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A CRITIQUE OF A FILM NAMED 'HIDEKO THE BUS CONDUCTRESS'

Dhiren Bhagawati

A Japanese film of 1941 titled 'Hideko the Bus Conductress' is a short film of almost an hour duration. It was directed by Mikio Naruse and the main roles were played by Takamine and Fujiwara. A film without a narrative, a love story, a villain, violence, songs and any explicit message but based on a story that hardly could be sufficient for a conventional image of a film. The film centres round a bus conductress who along with the driver of an old dilapidated bus is struggling to sustain their livelihood by innovating ways to attract passengers. The bus plies between an urban centre and rural areas; the bus conductress resides as a paying guest in a family of the small town. Her bus hardly gets passengers on the road because other fast running and more comfortable buses win away the passengers. Still she would shout "the next stop is...." without attention that there were no passengers to get down on the point. And she would ask the driver to stop the bus for a minute near her home in the village so that she could run to present a gift to her mother carefully brought from the town. She would also call the children of her village and throw some packets of candies to them though the window of the bus. One day when she was back from her work, her house owner lady told her about a radio program on skill - development of bus conductors. She listened to it and decided to apply an idea that she would recite a narrative describing the importance of the spots on her road in order to impress upon the passengers.

Both the driver and the conductress approached the bus owner with the idea. But the owner initially declined the proposal lest it interfered with their primary responsibilities. But when he was told that other buses on the line might apply the same ploy, he agreed to it and suggested too that an expert should prepare the narrative. The bus conductress knew a poet who once left his notebook in her bus. They approached the poet and he agreed to compose the narrative. The poet composed it and instructed her to recite it in a poetic fashion. The poet even accompanied them in their journey to supervise the recitation. Unfortunately the bus met a minor accident on the path causing some scratches on the body. Learning about the accident the owner directed the driver to cause some major damage of the bus in order to claim an inflated amount from the insurance company. But the driver and the conductress in the presence of the poet did not agree to the owner's proposal. When the owner learnt that the poet was a witness to his proposal for claiming inflated insurance sum, he took a u-turn. The bus was sent for repair and a new coat of painting was done. The conductress and the driver were greatly enthralled. On the other hand, the owner negotiated with a businessman for sale of the bus. When the bus was delivered from the garage and it got a shining attractive show, both of them decorated it with flowers and took it on the road for plying. The conductress recited the poem with all enthusiasm and a few passengers who got into the bus enjoyed the beauty of her narration. A group of school going children sang a lyric adoring the coming of the new season. At that time the bus owner completed the process of the sale of the bus without a hiss to the conductress and the driver.

Without a strong story the film is bound together by the actions of Hideto, the woman character. There is nothing extra-ordinary about her, her simplicity, openness and diligence keep the audience enamoured of her. She is a simple village girl struggling for a livelihood but not spoilt by the hazards of her occupation. Another important character was the owner of the bus who counts only the earning from his old bus without any care for the two workers employed there. His lack of basic honesty is exposed in his insistence on the driver to cause heavy damage to

his car after the minor accident for getting hefty compensation. But he was gentle enough to reverse his words in front of the poet. It was natural on his part, given his class character, to sell the car after pretending to refurnish it for the interest of the passengers and satisfaction of his two workers. The poet is an interesting character ready to help the workers in their struggle to improve the working conditions and appreciate their aesthetics. He was nonchalant to the small honorarium extended by the owner of the bus for his composing the narrative. And he volunteered to accompany them in their journey and instruct Hideto in reciting the narrative. He even accompanied them to the bus owner and defended their pleas. The three sets of characters in the film represent the outlook and perception of the three classes of people - the workers, the owner and the intellectual, the third one pursuing an independent world-view but aligning with the working class in their conflict with the owning class. There is no explicit message underlying the film but an 'interpolation' can be deducted that the workers' effort to improve their working conditions yields no result till the owners keep their ultimate control over the means of production. This film is an excellent example where the artist does not create an impression that he has a political message to deliver through his art and pursues his aesthetics independently. Still truth comes out unfabricated.

Purpose of cinema is primarily entertainment. But entertainment which hinges on mere sensual pleasure is bound to be hedonistic; it rises to the status of being ecstatic when it offers another form of happiness. It is happiness in the midst of struggle for creating better conditions of life and an empathic response from the fellow human beings. The beautiful part of this cinema is the striving of the bus conductress to improve her working conditions in order to survive in the struggle for existence. Though she ultimately failed, she gave a long fight and could garner the co-operation of other persons. The audience is overwhelmed with the struggle of the bus conductress, not her defeat at last. The director skilfully uses the images to communicate to the audience what he means to say without extravagant words by the characters. It is a simple and beautiful film.

HOW ELECTIONS GOVERN PEOPLE

Samir Kumar Das

One usually reads the book[1] as a brilliant piece of current history well in line with the great tradition of *buranji* writing in Assam – in this case the history of how people living in an ethnically plural society are mobilized during and between elections, exercise their franchise, cast their votes and thus influence the electoral outcomes. The electorate is understood as an open field in which strategic moves are made by the contesting political parties to wean away the people into their respective folds and it is for the people to decide whether to respond to these moves and how. Not all strategic moves are successful, some are. It is the people who have the freedom of responding and equally not responding to them. Mobilizations, in other words, are an inseparable part of elections and the emergence of the 'Hindutva regime' in Assam reflects the high point of convergence between Hindutva strategies of mobilization employed by the Bharatiya Janata Party and the other members of Sangh Parivar and the positive way people seem to be responding to them. The book, as one reads it conventionally, traces these moves in the fairly long history of the past decade and draws out their implications for the state of democracy of our body politic. The book may be read as a textbook illustration of democracy.

Although much of what I argue in this paper is inspired immediately by my reading of this book, the paper has a wider scope in the sense that it seeks to tease out the general implications of the author's argument made in the limited context of Assam. I would rather see the book as one that offers deep insights into our understanding of the tectonic shifts that have taken place in recent decades in

the art of governing the people in general and in Assam in particular. The book prompts me to ask if it is possible to see elections playing a vital role in governing the people (demos) and democracy. Could the title of the book be – How elections govern people?

Elections have hitherto been viewed as a democratic means of governing those who govern us, whether by selecting them, or keeping them under a leash and holding them accountable to those who elect them. This book forces me to view elections as a technology of governing people, of constituting the demos and bringing them under the regime of what Spinoza calls the 'whole'. They 'must necessarily come together', Spinoza tells us, if they are 'to live together as securely and well as possible if they are to enjoy as a whole the rights which naturally belong to them as individuals'. Their life should be no more conditioned by 'the force and desire of individuals that will be injurious to other fellowmen, but by the power and will of the whole body'.[2]

While much is being said about the problem of evolving, modifying, calibrating, refining and thus improving the means so that people may exercise ever greater and more effective control over their governors with a slew of electoral reforms, correspondingly much less – if at all – is written on how people are transformed into a mere object of government through the instrumentality of elections. This, as we have said, will take us beyond the conventional path of understanding democracies charted out by the textbooks we grew up with - to the way, for instance, the people are reduced to the numbers of an electorate, how they are organized and classified into constituencies, how constituencies are gerrymandered and delimited, how voters are enlisted, how their names are dropped from the voters' list – a phenomenon variously known as 'scientific rigging' in West Bengal during the Left Front rule or as 'D' voters' in Assam and so forth, how the electorate is mobilized and campaigns are conducted, in short how the people are constituted as a 'whole', as subjects by the very act of election and so forth.

The book thus has the potential of turning around one of the founding assumptions of the liberal-democratic architecture which says that the voters already constituted as political subjects go to the polling booth and cast their votes

while exercising their right to franchise – otherwise considered as the mainstay of democracy. What we argue instead is that elections become a technology by which people's subjectivities are shaped and constituted. There are no *apriori* political subjects existing prior to the elections. They become subjects only in and though elections.

Let us explain the point by way of trying to unpack the otherwise complicated relationship between ethnicity and elections in Assam. One cannot stop referring to ethnicity as one seeks to make sense of the politics of the region. The central question is: how ethnicities are sought to be governed and managed through elections for the 'convenience' of governing the people? One way of explaining it is to argue that people vote along given ethnic lines. Subjectivities being uniquely ethnic in a country like India and more so in a region like the Northeast are formed along ethnic lines and electoral outcomes only reflect the given ethnic composition of the particular society in which it is held. Sylhet referendum of 1947 may be regarded as the originary moment of postcolonial Assam. According to Amalendu Guha, the outcome of the referendum exactly coincided with the communal composition of the district's voters and Sylhet – predominantly a Bengali-speaking district - was thus pushed into the then East Bengal as a walkover by Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC).[3]

Once-undivided Assam had witnessed enough of the struggle for acquiring and retaining the majority status by the Assamese-speaking elite by getting rid of the areas where the majority status of this community is either fragile or simply non-existent. A book published sometime in the early 1960s entitled *Asomiya*, for instance, raises the question of why Assam should not have remained satisfied with only the erstwhile five districts of upper Assam where the Assamese had a comfortably stable majority.[4] Many of today's problems would not have emerged at all.

When electoral outcomes reiterate the ethnic composition of a given political unit, it is the ethnic majority that calls the shots and 'ethnocracy' masquerades as democracy based on the majoritarian principle. Election as a result ceases to have the kind of significance that was once attached to it by such theoreticians of representative democracy as John Stuart Mill and others. Mill was stoutly arguing

for organizing democracy within a flat and mono-national template which, according to him, will rule out the rise of ethnocracy and organize the electorate in a way that would enable it to put up a 'joint resistance' to the tyrant rulers. For him, representative democracy can function best only in a mono-national country.

But, what Israeli geographers call 'ethnocracy'[5] has its different connotation in Assam. Assam is not Israel. The society in Assam is irreducibly plural and winning elections here throws up the challenge of governing the very plurality of the society. Territorial reorganization does not seem any longer to be an option in the region – the last being Arunachal Pradesh way back in 1987. Governing ethnicity has by and large to take place within the given territorial framework of the region. This book, as I read it, tells us the story of how the plurality is governed through elections in the present scenario. A great change has occurred in this regard. AGP perhaps could not have understood the importance of leveraging elections for bringing about any social transformation. It took the society in Assam for granted and faced trouble.

Let us take 1985 election as an example. The Assam movement has just come to an end and Asom Gana Parishad has come to power reportedly riding on the huge popularity wave of the Assam movement. If one were to demystify the numbers, AGP even at its heyday could not muster more than 35 percent of the total votes polled in the election. It could come to power precisely because the opposition votes were divided. Another significant point is that AGP could not win a single seat wherever Muslims would constitute 25 percent or more of the population and could bag only half of the Assembly seats. Besides territorial reorganization, keeping the opposition divided by way of shaping and aligning the political forces could serve as a tool of governing the people in the region.

One can do it either by keeping others divided as it happened in 1985 elections or by way of building alliances across ethnicities as it happened about a decade later - in 1996. The 1991 results were an eye opener for AGP in the sense that it was voted out of power insofar as the Opposition forces joined hands and closed ranks with each other. AGP came to realize the irreducible plurality of the society in Assam only in 1996 and joined hands with those forces that were once vociferously opposed to the Assam movement. This was complemented by AGP's

strategy of slowly dumping the demands of the Assam movement by the wayside and quietly distancing itself from the movement's ideology.[6]

The liberal-democrats would certainly heave a sigh of relief. They would rather take it as the growing maturity of our democracy. For such alliances across the ethnic divide and distancing from narrow ethnicist demands would gradually propel de-ethnicization of the society and leave space for the play of individual subjectivities let loose from their ethnic allegiances. The existing literature on elections in Assam is of course marked by this liberal expectancy. Elections are expected to bring about this social transition - from ethnically loaded electoral majority to an electoral majority that is what Sheldon Wolin would have called 'ideological cipher'[7] and emptied of its ethnic and ideological essence.

The elections of 1996, I will argue, could have been an opportunity for AGP to create a rainbow society in tune with the AGP-led multiethnic political alliance. AGP could only accomplish the political task of building alliances across ethnic divisions without correspondingly undertaking the social task of creating what Akhil Dutta might call a rainbow society. AGP was caught in a conundrum-whether to create a society of the Assamese people or a society for the people living in Assam that also includes many other communities besides the Assamese-speaking population. Assam in that sense is a governor's nightmare. For governing Assam calls for the uphill task of rendering the society governable in the first place literally by altering its demographics almost brick by brick.

