Pratap Giri and lastly the spiritual and metaphysical perspective as developed by Rishi Aurobindo and Dr. K.P. Mookerjee.

In conclusion, it can be said that the political ideas and concepts developed by pre-Kautilyan political thinkers have always been neglected as a subject of study by students of political science in India. One of the principal causes of this neglect has been the non-availability of sources as most of the classical texts have been lost. One finds only scattered references of these pre-Kautilyan thinkers in stray literary sources of ancient India. Perhaps the most important contribution of this book in the field of political science is that the author has revived this lost phronetistry by systematically and painstakingly compiling the teachings of pre-Kautilyan thinkers from different classical sources of ancient India. However one must apprise the readers that despite being a well-crafted book, it is tedious read for the uninitiated and those not trained in the grammar of ancient Indian political thought.