The task of using elections as a means of altering the social fabric in order eventually to influence the electoral outcomes was still unknown to the Asom Gana Parishad. Dutta's book in that sense is unique for it portrays how saffron is etched deep and wide in the very fabric of the society. Neither Congress nor AGP was cut out for the job. The book shows cogently how Hindutva in power is also an agenda of social transformation. BJP could accomplish in the second decade of this century what AGP could not during its two reigns - between 1985 and 1990 and again between 1996 and 2001.

The challenge today is not so much to make government democratic but to govern democracy itself - constitute people's subjectivities, bring the demos into existence as a collective, a 'whole' as Spinoza would have said and render

them governable. Let us call this body an electoral community that comes into being in and through elections. It is not ethnocracy of the Israeli type. Insofar as this electoral community is produced by elections, what about those who resolutely refuse to be identified with it and stay away from elections? Staying away, I will argue, is also integral to the electoral game and so-called oppositional subjectivities are also framed through the instrumentality of elections. One of the enigmas that never stop puzzling us is: Between 1952 and 1978 – in six consecutively held Assembly elections in Assam, 44 percent of the voters on an average did not participate in voting. By contrast, according to *The Hindu*, since 1961 there have been as many as 41 elections in India in which the voting turnout was 80 percent or above – out of which 30 had taken place in the Northeast. Why do people vote with their feet up in the air in a region which has acquired the notoriety of being turbulent and prone to insurgencies and violence? It is because an electoral community has come into being that spills across the conventional divide between elections and insurgencies.[8]

This again goes against the very grain of our textbook habit of making a surgically precise distinction between elections and insurgencies. I think our concept of the production of electoral community will help understand the fraught nature of ethnic relations and the nexus between elections and insurgency. In 1996 elections, for instance, the commands of an insurgent organization played a significant role in setting forth the election agenda of the political parties contesting it. In this election, the same organization (United Liberation Front of Assam) asked each of the contesting political parties to clarify its stand on the issue of foreign nationals. In many constituencies, it would actively back up candidates known for their closeness to the insurgents. .

Is this then the end of the road for democracy? The growing depreciation of elections as a democratic instrument is also accompanied by a visible expansion of democracy outside its institutional limits. Akhil Dutta's earlier works on human security and civil society point out how the democratic space has exceeded the institutional contours of elections and their corollaries.[9] While we know that law is made by the legislative bodies authorised to make them, one cannot but notice how Kisan Samsad sessions are held for instance on the outskirts of Delhi. There are multiple points of law making in the society and legislative bodies are only one

of them. In the words of an old, agitating farmer: 'kanun sadak par hi banta' (laws are made in the streets). Shall we describe it as the 'democracy of the streets'?

I am particularly drawn to Akhil Dutta's use of the phrase – saffron *in* the rainbow. Does it mean that the rainbow loses its multicoloured nature and melts into the saffron - a phenomenon known as 'saffronization'? Does ethnic polarization threaten to rip apart the society of Assam? Claude Lefort too argues that liberal-democratic theory does not have an answer to the question. Any functioning democracy faces the threat of being dismembered as a result of this divide inherent in it.[10] Ankur Tamuli Phukon's yet unpublished ethnographies on 2021 elections in Assam provide ample testimony to how elections this year were fought on extremely local issues. He for instance addresses such question as, why the elderly women took out processions in support of Akhil Gogoi and his party viz. Raijar Dal in Sivasagar and not in other places? He shows why a remote village in Assam on the Assam-Nagaland border votes for a party and now the electoral behaviour of the villagers is influenced by whatever political developments occur across the border in Nagaland, the nature of political alliances amongst political parties than what happens inside Assam. At one level, it needs to be explained how all such local issues are woven together within the rubric of Hindutva and the ethnographic work in question like all other ethnographic works has a tendency of missing the woods for the trees. To say that it is saffronization of an otherwise rainbow society is an oversimplification. Borrowing from the title of Dutta's book, I would say – it is not so much saffron displacing the rainbow, but saffron skilfully positioning itself within the rainbow without wiping any of the colours. Gautam Bhadra once described BJP as a hydra headed entity. Dutta's book offers a clue to understand how the saffron 'penetrates' into the societies of the Northeast. Is it saffronization of the rainbow or the saffron in the rainbow? After all, we have to understand why cow slaughter is not an issue in Meghalaya or for that matter the iconization of Lord Rama is not an issue in any of the hill states of the region. Is it not true that Hindutva rearticulates itself within the rainbow?One has to explain how Hindutva reaches out to other social constituencies of the Northeast and recreates itself in the process.

End Notes:

[1]   Dutta, Ranjan. (2021) .*Hinduta Regime in Assam: Saffron in the Rainbow*.
         New Delhi: Sage. Two earlier drafts of my comments on the book were
         read in the panel discussions organized by Social Science Research
         Community (SSRC) and Department of Political Science, University of
         Hyderabad on 19 and 22 August 2021 respectively. I am alone responsible
         for the lapses, if there are any.

[2]   Spinoza, Benedict de. (2007). *Theologico-Political Treatise*.p.112.
         Retrieved 30 October, 2021 from   https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/sites/
         default/files/attachments/files/Theologico-Political_Treatise.pdf

[3]   Guha, Amalendu. (1977). *From Planter Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle
         and Electoral Politics in Assam*. New Delhi. PPH. p.320.

[4]   Sarma.,Sushil.(1973) . Sarma, *Asomiya* (in Assamese). Guwahati:
         Manisha. p.201

[5]   See, for instance, Yiftachel, Oren. (2005). *Territory as the Kernel of Nation:
         Space, Time, and Nationalism in Israel/Palestine*. In Das, S. (Ed.), *Peace
         Processes and Peace Accords*. South Asian Peace Studies. Vol.2. New
         Delhi. Sage.

[6]   I have discussed it in detail, In Das, Kumar. (1997). *Regionalism in Assam:
         The Case of Asom Gana Parishad 1985-1990*. New Delhi: Omsons.

[7]   Connolly, E. (2001). *Democracy and Vision: Sheldon Wolin and the
         Vicissitudes of the Political*, Eds. Botwinick, A., & Connolly, E. Princeton:
         Princeton University Press. p.224.

[8]   I maintained the same point in my interview with *The Scroll*. See https://
         scroll.in/article/831429/election-trends-why-indias-north-eastern-states-
         witness-huge-voter-turnouts accessed on 31 October 2021.

[9]   Dutta, Ranjan. (Ed). (2009). *Human Security in North-East India: Issue
         and Policies*. Guwahati. Anwesha. I reviewed the book in *The Calcutta
         Journal of Political Studies*, New series, 7 & 8 (1 & 2), p. 160-162.

[10]   Lefort, Claude. (1991). *Democracy and Political Theory*. Trans. David
         Macey. Cambridge. Polity.

REGISTERING VOICE:
WOMEN WRITING POETRY IN CONFLICT SOCIETIES

Amrita Pritam Gogoi

Abstract

Poetry has been a very powerful tool for registering voices of marginalised groups and communities. It has been used in feminist movements for the articulation and expressions of women's experiences of exploitation, violence and discrimination and also in recording resistances. For many women, writing — to be able to make oneself heard and visible through the act of writing and publishing poetry has been an empowering political experience. Here is a presentation of five poems by five women from different conflict societies of the world, each voicing their grievances through a poem, each grieving a loss through a poem, and each asserting one's identity through a poem.

Poetry as a medium through which women register their voices against misogyny and patriarchal oppression has been in use and feminist poets like Maya Angelou, Maxine Kumine have been able to make substantial impact through the use of this medium. Consciousness-raising on issues that ranged from economic, political to education and social has been crucial in forming feminist thought. It has particularly been used in giving a name to the "nameless" forms of oppression —

oppressions that were previously relegated to the nonpolitical arena of the "personal". Poetry till date has been used in raising consciousness to speak and inform of a wide range of exploitative practices and regimes. Poetry makes the inner world of "personal" experience available to the public for political discussions and exchanges. While poetry is often seen as a pure expression of personal feelings and emotions, it is argued; only very bad poetry does so. Good poetry, on the other hand, makes personal experience available to others by giving it an outward form (Reed, 2017). Audre Lorde in her essay Poetry is not a Luxury (1984) wrote, "For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into ideas, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought of. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives" (Lorde 1984: 57). Lorde, child of Jamaican immigrants, a working-class black woman, a mother, a lesbian, and a socialist, richly brings forth the necessity of taking poetry seriously within feminist and academic discourses. This makes essential addressing the ideas, attitudes and positions that are expressed, formed and circulated through women's poetry.

Considering the relevance of poetry as a medium of communicating self-awareness, and self-consciousness, and of registering voice against oppressions experienced, I present here five poems by women who have experienced violence and resisted it in various ways, which includes placing their thoughts and experiences down in the form of poetry. The poems that I present here are written by women from conflict zones from different parts of the globe (El Salvador, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka). Poetry that gives voice to gendered experiences in conflict zones is a distinct form of political activity for it foregrounds experiences that often goes unaddressed, unrecognised, and vices that are suppressed both by norms and political bureaucratic institutions. The politics in poetry, as a struggle for registering voices denied, extends not only the act of penning poetry down, but also in the act of publishing, exchanging, and sharing. Together they counter the systematic culture of silence imposed on women.

Five Poems

I
Of Man
(Lil Milagro Ramírez, trans. Jessica Rainey. Reproduced here from Guernica 2020)

In despair
a man prepares tomorrow's field.
Let flags and doves fly
from the smallest house,
from the hardest heart.
Distribute the seed, warrior,
for the time to sow is here.
We will sow
by force if we must,
we will plough the ever-fertile earth,
we will scatter seeds
across the widest furrow,
we will sow.
We will fight
until lit up by smiles,
until it is our destiny
for hope to find peace,
we will fight
until we stand, and then,
we will build,
so we can live,
can hand down
the earth to our offspring.
Clay will surface
from far below
and we will build

The poem, "Of Man" is by Lil Milagro Ramírez and translated by Jessica Rainey. Lil Milagro Ramírez is a poet and founder member of the Resistencia National and was born in El Salvador in April 1946. At the age of nineteen Lil Maligro was recognised as El Salvador's youngest female poet. She completed a law degree at the University of El Salvador but decided not to practice it. Instead she joined a revolutionary group in 1970. By 1971 Ramírez was completely underground and she had to struggle to continue writing. In her words:

"Many consider it impossible to balance being a revolutionary fighter with being a writer and poet. I went through that phase too, feeling considerable guilt when I was only writing. At such times, yes, I think you should give up the pen and take up the gun in defence of freedom. But once you're on the right track, sure of your role and fulfilling what you believe to be your duty, then it is possible and valid to spend your free time writing poetry." (Guernica, July, 2020)

The poem presented here was written around 1972. She was captured in 1976 and spent three years in jail until her death in 1979. Her anthology of poems was published posthumously by Cuadernos Universitarios, Universidad de El Salvador, in 2002.

II

Who Will Stand Beside Me

(Kinjala trans. Pranika Koyu. Reproduced here from Chronicles of Silence 2019)

I was a thirteen-year old.

Wandering around the village market,

My eyes delighted in the glitters

I suddenly saw the army and police vehicles.

Fear gripped me and I wet my pants

The First thunder after that was in prison somewhere

'til today, when I look at my cheeks,

I see the scar —- a memory left by the police officer's boots.

I know not of that police boots still has my skin meshed in it

But my scar is here for me to look at everyday.

I menstruated in that prison cell for the first time.

Even now, every month when my cycle begins

And my vagina hurts,

I wish to kill that demon.

If only he was in front of me.

Who should I share my pain with?

I listen to myself; I cry on my own,

And I move on.

This poem "Who Will Stand Beside Me" was written by Kinjala (real name withheld) a survivor of sexual harassment and rape from the Maoist People's War (MPW) of Nepal. In MPW rape and other forms of bodily torture and humiliation was used by the state apparatus against the Maoist cadres, sympathisers and family members. Suspected sympathisers were stripped naked in front of the public, and were taken photographs in naked state to frighten the mass. In the book Mahila Sahid Gaatha, ANWA (Revolutionary) that gives a summary introduction to 946 women who died or were killed during the war, mentions that following their arrest, 48 out of 946 women were subjected to physical torture, repeatedly raped, or shot dead, either at their homes or after being taken elsewhere. To humiliate both men and women they are forced to strip naked and lie on top of one another. Women being urinated on when they asked for water, mocked for being hysterical if they collapsed due to torture or other reasons. In her essay, Rape: An instrument of State Repression in Nepal, Parvati (2006) elaborates on the ways in which rape was by the state apparatus to inflict suffering and humiliation

on the Maoist and their sympathisers. By referring to various such incidents of the People's War she brings to light how rape is used as a 'biological instrument in order to bolster patriarchal values and sexist ideology in order to reinforce masochism in armed force and to feminise the enemy' (Parvati, 2006: 111). She mentions how in Uwa, Rolpa district, four women were raped in 1998, in Harjung all available women including 12 years old Jasa Pun were rounded into a school and were rounded up and raped after forcing men to flee under the terror of guns by a police force of about 150.

The poem was published in Chronicles of Silence: The Smoldering Embers (2076 v.s.) published as a part of the Memory, Truth and Justice project which has 11 stories of conflict related sexual violence survivors. The poems are an outcome of a weeklong workshop with survivors and they wrote their experiences and emotions in the form of poetry.

III

Unbind Me
(Irom Chanu Sharmila trans. Longjam Joychandra Singh. Reproduced here from Fragrance of Peace 2010)

unbind me
from this chain of thorns
that binds me in this narrow room
for no fault of mine
a caged bird

in this sinister prison cell
myriad voices cascade
no, not the garrulous chatter of birds
nor the crescendo of merry laughter
never a sweet song of lullaby

but the wailing of mothers
their children ripped from their breasts
women separated from their men
the widows' lament of despair
drawn by hands lads clad in olive green

i see a flaming ball
a terrible face of holocaust following
kindled by the spectacle of knowledge
in the path of experiment

they turned to lotus-eaters
slaves of hedon
intoxicated
their mind and intellect
nipped in the bud
while floating submissive in their revelry
time and tide
sweep away their wealth and honour
far beyond
the nine lofty ranges

its a boon for others far away
smiling they reap the harvest
helplessly watched
by the impotent souls

life is precious
only to depart too soon
like a light which illuminates darkness
let me plant the immortal tree
sow the seed of ambrosia
like a blood

let me wing to earth's every corner
to reach the proximity
where meets the living with the dead
and sing the carol of humanity

unbind me
remove this chain of thorns
let me not deflect my course
do not fault me
this is the only desire
of a caged bird

The third poem "Unbind Me '' (Hooktokpiro Khongdagee Jhinjoorse) is written by Irom Chanu Sharmila known also as the Iron Lady of Manipur, and Mengoubi (The fair One). Irom is a civil rights activist, political activist and a poet who was on a hunger strike for sixteen long years demanding abolition of the draconian law Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 from Northeastern states. The poem has been translated by Longjam Joychandra Singh and published in Fragrance of Peace (2010, 42-45) an anthology of twelve poems written by the Iron Lady of Manipur with an introduction by Laifungbam Debabrata Roy and an interview by Pankaj Bhutalia.

Irom Sharmila, demanded the lifting of AFSPA, 1958 that gives the armed forces wide powers to shoot, arrest and search in the name of "aiding civil power". It was first applied to the Northeast states of Assam and Manipur and was amended to include other Northeast states of Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. As per the law even a non-commissioned officer is granted the right to shoot, to kill based on mere suspicion, that it is necessary to do so in order to maintain public interest. With such powers conferred, enforcement of the law resulted in innumerable incidents of arbitrary detention, torture, rape and looting by security personnel. Its continued application has also resulted in numerous protests across the region. Irom Sharmila's hunger strike was one of the most

powerful ways of registering resistance against this draconian law. Irom started her fast two days after the Malom Massacre. On the 2nd of November 2000, a makeshift bomb exploded close to an army convoy passing a bus stop in Malom, Manipur. According to the soldiers the explosion was followed by gunshots and they returned fire. While none of the troops was hit, 10 Manipuri civilians were dead. Sharmila who was then working as an intern with a human rights group went on a hunger strike that continued for 16 long years until August 2016, when she decided to opt for parliamentary politics.

IV

Why Shall I Not Resist
(Kabita Chakma trans. Meghna Guhathakurta. Reproduced here from Guhathakurta 2001)

Why shall I not resist !
Can they do as they please —
Turn settlements into barren land
Dense forests to deserts
Mornings into evening
Fruition to barrenness

Why shall I not resist?
Can they do as they please —
Estrange us from the land of our birth
Enslave our women
Blind our vision
Put an end to creation.
Neglect and humiliation causes anger
The blood surges through my veins

Breaking barriers at every stroke
The fury of youth pierces the sea of consciousness.
I become my own whole self
Why shall I not resist!

This poem "Joli No Udhim Kittei (Why Shall I Not Resist)" is written by Kabita Chakma, a young activist and poet from Bangladesh belonging to the Chakma Community — an indigenous minority community. The poem was published by Narigrantha Prabartana Dhaka, a Women's Resource Centre in 1992. Kavita Chakma is considered a powerful and courageous voice of resistance against forces threatening the survival of her cultural community. The english version of the poem presented here has been translated by Meghna Guhathakurta. According to Ahmed (2015), Kavita's poem talks about the estrangement and enslavement of the Jumma people of Bangladesh. It speaks of the humiliation that women, particularly activist women were subjected to in the hands of the state. During the years of the insurgency rape and forced marriages were used as a tool of war. Women like Kavita stood witness to such tortures and horrors of war. While the insurgency must have come to an end the memory, the trauma remains and this poem by Kavita, according to Guhathakurta is an expression of resistance of Jumma women of more than a decade of militarisation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Ahmed, 2015).

V

The Unwritten Poem
(Captain Vaanathi, trans. by Meena Kandaswami. Reproduced here from Guernica 2019)

Write!
Write,
My poem

That I leave
Without writing

I am unable to write
The many, may thoughts that come…
My gun is standing in the border
I am unable to come away
so, write,
Write my unwritten poem.

Behind the fierce gun
My body might be decimated
But my emotions will not.
They will make you think
Then, write,
Write my unwritten poem.

In our liberated land
When our memorials are built
They are not for your tears,
They are not for your wreaths.
They exist so that you stay
Determined to breathing
New life into our land.
So, please write,
Write my unwritten poem.

After my meaningful death,
You will come to tour around
The recognised nation of Tamil Elam.
Then, my unwritten poem
Will stand up in front of you

Look into my unwritten poem
And you will see those who knew me,
And those who understood me,
And those who cared for me,
And those who loved me,
All of them

there, not only me,
But all the martyrs
Will see you, and
Joyfully smile.

The fifth poem "The Unwritten Poem" was written by Captain Vaanathi, a cadre of the women's wing of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who was martyred on 11.07.1991 in the battle of Elephant Pass. Born as Patmasothi Sanmukanathapillai, she headed a unit of Female Tigers of the LTTE at the battle of Elephant Pass. The primary objective of the attack was to capture the government's largest and well entrenched military complex. The complex which was a symbol of the government's power and prestige is encased in massive chain-linked fences that overlap shatterproof plexiglass windows. Yet the LTTE cadres were able to punch corridors through the defence lines, forcing soldiers to abandon the complex.

Meena Kandasamy, the translator of the poem, in her publication The Orders Were to Rape You notes that Captain Vaanathi's poem is an intervention into the body of war poetry that traditionally exalts men and centre their experience including in the Tamil poetic tradition. Secondly, it alters our perception of the battlegrounds — smashing the stereotype that it is a male preserve — and it also dismantles the lazy, patriarchal belief that gallantry and valour are male, masculine traits. Female fighters used poems as a tool for political commentary and that far from being unwilling recruits, innocent recruits, helpless recruits, they were acutely aware of the macro-politics — that their armed struggle was taking place in the context of an imperialist world order, of powers and foreign nation's meddling in their affairs and that they were acutely aware of macro politics. Writing about Captain Vaanathi in the introduction to Vanathiyin Kavithaigal, an anthology of poems by Jeya wrote — "she stood as a woman and fought as a tiger" (Kandasamy, 2020). Her poems were published posthumously by the LTTE in December 1991.

These poems are testimonies to not just of the world of experiences they have had as revolutionaries, reformers, survivors of heinous crimes in conflict societies, as political activist and the like but these poems also furnishes evidence of their resistances, their dreams and desires and the voices that they have been able to create and represent through the very personal yet political activity of writing poetry.

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TIGER SIBLINGS AND THE IDU MISHMIS

Ambika Aiyadurai

Anyone visiting the Mishmi Hills and interested in wildlife and conservation would have come across the mythological story of the Mishmi and tigers as brothers. Such narratives of tigers as siblings are popular in other parts of Arunachal Pradesh as well (Aisher, 2005; Aiyadurai, 2016). For the Idu Mishmi, the tiger (*aamra*) is their elder brother. Tiger is the most revered animal, and killing it is prohibited. In fact, it is even viewed as a 'homicide'. The kinship relation of the Idu Mishmi with the tigers and the claims that residents of Dibang valley make about tiger conservation is an important aspect to consider if one is interested in wildlife conservation in Northeast India. How the common people perceive wildlife conservation is rarely addressed in discussions on nature conservation and my monograph *'Tigers are our brothers: Anthropology of wildlife conservation in northeast India'* (OUP, 2021) addresses some of the complex issues of wildlife conservation in Dibang valley. Through Idu Mishmi narratives, the book highlights how Mishmi relate to tigers, vis-a-vis the role of the state and of science in tiger conservation and how the Mishmi's conception of 'nature' stands in contrast with the way the state and science perceive tigers and their conservation. Mishmi's indigenous ideas about tigers and their cultural and ecological knowledge are often used as a form of resistance during meetings with conservationists and researchers to question the motive and activities of tiger research and also the forest department. When conservationists and the local villagers meet, how do these actors negotiate their positions in making claims over nature? Some of these questions are central to this book.

In this article, I will discuss people-animal relations in Dibang Valley and what we can learn from the indigenous beliefs about wildlife conservation. The rescue of tiger cubs in the winter of 2012 in a remote village shaped Dibang valley district as a new conservation site. After the rescue, the district witnessed a series of conservation interventions and implementation of research projects by state and NGOs and this remote corner of India were visited by wildlife researchers and conservation groups. They mapped the tiger habitat, assessed the tiger & its prey population and this information led to the proposal of a tiger reserve *(FN: 11th meeting of the Technical Committee of NTCA held 01.09.2021, in-principle approved the proposal for India's first High Altitude Tiger Reserve: Dibang Tiger Reserve).*

While the researchers and NGOs were busy studying wildlife, the Idu Mishmis were anxious with the several actors visiting the district to study tigers and their habitat. They were particularly curious about the 'new' found interests in tigers. Idu Mishmis always knew about these tigers, but researchers took some time to get convinced about the presence of tigers in this landscape, citing low prey density as a reason. The tiger cub rescue provided the necessary 'data' of tiger presence.

'Why have a tiger reserve here? We don't hunt tigers, they are our brothers! Tigers and humans were born to the same mother. We kill tigers only as a last option, when they become a threat or when they are killed in traps accidentally. We are protecting them anyway' said a resident of Dibang Valley. During my interviews with the residents, they often stated that they do not harm tigers and in fact their kinship relations with tigers are helping the tiger population. They, sometimes, questioned why there is a need for a tiger reserve here. The fear of getting intertwined with the state's 'ever-reaching hands' and losing their lands for tiger conservation was the chief reason behind their anxieties. While some welcome the idea of a tiger reserve with the hope of employment, others worry that the ownership of their lands, forests and mountains will be compromised. This is one of many issues that brought researchers, scientists and the state in direct confrontation with the people of Dibang Valley. A common grievance of the residents was the non-consultative approach of the state and the non-participatory nature

of wildlife researchers. The local Mishmis felt a sense of mistrust towards the forest department and the research team members. This has resulted in mild intimidation and resistance, as well as hesitation or even refusal in participating in research activities. Moreover, there was a difference in the perception and understanding of nature as well as its protection and conservation that the book examines.

The book primarily argues that 'nature' needs to be decoded, not only at a conceptual level (the idea of 'nature') but also at the operational level (how to engage with 'the nature'). The book discusses the Idu Mishmi's relationship with nature and more importantly, their ethics of nature in which humans and non-human lives are interlinked and seen as continuous, not discrete categories. In addition to the cultural, commercial value of animals, the book discusses the symbolic interaction of the Mishmi with non-humans (the mountain spirits and animals), and their reciprocal engagement during subsistence activities, highlighting the tensions between subsistence-related hunting and wildlife protection that see hunting as illegal.

Tiger brothers of the Idu Mishmis

According to Mishmi mythology, the Mishmi and tigers were born to the same mother and were siblings; the tiger was the elder brother, and the human, the Mishmi, the younger brother. This myth and the taboo against hunting tigers was told to me by an Igu (shaman): One day, the younger brother hunted a deer and left it with his elder brother before going into the jungle to collect firewood. On his return, he was terrified to see his brother eating the meat raw. He told his mother that his elder brother was a tiger. 'If he can eat the raw meat, then one day he will eat me too,' he said. This became a serious concern. A plan was made by their mother to have a competition between the two brothers. The one who crossed the river and reached the other side of the bank first would kill the other. The tiger decided to swim across the river, whereas the Mishmi took the bridge. The tiger was the first to reach the bank. When the tiger was about to come out of the river, however, the mother threw an ant's nest at the tiger's body to prevent him from winning. To get rid of the ants, the tiger went back into the river and scratched himself against a rock. The Mishmi, meanwhile, reached the bank and

shot the tiger with an arrow. Thus, the tiger died and its body floated in the river. It was swept away to a far off place. After several years, a bird saw the bones of the tiger scattered on the riverside. The bones were white and bright under the sunlight. The bird thought them to be eggs and sat on them to incubate. It is believed that the large bones transformed back into a tiger. From the tiny bones emerged a leopard, a leopard cat, a clouded leopard, and civet cats. This is the story of the tiger being born again. Therefore, tigers cannot be killed. According to the Mishmi, tigers can only be killed or trapped when there is a loss of property or for personal safety. If a tiger is killed, an elaborate ritual (*tamamma*) is conducted over five days, with restrictions on both the family members of the one who killed the tiger, as well as on the villagers as a whole. There are five clans (Meme, Umpo, Mena, Mischi, and Misiwo) of the Idu Mishmi who are exempted from performing this ritual. Members of these clans are believed to be the descendants of Sineru, the first priest of the Idu Mishmi. However, killing a tiger is a taboo for them too.

Human-non-human entanglements

People are related to nonhuman animals and entities in multiple ways. These relations are complex, diverse, and multifaceted. Animals are believed to be under the control of the guardian spirits of the forest. The relationship of these communities with nature has changed substantially with the shift in their socio-economic situation and nature came to be seen as a commodity. Overlapping of human and nonhuman worlds is part of Mishmi social worlds. For example, similar to many indigenous people, the Mishmi do not make a distinction between the human world and the non-human world; all nature is 'one', including the world of spirits (Fig 1). The Mishmi constantly engage with animals and spirits during farming, hunting wildlife, or slaughtering domesticated animals. The Mishmi believe that spirits take care of domesticated animals (*mitu-sipa*) and wild animals (*ngôlô*). This belief is so strong that spirits are often talked about as if they are people; the Mishmi are respectful towards and fearful of them. For example, when I asked someone in Anini what would happen if women ate wildmeat *(FN: Among the Idu Mishmi, women do not eat any wild meat, except fish (anga), rats (kachingo), and birds (pra) because they believe that something unfortunate*

will happen if they consume it.), she told me, 'ngôlô humko maarega' (ngôlô will beat us), and that *ngôlô* watches over people from afar. Shamans or Igus (Fig. 2) play an important role as mediators between these worlds, which give them a central role in the religious practices and beliefs of the Mishmi society (Dele, 2017; Chaudhuri, 2008). Igus are respected for their services during funerals, births, farming, hunting, and slaughtering of domestic livestock. The Mishmi acknowledge the role of spirits for all their life events and believe that their lives are ultimately governed by spirits, both benevolent and malevolent. Therefore, the Mishmi are expected to act in accordance with the obligation to give, to receive, and to pay in a reciprocal way through a dense network of exchanges that exist between the animals, and the spirits. The Mishmi's social world is a network of their associations with humans and non-human beings (animals, rivers, birds, and spirits). The presence of several spirits in farms, homes, forests, and mountains as well as the significant roles of these spirits is reflected during harvesting, healing rites, funerals, and birth ceremonies.

The relationship between humans, animals and spirits is acknowledged through rules and regulations in the form of fear and respect, and is mediated by blood. This fear is manifest in the way wild animals, their meat, and their skulls are treated. There is a strict physical separation between wild and domesticated animal skulls on the trophy board. Mixing of wild and domesticated animal meat is also seen as a taboo, and therefore the two are never cooked together. *Ngôlô* is the most important spirit for long-distance hunts, such as those for musk deer, and is believed to be the caretaker of wild animals (the animal master). *Ngôlô* should be respected so that hunters are able to continuously get animals. In exchange, hunters make a payment in the form of a piece of metal and a small piece of meat from the dead animal. Like *ngôlô*, there are other spirits that offer health and wealth for an exchange. For example, *Aasa* is the spirit that looks after large trees and the forests near villages. Cutting these large trees is believed to annoy these spirits. In general, large trees are not cut down unless they are required for house construction. People cover the stumps of a chopped tree with mud and trees to prevent *Aasa* from seeing it. There are trees that should not be cut without performing certain rituals. The Mishmi act is in accordance with the obligation to

give, to receive, and to pay. For example, an act of reciprocity is followed when meat is shared. The person who shoots the animal gets the head. The rest is shared with others. The Mishmi have strong ethics when it comes to sharing both domesticated and wild animal meat. During festivals, meat is widely distributed among relatives and guests; similarly, sharing of meat between villagers is crucial during weddings and funerals. Therefore, wildlife hunting and slaughtering domesticated animals are taken very seriously as these activities signifies a complex network of exchanges exists between these two worlds, in which the slaughtered domesticated animals and the hunted wild animals form part of the exchange process. If certain taboos are not observed, there could be a disruption in the circulation of energy, causing illness, death, bad harvest, and hunting failures.

The relations of the Mishmi with animals are undergoing transformation because of the changes in their socio-economic situation. Cultural taboos, which were instituted to prevent the over-hunting of animals, are eroding due to changes in the belief system. The Mishmi who convert to Christianity do not follow hunting taboos. For example, those who have converted do not display animal skulls in their houses and have abandoned the ritualistic ways of worshiping spirits. However, they continue to hunt without necessarily following the rules. The Mishmi who are inclined to the Hindu belief system have stopped slaughtering mithuns, while some have even stopped eating meat. Those who have converted look down upon the traditional Mishmi beliefs as 'primitive' practices. The changing Mishmi–animal relations also need to be seen in the light of wildlife conservation practices brought in by conservation NGOs and the government.

Wildlife conservation in Arunachal

Places such as Arunachal have recently been subjected to a growing academic interest from ecologists and conservationists. Wildlife research in this region has increased in the region partly because of its inclusion in the Eastern Himalaya 'biodiversity hotspot' (Myers, et al. 2000). Setting up of protected areas has been one of the major approaches to conserve wildlife. Arunachal's forest department has set aside large tracts of land for conservation in the form of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. There are 11 wildlife sanctuaries and two national parks in the state, which are also designated as tiger reserves. The forest

department's engagement with the local communities for wildlife conservation has been slow, and it was not a priority for the government for a long time. NGOs (World Wide Fund for Nature, Wildlife Trust of India, and Nature Conservation Foundation) have played an active role in the conservation of protected areas, namely Pakke Tiger Reserve and Namdapha Tiger Reserve. However, lack of road connectivity and basic infrastructure made this region immune to active governance for a long time. Therefore, implementation of laws has been rather weak. In addition to this, due to the lack of economic alternatives for sustaining livelihoods in the region, people continue to hunt and trade wildlife parts to earn some extra cash (Hilaluddin, et al, 2005; Aiyadurai, et al. 2010).

Many NGOs have been working with indigenous peoples and implementing conservation projects by actively engaging with communities. There has been little or no social assessment or analysis of these projects to examine their impact on the local communities, and how these interventions are perceived by the local communities. Community-based conservation projects have been implemented in Arunachal to wean hunters away from hunting. Schools are being set up and awareness and health programmes are being conducted to encourage local communities to participate in conservation projects (Datta, 2007). In places such as Arunachal, the local people are dependent on wild animals and forest resources for subsistence, and have complex relations with the animals. Any conservation measure needs to take into account the locals' attitude towards natural resources and, especially, people-animal relations. Sociological studies on community-based conservation projects are now emerging from Northeast India (Aiyadurai and Banerjee,2019; Nijhawan, 2018; Roy, 2018). How the local people react to the conservation efforts of the state, NGOs, or biologists depends on their relations with the animals themselves. The cultural linkages of the Mishmi to the natural world and their subsistence-based livelihood place them in opposition to contemporary conservation practices (Aiyadurai and Velho, 2018).

This book explores multiple layers of wildlife conservation and asks why, how and in what ways the discussion of conservation and development needs rethinking. Primarily, the book is concerned about tiger conservation and its predicaments in Arunachal and it concentrates on the diverse human-nature

relations, especially Idu relations with animals. The state's view of tigers as national animals and the biologists' view of tigers are ecologically endangered species stand in opposition to the indigenous interpretations of nature that see animals and their habitats intrinsically connected as part of human lives. The story of the tiger brothers of the Idu Mishmi is a reminder to consider alternate ways of knowing nature and to give space to indigenous voices to make conservation more socially meaningful and inclusive.
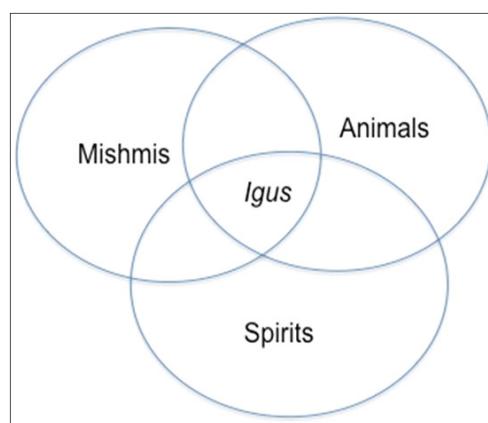
Fig. : 1

Fig. : 2

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CAN THE SUBALTERN PROTEST? TEA PLANTATION WORKERS OF ASSAM AND INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Phulmoni Das

Subaltern struggle is not a new phenomenon to Indian history. Movement, resistance and ideology are the three components and also interrelated factors that can determine the dynamics of social change. The functioning of the state cannot be fully understood without the understanding of the politics of the masses. It is sometimes the perception, beliefs, aspirations and the views of the subaltern classes which come into the conflict with the state apparatus. Most of the time, the collective action of people is often regarded as alienated, estranged, excluded and outside the polity. Collective action of the tea plantation workers of Assam in the form of protests and resistances were the manifestation of subaltern way of resistance against the dominant power structure. Protest of tea garden workers is an integral aspect while referring to the tea plantation in Assam. Strikes and protest of the workers were not unknown to the tea garden workers during colonial and even in the postcolonial period, though they have come in different forms and nature. The deprivation, suppression and exploitation of the workers at large sometimes led to sporadic violent outbursts and protests between tea garden workers and Planters during the colonial period. It is in this context, book, and *'Tea Plantation Workers of Assam and the Indian National Movement 1920- 1947'* written by, Bikash Nath is relevant. Author in his book, has given a historical account of the workers protests in the colonial period. Author has significantly located the protests of the workers in the period confined within 1921 to 1947. The reason cited by the author is that the perspective of the native bourgeoisies towards the subaltern

workers struggle was diabolic and therefore resistance of the workers never gets adequate recognition from the nationalist leaders. This period was also significant as simultaneously nation has witnessed national movement leaded by the congress and nationalist leaders. How the nationalist leaders perceive the workers struggle is significantly raised by the author. Book contains eight different chapters on workers protests in colonial period. But the readings of the book can be contextualized in the form of protests and resistances of the workers and how the protests of the workers are interpreted by the established knowledge of the Indian national movement and the leaders associated with it. Moreover the book has also laid down the description of the emergence of trade union culture in Assam and how far the trade unions of Assam has been successful in shaping the workers protests in colonial period is also dealt by the author.

Author here successfully describes the space of participation of the subalterns in the nation's struggle for freedom, and locating their struggle he mentions that space is not shared equally by all. Basic cause against the disowning by the nationalist leadership was that the bourgeoisie nationalist leadership would not encourage and embrace the working class and their way of struggle. Moreover the book also raises the pertinent question of 'spontaneity and autonomy' of the subaltern struggle. Theoretical ambiguities faced by the labour historian while defining the exact nature of the labourers' struggle is also mentioned in the book. Because of the peasant characteristics of the working class have been held responsible for the breakdown of working class solidarity is also highlighted by the author. In regard to the ambiguities in determining the nature of the workers protests, author has mentioned about the colonial socio economic set-up which created difficulty to determine the nature of exact capitalist development and the formation of working class in India during the colonial period. According to historians such as Eric Wolf, laborers' consciousness has been regarded as being devoid of the notion of pure proletarianised class conflict. The scenario in case of the tea garden workers can be said to be similar as previously they were mostly landless peasant but under colonial regime they lost their peasantry identity and did not enjoy the right of 'autonomous decisions' regarding the process of cultivation.[1]Therefore they have unable to develop the class consciousness and which subsequently affected their way of protesting against the capitalist power.

These tea garden worker recruits were mostly landless and deprived which has limited the workers to attain the class consciousness. But despite their heterogeneous background they have developed a sense of collective unity from their shared history of disposition, exploitation and sufferings to fight against common enemy of colonialism. Author has mentioned in detail about many examples which show this class's resistant through unorganized sporadic outbursts and strikes against the plantation authority. (p.146 -172) Tea plantation of Assam is the product of colonialism and migrant workers constitutes the core of the plantation system in Assam. As mentioned by the author, before joining the plantation economy workers were mostly peasant and the large scale colonisation of land and resources were responsible for the migration of tea plantation workers which subsequently transformed their peasant and tribesman characteristics to plantation workers. In the colonialist –capitalist discourse, labour was simply defined as a commodity which could be tamed and subjected to the discipline and authority of the tea planters. Everyday confrontation with the cruel realities in plantation regime such as hard work, discrimination, malnutrition and undernourishment, impoverishment, exploitation, disease etc has led to the death and desertion of the workers in Assam tea gardens. But the accounts of such painful experiences have not been recorded by the colonial bureaucracy. Even their individual identities remained unrecorded but were subsumed into anonymous 'gangs' and 'muster rolls', to be confined in 'depots' during the journey and 'coolie lines' upon arrival in the plantation. Like many of their counterparts, they have been relegated to the category of a 'people without history.' But contrary to the stereotype picture of the workers as 'helpless', 'ignorant', the workers too often showed their awareness about their rights although it was unsuccessful in most of the time. (p. 146-175)

Most significant aspect dealt by the author in the book was the ambivalent attitude of the nationalist Congress leaders and the leading periodicals of Assam during colonial period towards the protests of the workers of Assam. Moreover the 'thaumaturgical role' which was ascribed to Gandhi in the context of workers' protests worked as indirect catalysts and giving a sense of political knowledge to the workers. [2] Role of rumour played an important role in subaltern way of protests and author has mentioned this nature of subaltern protest by highlighting the worker's famous Chargola Exodus. Development of new kind of self-confidence

among the workers led to the departure from the tea estates by simply saying that it was on Gandhi's order *(hukum).* But despite their spontaneous and sporadic nature of protests against the plantation authority, their protests did not earn any consideration from the leaders of the Gandhi led- movement. Author opines that the nature of the protests of the tea plantation workers was significantly departure from the elitist led national movement. It was an autonomous domain of subaltern protests without any elitist method of struggle. Moreover author also describes that, subaltern started their protests without any bourgeois intervention and the trade union culture also did not have a great presence among the tea plantation workers, it is because of the strict surveillance of the colonial state as well as the late entry of trade unions in mobilizing the workers of tea estates.

Where the book falters slightly is its little mention about the colonial construction of waste land and its significant role in transformation of vast land into tea plantation area and its role in transforming the nature of the capitalist structure in Assam. Moreover it would be fascinating to know the authors view on subaltern nature of struggle in detail and how the different protests and resistance of subalterns groups happened in Assam and other parts of India against the colonial power structure has influenced the tea plantation workers consciousness and their mobilization against plantation regime. Keeping these minor research gap aside, Bikash Nath's book is an important contribution to understand the nature of subaltern protests and more specifically the collective resistance of tea plantation workers of Assam against the exploitative colonial regime.

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[2]Nath, Bikash. (2016). *'Tea Plantation Workers of Assam and the Indian National Movement 1921-1947'.* Primus Books, New Delhi, p. 158.

'DEVELOPMENT' IN THEORY AND PRACTICE :
THE CASE OF INDIA

Sanjukta Banerji Bhattacharya

"Development is not about factories, dams and roads. Development is about people. The goal is material, cultural and spiritual fulfilment for the people. The human factor is of supreme value in development".

Rajiv Gandhi (2013)

'Development' is a contested term – what it means to the World Bank, for instance, is certainly not what it means to Greenpeace activists; what it means to western developed countries, is not the same as what it means to countries like Bangladesh which has shown remarkable growth Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the past few years but may have severe problems in sustaining that growth in the face of any global economic slowdown, or India, which is the world's sixth largest economy by nominal GDP and the third largest by purchasing power parity (Silver, 2020), but has a Below Poverty Level (BPL) population of 21.9 percent on the basis of the World Bank 'poverty gap index' of $1.90 per day measured at 2011 purchasing power parity (PPP) prices (The Global Statistics, 2021) and a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.645 (2020), which gave it a global ranking of 131 out of 189 countries in 2021, which actually meant a drop of two ranks in two years, even though the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) noted that 27.1 crore Indians had been lifted out of poverty between 2005-06 and 2015-16. In this context, 'development' is also a political term because development is a

process bringing about change in socio-economic growth and status, and therefore raises the question of who has the power to bring about this change, and the implication is what agenda does that agency for change have?

I

It must also be stated at the beginning that the contemporary concept of 'development' is a western one, there being no Sanskrit equivalent for the meaning that we understand today. In the context of India, the English-Sanskrit dictionary, throws up words like 'pusti' meaning 'completeness', 'prapancana' meaning 'consciousness' etc, which connote spiritual development more than anything, with only 'vikasa' and 'vriddhi' connoting any closeness to growth that can be interpreted in the modern sense. In fact, rather than economic progress or human development, 'development' was seen more in terms of spiritual growth and enhancement in ancient and medieval times, with the most respect paid not to the richest person, but to one who had attained spiritual enlightenment, even though India had made such economic progress that it was its wealth that drew in invaders right through its history including the western nations. With colonialism, western concepts became universal and in the post-colonial phase, 'development' was viewed in the western sense as progress began to be measured in terms of GDP and per capita income. In fact, colonialism had changed the world: it had not only brought the world closer together, it had also enriched the western nations partly at the expense of the colonies – causing economic development in the west, while making the colonies economically dependent on the metropolises through channelling trade from the periphery to the centres, what has been termed as the "development of underdevelopment" (Frank, 1966). It is in this context that new theories of development, all initially originating in the west, were shaped. However, no theory in the social sciences is static since society itself is dynamic. Therefore, theories of modernization gave way to dependency theories, which in turn, were rejected in favour of theories of interdependence and globalization, which again were countered by grassroots development theories; and these were all interspersed

with doctrines of sustainable development, human development, gender and development etc. At this stage, many of the ideas were coming from non-western sources and the models on which these views were set were not only Latin American countries, but African countries, South Korea, China and India.

Modernization theories studied the process of social evolution and the development of societies. Its origin can be traced to Social Darwinism through Max Weber (Weber, 1987) regarding the role of rationality and irrationality in the transition from traditional to modern society, and later Talcott Parsons (Parsons, 1964) who carried this further. With de-colonization and the growth of democracy, modernization got linked with democracy and authors like Seymour Lipset, Larry Diamond and Juan Linz argued that economic growth is very important for democracy; that socioeconomic development helps social change that facilitates growth of democracy and other changes, like the development of a middle class, which is conducive to democracy. This argument was carried further by Walter Rostow in *Politics and the Stages of Growth* (Rostow, 1960), which spoke of five main stages of economic growth, and others like AFK Organski (Organski, 1965) and David Apter. (Apter, 1965). However, all these authors based their arguments on European history and expected the Third World to follow western growth patterns. In fact, the United States modelled its economic and food aid programmes to the Third World on theories like Rostow's expecting outcomes similar to that of Europe if sufficient developmental aid was pumped in.

This, of course, did not happen, and modernization theories were critiqued by scholars like Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein (Wallerstein, 1974) who argued that the underdevelopment of Third World nations derived from systematic exploitation of raw materials of the periphery by the centre, or the metropolis, something that began during colonial times when trade was structured to benefit the Western colonizers, and this structure continued into postcolonial times through neo-colonialism. Dependency models focused on Latin America but could be applied to all underdeveloped countries because they were all weaker

members in a world market economy. However, their prescriptions of import substitution industrialization, planning and state intervention and regional integration, also proved slow, often insufficient and inefficient, and sometimes not possible because of the small size of markets.

Dependency theories in turn, gave way to interdependence theories, that is, incorporating the complex relation between central and peripheral development and stressing global interdependence through global markets and trade. But the immediate prescription of massive financial transfers to the developing world in the 1970s and 1980s from Western commercial banks and international lending institutions resulted in a world debt crisis that has actually yet to be fully resolved. Two responses have to be noted here: one is the neo-liberal one which advocated restricting the role of the state and state planning in development and relying more on the market for optimal resource allocation. The second is more diffuse, recognizing the realities of power in which development has often degenerated into a rhetoric of admirable goals like providing basic human needs and services while operational goals focus on debt servicing, crisis management and also, defence of privilege.

In the 1970s, a new concept associated with development emerged, claiming that the rates of economic growth of the world economy could not be sustained at the then prevailing levels because arable land, water, and most other natural resources were being depleted at fast rates that could not be sustained for long. This led to the Brundtland Report in 1987 (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), which made "sustainable development" a key model in development studies as well as in the work of the World Bank and other organizations engaged in development. The report warned against the depletion of natural resources and called for economic growth strategies that could be sustained without harming the environment or compromising the welfare of future generations. Subsequently, it was acknowledged that development is both a quantitative increase in economic production and a qualitative improvement in life

conditions, while protecting the environment. At the same time, renowned economist Joseph Stiglitz argued that development is about transforming the lives of people, not just their economies, and, therefore, development involves every aspect of society; it engages the efforts of everyone: markets, governments, NGOs, cooperatives, and not-for-profit institutions (Stiglitz, 1998). Thus, true development can only be achieved when society acquires the capacity to utilize its human and natural resources efficiently to improve the quality of life for all citizens. Due to its comprehensive nature, development seeks to improve life conditions by helping to free people and their creative energies from all constrictions. In the modern sense, development also seeks to enable people to pursue personal goals within legitimate frameworks that guarantee fairness, equality of opportunity, freedom, and social justice. Development, therefore, is both a vision to create new, much-improved conditions of life and a programme to transform economic, political, and socio-cultural conditions to correspond to that vision (Rabie, 2016).

II

Given this theoretical background, let us next examine what kind of development trajectory India has had. Following a period of colonial economic and political exploitation which obviously had its social repercussions in fortifying religious, caste and even gender lines despite many liberal reforms that transformed society, post-independence India's economic policy was shaped by left-leaning liberals influenced by the Soviet model. India was principally an agricultural country which had been made into a producer of primary resources for the British market, and had stagnated for over a hundred years in this mode. Economics was at the root of thinking on India's development of our early leaders, who had a daunting task of lifting literally millions out of poverty on the one hand, and making India economically sufficient on the other. At the same time, a political stance was taken on caste, expanding reservations already instituted by the British, to encompass education and employment in the state sector hoping that this would lead to what we today call 'human development'. Such affirmative action was not taken for

women or religious minorities at the time. The Soviet model implied a planned economy with the centre guiding development. The Nehru-Mahalanobis approach, the basis of the Second Five Year Plan, stressed import substitution industrialization with a focus on the development of basic and heavy industries as a means of accelerating growth. In a way, this followed the pattern laid out by modernization theory, which emphasized western style industrialization-driven growth. Critics of this approach have noted, among other things, that the 'misbalanced' weightage on the industrial sector over agriculture led to an increase in food grain prices, which in turn, increased poverty and malnutrition. Land reforms, which were subsequently proposed to correct certain imbalances but were inadequately implemented in most states, were never directed to correct imbalances of caste, gender or religion, and as such, did not address inequalities based on exclusion. Later, following the theories of dependence, the 1970s saw measures to help Indian industry such as nationalization of industries and financial institutions, and massive increases in the tariffs of imported industrial products. This meant a continuation and strengthening of the state sector without correcting inefficiencies within this sector. Perhaps these were necessary steps in India's growth story, because when India did begin its process of liberalization and limited market capitalism, there was a degree of economic growth within the country that helped it to cope with the demands of the global market. State planning meant not just planning for industrial and agricultural growth (which had been done through the green revolution, again promoted by the state sector), but also resource allocation for human development like the education, health, insurance and other sectors. Given India's large BPL population, low employment opportunities and centuries of keeping certain sections socially backward, the importance of the state sector cannot be understated in providing basic needs, because market capitalism would have proved disastrous to the huge majority with extremely low per capita incomes, had it been introduced in the immediate post-independence period. Basic services like education and medical services would have been beyond their reach. Further, it must be remembered that the private sector was never stifled in India despite the heavy

emphasis on central planning and aid; resultantly, when liberalization began in the 1990s, there was enough private capital in the country to fuel market capitalism, which, in turn, attracted foreign capital, leading to phenomenal growth rates for several years. Liberalization follows the global interdependence theory, which implies that India fits into the scheme of global theoretical trajectories as they go.

But does it? It may be noted here that every country is unique and has its own peculiarities with disparities in 'development' within the state, apart from the fact that the same prescriptions may produce different outcomes depending on predictable and unpredictable variables; further, it has already been stated that theories are not static and every theory has various models. The Indian model is intricate because of its historical complexities of inclusion and exclusion, and the fact that this complexity was compounded further by whoever was in power at different points of history, since each followed policies that included some and excluded others in their 'development' projects. Further, western theories suggest a link between industrial growth and development in general. India, on the other hand, has witnessed economic growth based on the expansion of the services sector. It has been argued that the pattern of Indian development has been a specific one and that the country may be able to skip the intermediate industrialisation-led phase in the transformation of its economic structure (Kochhar et al, 2006). However, this kind of growth does not generate jobs and there have been serious concerns about the jobless nature of India's economic development which would certainly exclude some sections from the benefits of growth (Novotny, Ramachandran, 2010). Moreover, the rate of growth has varied between and within states and one can safely state that there is no single, national Indian economy. There are sharp regional variations in terms of poverty, availability of infrastructure and socio-economic development indices, that is, literacy rates, life expectancy, income, and living conditions. Also, there are intra-state variations based on, for instance, literacy, gender, urban and rural divides, and also among various social groups, especially, religious, which is also related to gender. All these obviously, have an impact on our overall human development index. While on the surface

there may seem to be clear winners and losers in India's ongoing development trajectory, the country's recent performance and consequently, future prospects, are much more nuanced. Many high-performing states still lack investment in infrastructure and education, while some low-income states have seen robust growth in recent years because of more appropriate local government policies. In fact, each of the country's 28 states and 8 territories essentially has its own economy, its own regulations, and its own attitudes toward economic reform. As a result, there is a high degree of variation in economic and business conditions across the subcontinent and correspondingly, social indicators of development also vary.

Perhaps this can explain why our Human Development Index (HDI) does not correspond to that of our previously soaring GDP growth rates, and also the regional variations in HDI. According to 2019 UNDP figures, Kerala with an index of 0.782 has the highest HDI, while Bihar with 0.574 has the lowest. None of the states are however, comparable to any developed western state. At the same time, if we look at the degree of improvement in the last 20 years or so, there is remarkable change for the better. Kerala's HDI in 1990 was 0.544, and if we look at the 2018 figure of 0.790, there has been a rise of 0.246 in the index. Bihar was 0.378 in 1990; the 2018 figure of 0.576 marks a rise of 0.198 indices. The national average HDI for India was 0.467 as late as 2008; in 2018 it was 0.647, which implies a 50 percent growth in 10 years, and now India is above the average for the medium human development group of countries, ranking 131st out of 189 countries and its HDI is marginally above the average for other South Asian countries (0.641; Sri Lanka, however, is ranked far above India with a HDI of 0.782). This is because in the last three decades, life expectancy at birth in India increased by 11.6 years, whereas the average number of schooling years increased by 3.5 years (Global Data Lab). Per capita incomes increased from US\$ 1,670 in 2016 to (an expected) US\$ 1800 in 2019-2020; but it may be noted simultaneously that the per capita income of Goa is far higher than the national average, while that of Bihar is far below, signifying major inter-state differences in industrial and human development (*Statistics Times*, 2021).

While some of the statistics may be heartening especially when compared to earlier figures, there is another part to this story. Despite lifting 271 million people out of poverty between 2005 and 2015, a recent report on Global Social Mobility at the 2020 World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked India 76th out of 82 countries in social mobility with a score of 42.7, noting its low life expectancy, low educational quality and equity (scoring 31.3), second highest level (behind Saudi Arabia) of workers in vulnerable employment (76.2 percent), low female labour participation (29.8 percent of male labour participation), low social protection (2.68 percent of GDP), to name a few (World Economic Forum, 2020). Moreover, according to the latest WEF report on gender, India dropped 28 ranks in the gender gap index following the Covid pandemic to rank 140th out of 156 countries having dropped in performance, especially in labour participation and access to finance, educational attainment, health and survival and even political empowerment of females (World Economic Forum, 2021). The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) *Human Development Report 2019* stated that as the number of people coming out of poverty is increasing, the world is veering towards another type of poverty. The old inequalities were based on access to health services and education whereas the next generation of poverty is based on technology, education and climate change. India has both types of poverty. Even as Indians continue to face a lack of access to healthcare and education, many others are becoming poor based on the new criteria. According to the UNDP administrator, Achim Steiner, "What we are seeing today is the crest of a wave of inequality. What happens next comes down to choice...politicians and policymakers have a battery of choices that, if correctly combined for the context of each country or group, will translate into a lifelong investment in equality and sustainability." (UNDP, 2019). This statement further emphasizes the point made earlier that the issue of development is also political. The kind of choices our leaders have made have led to unprecedented growth in GDP, which of course, has translated into higher incomes, better educational levels and state-of-the-art health care at the urban level even for those who are not affluent. But at the same time, has it

lessened unemployment? Has development had a trickle-down effect? Have policies been pro-rich, and inversely, anti-poor? How have they affected the middle-income group? Have they increased rural-urban divides? Have they truly addressed gender issues? And in the context of the ongoing pandemic: have they increased social inequalities?

III

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize equality of opportunity and reducing inequality of outcomes, the elimination of discrimination in law, policy and social practice, and socio-economic inclusion of all under the banner goal 'to leave nobody behind' (United Nations, 2015). ''All'' here means, ''irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status''. However, there is no mention of caste, the UN terminology for inherited status being "work and descent". While prohibited by international human rights law, caste or 'work and descent' based exclusion is excluded from the international agendas of negotiations such as SDGs. Yet, some international human rights groups claim that caste or 'work and descent' is a fundamental determinant of exclusion and development.

On the issue of gender, there is a lot of literature on gender and development ever since the publication of the Danish development analyst, Ester Boserup's book, *Women's Role in Economic Development,* in the 1970s, where she focused on integrating women's needs into development agendas. But gender inequalities in development continue to persist because most countries do not focus on the particular needs of women. There are two types of needs: practical and strategic. Practical needs include improving women's health and services for their families, increasing their income and reducing their workload. Strategic needs, on the other hand, include improving their educational opportunities, gaining equal opportunity for employment and ownership, and increasing their participation in decision making (Moser, 1993). The concept of 'empowerment' was another approach focusing on removing social and institutional barriers to reach structural change in gender

relations as well as economic growth. These approaches, especially empowerment, with its emphasis on structural change, illustrate that gender has a very important role to play in the initiation and promotion of sustainable development, especially in rural areas. At the national and international levels, attempts have been made to empower women and integrate their needs into development agendas through international conventions, national law and allocation of resources. But on the ground, gender disparities continue in the workplace, in access to educational opportunities, property ownership, decision making, and representation, to name a few. In India, the increase in the gender gap reported at the WEF report of 2021, brings out the stark realities of women's development or the lack thereof, at the ground level, belying the goal of leaving 'nobody' behind. Women often land up doing reproductive as well as productive work, but are denied entitlements like a right to the land that they till while their men folk move to cities and do much easier but better paying work like being lift-mans or security guards in housing complexes. They also have no decision on the end product of their labour, whether it will be marketed or consumed at home, or if marketed, how will the money be divided or spent. While poor children, especially in the rural sector, suffered a setback in education due to school closures during the pandemic, it was the male children in poor households who benefited from online education because it was they who had access to smart phones if the family could afford one or the government paid for one. Girl children were denied priority. As a result, the gender gap in education has increased among both the rural and urban poor.

In India, there is a lot of inter-linkage between caste, gender and religion. All three are identities in the political sense when it comes to the politics of development, and there is certainly politics involved here because whoever sets the agenda has the power to frame policies that will impact development, perhaps excluding some. Caste, in a way, is central to the debate on development because it is a residue of religious and social practices and its reflection can be found in other religions like Christianity and Islam in India to which many lower and upper caste Hindus converted and carried the vestiges of caste prejudices with them,

which now some wish to politicize by demanding OBC status for groups within these religions (which are supposed to be casteless) for the political benefits that go with reservation. Gender is also central to religion and caste because of women's secondary status in all religions and castes. The Indian Constitution outlawed 'untouchability' and gave reservations in public sector employment and government funded educational institutions to the Scheduled Castes (SC). But although educational and employment levels increased, did it really help in human development? Many of the manual scavenger jobs in the public sector, for instance, the railways, which have toilets and train tracks, have gone go to SCs. While permanent scavenger type jobs help them get better salaries, do they improve their status? Moreover, the economic reforms in the country, which were introduced in the 1990s, have significantly shrunk the breadth and scope of public sector employment, while government educational institutes have expanded reservations to almost 50 percent in some states. So, educational attainment has increased for SCs and other 'backward' groups, but the scope for employment commensurate with that education may be shrinking.

In this context, it is pertinent to mention the capabilities approach theory of Indian economist Amartya Sen, who based it on his experience of India's development; he challenged the concept of measuring development by economic growth. While acknowledging that radical redistributive policies are needed for the poor to benefit from growth, he saw human development as the expansion of citizens' capabilities (Sen, 1987). In India, attempts have been made to increase school enrolment and keeping the child in school by measures like providing free books, mid-day meals, scholarships, the idea being that better schooling will increase capabilities and therefore life choices. However, the intricacies of caste and religion have led to outcomes that are less than the expected goal. Various studies have shown that while literacy rates have increased all around, firstly, they do not compare to growth in countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand or Indonesia; and secondly, enrolments are influenced by community norms like religion and caste, and within these, gender, with enrolment rates for Dalit and Muslim girls being much lower

than the general Hindu group. There is variance again on the degree of community effect based on the educational level of the parents, as well as between urban and rural areas. This would imply that Dalits and Muslim children in villages have less of a chance of benefiting from state policies on development than those in the city because of something called the 'community effect', and women of these groups are the worst sufferers. In a way, those who should benefit from government policies are the ones who are deprived, partly because of the prevalence of caste and religious prejudices within castes and communities. And the other part? How efficient has the government been in pursuing its developmental policies that refer to the underdeveloped in this emerging country? What percentage of our resources is actually allocated to elementary and secondary education at the village level for the uplift of the underprivileged? Is 'Sabke Saath, Sabka Vikas' a reality or a mere election slogan? Further, there are quite a few political parties in India now which are ostensibly SC or backward class based, and they have held power in certain states for several years. What has been the track record of such political parties with regard to grassroots development issues, especially those concerning lower and backward castes and classes, and particularly women of these groups, in the states where they have been voted to power?

Under the Right to Education Act, 2009, the government is mandated to provide elementary education to all children between six and 14 years of age; but the Economic Survey of 2019-2020 noted that the expenditure on education by the Centre and the states between 2014-15 and 2018-19 as a proportion of the GDP was around three percent only (Ministry of Finance, 2020). India's expenditure in the health sector is even worse. Despite the pressures of the pandemic, India spent only 1.8 percent of its GDP on health in 2020-21; it had varied from 1 to 1.5 percent in previous years, which is among the lowest that any government spends on health. As a result, there are huge infrastructure inadequacies as well as major inter-state and inter-regional variations in the availability of both education and healthcare in India. And these are the basic building-blocks of human development in any country.

IV

In conclusion, it may be said that India's growth story is unique in that while the GDP has grown exponentially in the last 20 years, human development indices have stagnated and in some cases like the gender gap, regressed. According to Nobel prize-winning economists Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, "One very real danger is that in trying to hold on to fast growth, countries facing sharply slowing growth will veer toward policies that hurt the poor now in the name of future growth. In a bid to preserve growth, many countries have interpreted the prescription to be business friendly as a license to enact all kinds of anti-poor, pro-rich policies, such as tax cuts for the rich and bailouts for corporations" (Banerjee & Duflo, 2020). They further added, "The explosion of inequality in economies that are no longer growing is bad news for future growth. The political backlash leads to the election of populist leaders touting miracle solutions that rarely work". These observations are very pertinent to India from which Banerjee hails. What the two also note is that GDP is a means to an end and not the end itself, which is improving the quality of life, especially for those who are the worst off. And quality of life does not mean just consumption; it means a feeling of worth and respect, health, education, having their voices heard and following dreams. The prescription? According to Banerjee and Duflo, "In the absence of a magic potion for development, the best way to profoundly transform millions of lives is not to try in vain to boost growth. It is to focus squarely on the thing that growth is supposed to improve: the well-being of the poor".

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) brought out a report in 2021 (UNCTAD, 2021), which noted that India "suffered a contraction" of 7 percent in 2020, but is expected to grow 7.2 percent in 2021; the projected economic growth for 2022 is 6.7 percent. It further stated that "The recovery in India is constrained by the ongoing human and economic cost of COVID-19 and the negative impact of food price inflation on private consumption". A slower economic growth, high inflationary prices of food and fuel, can hamper

human development, and without 'sabka vikas', India can only remain a developing country when measured by the modern accepted criteria of 'development'.

As mentioned at the beginning, 'development' is also a political term because the agenda for development is set by whoever is in power. In a democracy, 'sabke saath, sabka vikas' or 'together with all, development for all' is a worthwhile slogan; it should include people from all religious groups, the underprivileged among the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and women – they should have a voice along with the privileged and be empowered to follow their dreams. Policies should be framed in consultation with groups who are expected to benefit from these policies since it is they who best know their needs; they should also be widely discussed before they are adopted and implemented to see whether they help actually designated groups and are not detrimental to other groups. It is only then, perhaps, that India's growth trajectory could encompass all, leaving 'nobody' behind.

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DEVELOPMENT AND WEAKER SECTIONS : UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM AND ITS IMPACT IN THE CONTEXT OF ASSAM

Dolly Phukon

Abstract

Development is characterized with a complex interplay between various societal structures led by multiple or single actors or agents under different contexts at a different pace. Development can be symmetrical or asymmetrical, leading to conflict of interests. In view of this, meaning of development, its kind, nature, implications have been a multidimensional phenomenon. Understanding development is subject to the material and the cultural aspirations of different societies. Likewise, term weaker section carries a broad diverse contextual meaning. In general, it signifies those people who are backward economically, socially, politically in comparison to 'others'. For identification of the weaker sections, the Government has categorized the weaker sections into ST, SC, MOBC/OBC, EWS etc. Further, to identify one as weak or others as weak is associated with certain political motives. The word weaker-section is a very fluid and relative word to deal with. With changing contexts or situation, the position or magnitude of weaknesses differs. Weaker sections itself signifies heterogeneity as well be the subjective and objective position of the individual/community claiming or termed as

weak. The developmental policies adopted by the government also influence the weaker sections position. In this context, this paper tries to throw a brief overview of the development paradigm practiced in Assam and its impact on its people, ecology and identity.

Key Words : *Development, Dispossession, Extractionist Economy, Weaker Sections.*

Development means improvement; change in a situation in case of economic and societal systems of society. In simple words, it denotes the affordability and availability of the basic needs i.e., healthy food, decent clothing and a safe place to lead a life of dignity and respect. It is characterized with a complex interplay between various societal structures led by multiple or single actors or agents under different contexts at a different pace. Development can be symmetrical or asymmetrical, leading to conflict of interests. In view of this, meaning of development, its kind, nature, implications have been a multidimensional phenomenon. Understanding development is subject to the material and the cultural aspirations of different societies (Richard & Hartwick, 2010, p.1). In conventional understanding, development and economic growth has been used interchangeably. Of late this modernist definition of development has been criticized due to its blind understanding of how economic development can occur[1] without addressing the various inequalities that exists in the society. Further for a better understanding of development, the power relationships that exists at different level of societies at regional, societal, personal level on the basis of ownerships, investments, profits, information, communication for exchanging material and non-material goods needs to be addressed.

The development paradigm in India has followed the discourse initiated by UNDP starting with the approach to basic needs as a development strategy enhancing the arena of economic security with a poverty alleviation agenda to a rather contradictory paradigm of the structural adjustment programs which is based on donor's prescription to the postcolonial government to cutbacks, privatization

and free market in its development and economic policies with an exclusion to human security. But due to the failure of the SAP, another measure was adopted by the state i.e. good governance which meant meaningful and inclusive political participation so that the institutions and processes could be made more responsive to the needs of the poor by strengthening electoral, legislative and justice delivery system to put a veil on the adverse effects of the structural adjustment policies on the post-colonial state which adopted free-market ideology, minimizing role of State apparatus etc. The donor agencies found out the ineffectiveness of the SAP due to bad governance characterized by non-transparent, corrupt and undemocratic policy formulations. With this, the term good governance became a prime condition for availing development assistance from the donor agencies. Ilan kapoor, observed that the post-colonial states were blamed with bad governance and in lieu of it they tend to face some sort of external intervention from the first world in the shape of policy directives to convert bad governance into good governance (Kapoor, 2008, p.29-31).Good governance also demands for a strong civil society as debated by the neo-liberalist agenda which tame the civil society by constructing the civil society by funding its NGOs. Neera Chandoke refers the return of civil society as a part of neo-liberal projects such as privatization, de-nationalization, de-regulation and de-stabilization with an aim to roll back the state. Thus, civil society tends to unleash the market forces and retreat the state from social engagements (Chandoke, 1995, p.10-11).The market on the other-hand tries to rationalize and legitimize social inequalities with the hegemonic ideologies and mythologies which tend to universalize the character of the civil society as an arena of free choice for the individual (ibid, p. 195) Thus if one looks critically, the role of civil society to check bad governance happens to be a profitable agenda of the donor agencies. The civil society in the post-colonial state is different from that of the first world. The civil society of the post-colonial states are of fragmented nature due to the long history of colonial rule, emergence of political leadership from a small group of educated class mostly belonging to the wealthy sections among the colonized people and finally ended up with bureaucratic, patrimonial rule after independence.

Weaker Sections- An Understanding:

Now coming to the context of who are the weaker sections of the society, the term weaker section carries a broad diverse contextual meaning. In general it signifies those people who are backward economically, socially, politically in comparison to 'others'. For identification of the weaker sections, the Government has categorized the weaker sections into ST, SC, MOBC/OBC, EWS etc. Further, to identify one as weak or others as weak is associated with certain political motives. The word weaker-section is a very fluid and relative word to deal with. With changing contexts or situation, the position or magnitude of weaknesses differs. Weaker sections itself signifies heterogeneity as well be the subjective and objective position of the individual/community claiming or termed as weak. The developmental policies adopted by the government also influence the weaker sections position. The development paradigm based on the idea of five-year plan in India and subsequent state intervention in implementation is predominantly spelled out in the domain of economic policy between growth and equity backed by the modernization theorists. Though planning is criticized by the liberalists as it goes against the free-market ideology where certain technocrats are assigned the power to visualize and implement their visualization on behalf of the nation, the Third World State in order to pacify tried to design the development model in favour of the market forces (Srivatsan, 2016).This move has ultimately has led to a further more complicated class structure in India creating multilayered weaker sections.

Weaker sections in Assam: Vulnerabilities and Challenges

In this paper, I am trying to analyse and identify the weaker section not on the basis of caste, but on the basis of the dispossessed classes of people who have become the prey to the present phenomenon of development based on the economy of extraction. In this context, this portion of my paper tries to throw a brief overview of the development paradigm practiced in Assam and its impact on its people, ecology and identity.

I

Development cannot happen without sustainability: As per the Human Development Report, 2007, Climate change has been one of the most defining factors of human development which threatens to erode human freedoms and limit choices. It calls into question the enlightenment principle that human progress will make the future look better than the past.Global warming, tragedy of global commons has led to environmental concerns linking environment with human being on three basic issues: conservation and sustainability of resource, sink problem-emission or dumping of the developmental waste and the ethical issue, to foster a balance between nature and humankind by reframing the development agenda conservation of wildlife and wilderness, change agricultural practices-organic farming and the respect for others. Now coming to the context of Assam, the development paradigm in Assam has been bases on the arena of extraction of four important resources of the land, coal, oil, tea and water recourses. In this connection, we can see the contexts of coal mining in Saleki Proposed Reserved Forest, Auction of Oil Fields to the Private Sectors, Baghjan Tragedy, Large dam projects etc.

The changing ecological landscape in Assam and as a developmental impact can be traced back to the colonial period. The modernisation backed developmental model was looked up as the model for development in Assam. As per the narratives of Anandaram Dekhiyal Phukoon in his four essays published in '*Inglandor Biboron*' published in the newspaper '*Orunodoi*', talks highly about the educational and industrial progress of England and wished to see Assam prosper on lines of industry and agricultural progress with modern technologies. He further prayed to the 'All Gracious God to shower the people of Assam with a desire to work to transform the jungles of Assam (Habi) into flower garden, let the logs plying in the rivers transforms into steam-ships, bamboo house be changed into brick walls, villages into towns and cities with schools, colleges, hospitals and homes for the destitute etc' (Neog, 1980). This narrative could easily explain the visions of modernity and in the post Treaty of Yandaboo, the wastelands (unused lands) in the then colonial Assam was transformed into plantations land

keeping in mind the financial colonial logic for collecting revenue. With the plantation industry new classes were formed with immigrant tea-garden workers, class of skilled Bengali peasants and new class of tea-planters in the Brahmaputra Valley.

Even extraction of Oil has a same type of colonial extraction history. Even in the post colonial era, after the replacement of the white masters, these resources of Assam still remained in the hands of Indian big capital. Dr. Hiren Gohain in an interview with *The Wire* said:

> 'Look at Assam's tea and oil industries. These are usually thought of in Assam as major resources but the people have no control over it. They never had any control over it before nor do they have it now. The western imperialists are gone but their place has been taken by, let's say, Indian big capital. As a result, people have no idea how it is really functioning, whether it could have done some good to the economy of the state and give it a push forward for development.' (Barooah, 2017, The Wire)

Further the same is the case with the BCPL, which has failed to directly benefit the locals. No auxiliary industries were built tolift the economic state of the people living near it. The proposed Plastic Park near Tinsukia is yet to function to produce the plastic products to be used by the local markets. OIL, BCPL, Tea and Coal industries were built to but what it producing something that could be sent to rest of India (ibid, 2017)

The demographic survey on the land where these industries were built would reveal the traumatic history and narratives of the displaced people who has lost their livelihoods.In an article by Anupam Chakravarty, henarrated how the Assam's Tribal communities are losing their land and livelihoods to legal and illegal coalmining.The recent controversial coal mining area near the Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary has been the home to the Khamti, Singpho, Sema Nagas, Tangsa, Tai-Phake, Syam, Aitom, Nocte and other communities who have been

impacted by mining and deforestation that displaced them from lands that traditionally belonged to them. These tribes were robbed off their rights over the forest resources that they depended upon. The heavy illegal extraction, has deteriorated the soil and water quality around Dehing Patkai which has not only posed a challenge to the rich ecosystem but also has risked the livelihood and culture of the communities resigning in the foothill of Dehing Patkai (Chakravarty, 2020).As Hiren Gohai claimed, how the Industries in Assam actually were set up only to feed the needs of other states without any longstanding benefits to the local communities, even the extracted coal supports thousands of tea factories, thermal power plants, small-scale iron smelters and brick kilns in the Brahmaputra valley in Assam to Punjab and Haryana. These kinds of development can be cited as development by dispossession hereby creating a weaker section based on landlessness as well as loss of identity. For example, the dumping of chemical waste from BCPL into the Sesa River has displaced the fishing communities from their livelihood securities.

The recent Baghjan Tragedy[ii] clearly depicts the lack of safety and environmental governance in the implementation of extraction industries. The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) was not followed which has led to a huge lost of biodiversity and human habitat. It has been OIL was extracting oil and gas without proper environmental clearances and biodiversity impact assessment hereby violating the environment-related acts and rules of the country during its operation. (Chakravarty, 2020)

Interestingly without learning from two tragedies, Dikom Oil Blowout and Baghjan the draft EIA 2020 aims to legalise such environmental violations through post-facto clearance without disciplinary action. The community ownership of land, grazing land, forests, aquatic resources were undermined hampering not only the livelihood of the community but at the same time has robbed off from them the memories of associated with the landscape. The draft EIA 2020 is also subverting the Constitution by limiting the inclusion of local decision-making bodies and public participation in the region hereby in the name of so called 'national interest'. Further the auction of Oil fields to private bidders would certainly lead to a massive displacement and disruption of livelihood of already marginalised communities.

Besides Oil, Tea and Coal, harnessing the water resource to produce hydro-electricity has been another vision towards development. The resistance against big dams in Northeast India has been a proof of how development is sought not for the people of this region, but only to extract wealth and resources to the central capitalist Industries. Sanjib Baruah in his article, *Whose River Is It Anyway?* has expressed his concern on the extraction politics of hydro-power and its effects on the natives. He opined, 'The large dams being built on the rivers of the eastern Himalayas have become highly controversial. The hydropower that north-east India is expected to produce is meant almost entirely for use elsewhere. The construction of these dams was directed exclusively towards extracting hydropower but not to be multipurpose dams (hydropower, irrigation, flood mitigation, navigation) to distribute evenly the potential gains and losses. Then closure of the water commons which is the inevitable outcome of these dams would have a devastating impacton the lives of millions, especially the rural poor whodepend on the water commons in multiple ways for their living' (Baruah, 2012). Though compensation would be paid for the immediate displaced rural people but the cost effects of the people who depends on the river in the downstream for their livelihoods are not accounted. Sanjib Baruah cited a practical example of the affects of the construction of Ranganadi Hydropower Plant located at Yazali of Lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh operated by NEEPCO has not only changed the course of the river and affected the ecosystem but also the public access to the river. A village nearby the project has been suffering ever since its operation when it's released water without notices washes away crops, cattle. Fear of life of the children of the village became a nightmare for the villagers and after complaints to the authorities of Yazali plant's management issued the following notification to refrain the going to the river and also restricted the cattle from moving around the river/reservoir during the monsoon period. The corporation would not take any responsibility for any loss of life of human, and cattle, etc. Thus, these effects on the locals who are dispossessed from the belongingness to the river as a means of livelihood has not been accounted as in terms of the capitalist mentality these are nonmarket means of livelihood. (ibid, 2012)

II

Issue of Identity and vulnerability of Weaker Section: The issue of identity has been another example of the development paradigm linked with the control over land, citizenship rights and belongingness. Resources and concern for autonomy of the people of Assam dates back to the colonial visions of capitalist development which changed the landscape of the region by introducing extraction economy on the basis of tea, oil, coal etc. This required a different land policy to transfer the abundant forest lands and unsettled lands which were termed as wastelands to profitable marketable land. This vision has led to the development of Tea-Gardens, Mining of Coal and Extraction of Oil under direct control of the colonial masters and after independence to the capitalists. These industries required a massive workforce which culminated into migrations, ultimately leading to the change of demography of Assam. In due course of time, concerns related to identity crisis on linguistic and cultural lines led to the historic Assam Movement and aftermath various ethnic movements with their own demands for autonomy and rights over land and her resources.

The announcement of the draft NRC on July, 2018 reflecting the exclusion of more than four million people has led to unrests and even suicides. Furthermore, two dichotomous understanding in support and against NRC along polarized linguistic and regional line could be seen among the people of Brahmaputra Valley and Barak Valley. The difference was based on identity issues backed by deprivation on linguistic lines along with the issue of illegal migrants whereas NRC was seen to be a legal way of solving the autonomy question around the territorial control over land and its resources by the indigenous people of the region. The proof of indigeneity has been the legacy data creating problem for securing the identities and claims of the migrated unorganized workforce as well as women folks. The process has alienated the Muslims of East Bengali Heritage. (Barbaroah, 2019)

The issue of land alienation due to the British policy of granting huge lands to European tea planters as well as the migration of Bengali settlers from East Bengal, now Bangladesh was a huge concern for the Assamese middle-class elites. These concerns finally culminated to the creation of tribal belts and blocks

under the Assam land revenue regulations securing the rights of the tribal belts and blocks from transferring them to non-tribal people. Further agricultural land protection was another important area of concern which aggravated criticism and protest from KMSS led by Akhil Gogoi criticizing the Congress government of Assam under whose regime the transfer of indigenous agricultural land to commercial traders. This protest led to the Assam Agricultural Land Regulation of Reclassification and transfer for Non-Agricultural Purpose Act, 2015 which prohibited the transfer of Agricultural land for non-agricultural purpose and in case of transfer such land shouldn't be used for agricultural purpose for at least 10 years. This law was again opted for amendment by the present BJP led government, an ordinance to ensure automatic reclassification of agricultural land once the purchaser makes a self-declaration to the effect that the land is purchased for establishing an industry. In case this ordinance is passed then the development of the capitalists by dispossessing the locals will be an added feather to the cap of the neo-liberal agenda of the state. To substantiate, controversy of Rowmari village located in Chirang district of Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD) following allotment of some 485 hectares of its land to Patanali Ayurved, managed by Baba Ramdev. The Bodoland Territorial Council which administers BTAD, home to plains tribes (mainly the Bodos), has made the allotment for setting up a *yogpith.*(Azad, 2019). Allotment of 150 acres of land by the Assam Government in 2016 in the state's Sonitpur district to Ramdev-owned Patanjali Herbal for setting up manufacturing units in the name of Patanjali Herbal and Mega Food Park also has created huge resentment. (Barooah, 2016)

Conclusion:

The dispossession of the people from their entitlements to the natural resources like their native lands, forest resources, the eviction of tribal's, from forests that have been their home for decades due to government's leasing them to the mining companies. Development induced displacement due to the construction of Dams without a proper resettlement policy has robbed the people off their right to livelihood securities. The naturally displaced people of Laika Dodhiya which falls in Tinsukia and Dibrugarh District of Assam have since the great earthquake

of 1950s has been waiting for a permanent settlement which has been denied to them. Most of the displaced 3000 people belonged to the Mising tribes. The State has virtually failed to guarantee the basic human rights of the minorities and backward communities due to the politics of accumulation through dispossession. Michael Levien within this context has advanced the concept of "regimes of dispossession" to analyze how dispossession has been politically organized over different socio-historical contexts to serve different class interests with diverse hierarchical economic effects and political "success" (Levien, 2015). Citing Fernandes, Levien tried to highlight the trend of dispossession in India just after independence and in post-1990s. Previously land dispossession was due to the State-Led Development Projects and after liberalization of Indian economy, the trend of dispossession increased as it shifted towards forceful eviction of people in favour of privatized forms of industry, real estate and infrastructure (ibid).Thus, in this present scenario, development of the weaker section of the society requires a paradigm shift in understanding development from exclusionary development to inclusionary one.

End Notes :

[1]The measurement of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and GNI (Gross National Income) has failed to address the inequality in class, ethnicity, gender, geographical location as GDP measures only a part of production which are sold in formal markets and GNI fails to incorporate the informal incomes earned by the poverty ridden people.

[2]**Baghjan gas leak** is a natural gas blowout that occurred on 27th May, 2020 in Oil India Limited's Baghjan well No 5 in Baghjan Oilfield in the Tinsulia District of Assam, India causing three deaths, large scale displacement of the local population, loss of property and huge environmental damage to the Dibru-Saikhowa National Park and Maguri -Motapung Wetland. It took almost six months to kill the well.

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CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ECOLOGICAL ABJECT : THE POLITICS OF THE ANTHROPOCENE IN *GUN ISLAND*

Mridul Bordoloi

Abstract

This article proposes to undertake a politically charged environmental reading of Amitav Ghosh's Gun Island (2019). The dangers of the Anthropocene are evident in the form of global warming and climate change. The gradualist and denialist mentalité, which is part of capitalist geo-politics or 'Capitalocene', has done irreparable harm unto nature, causing climate change and global warming to a scale hitherto unimaginable. In Amitav Ghosh's Gun Island, there are many instances of sighting of species in places where their existence had never been in evidence in recorded history or public memory. These "strange strangers" (Morton) constitute what may be termed as the ecological abject or uncanny. This article attempts to understand the politics of the Anthropocene – how it generates a worldview that denies warning signs that are apparent in the environment. The article also tries to understand the significance of the ecological abject – the presence of 'strange strangers' – amidst alien surroundings, and what it bodes for the ecosystem, the non-human, and the human.

Keywords: *Anthropocene, ecological uncanny, global warming, climate change, strange strangers.*

Amitav Ghosh's non-fictional work *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016) raised several pertinent issues. One of his most telling observations was his attempt at understanding why writers of fiction did not engage with environmental issues to the extent that they should have. Ghosh also questioned why global warming and climate change were not 'interesting' enough themes to whet the aesthetic imaginary of fiction writers? Despite tell-tale signs of the looming catastrophe confronting human civilisation due to ecological crisis, everybody, including committed creative writers, seemed to have turned a blind eye to it. Ghosh acknowledged that he himself did not focus much on environment issues in his past works (both fiction and non-fiction). He rationalised this 'neglect' towards nature to humans ideological indoctrination to 'belief in uniformitarianism' (Ghosh, 2016, p. 34). This notion finds traction in Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge's theoretical distinction between 'gradualism' and 'catastrophism' – antithetical schools of thought – the former emphasising on natural and slower processes of change or decay, while the latter underscored processes that were swift and cataclysmic, resulting in massive rupture. Ghosh's contention is that the culture of rationality (which is compatible with gradualist *mentalité)* came to be endorsed by fiction writers insofar as it corresponded with the quotidian bourgeois everyday life. Therefore, 'realism' came to be the defining shibboleth of fictional/novel writing, and it went a long way in subsuming the improbable or the 'uncanny' phenomenon of nature. The regime of the belief in gradualism came to be so deeply entrenched in modern human consciousness that catastrophic pronouncements about the impending environmental crises (in the form of global warming and climate change) were, till recently, and assumed to be nothing more than improbable apocalyptic prognostications.

However, from 1970s onwards, awareness about nature in the field of Humanities seems to have increased, especially on account of the efforts of certain environmentally-concerned academic groups like The Association for Literature and the Environment (ASLE), Association for Literature, Environment, and Culture in Canada (ALECC), European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and the Environment (EASLCE) and so forth, all of which attempted to read literary texts by adopting an environmental perspective. A sub-genre of literature

termed as "ecofiction" and a branch of theory/criticism termed as "ecocriticism" came into being, and these went a long way in classifying works of fiction as environmental fiction, climate fiction (cli-fi), green fiction, etc. Ecocriticism contributed by approaching literary texts from the deep ecological, non-anthropocentric perspective at the beginning, but gradually changing the focus to theories of the Anthropocene. Fiction writers like Barbara Kingsolver (*Flight Behaviour*), Emmi Itaranta (*Memory of Water*), Richard Powers (*The Overstory*), Paolo Bacigalupi (*The Water Knife*), Edward Abbey (*The Monkey Wrench Gang*), Ann Pancake (*Strange as this Weather Has Been*), Karen Joy Fowler (*We are All Completely beside Ourselves*), Upton Sinclair (*The Jungle*) have contributed substantially to generating environmental awareness as well as perils of the Anthropocene.

Amitav Ghosh's latest novel *Gun Island* (2019) pushes the environmental agenda even further. In fact, after his non-fictional *The Great Derangement*, it was expected that his next work of fiction would have ecological crisis as an important trope. It turns out to be true. However, Ghosh is ambitious enough to bring into the ambit of his narrative interconnections and intersections at various levels. He attempts to, first, historicize the legend of Bonduki Sadagar; second, explores politics of mobility, especially migration; third, opens a dialogic space between rationality and mysticism, and fourth, writes a sequel to his acclaimed *The Hungry Tide* (2004), thereby recreating the magic of the tide country – the Sundarbans – with some of the memorable characters of the earlier novel. Yet, what marks clear departure from *The Hungry Tid*e is the emphasis on human-engendered environmental crisis. While holding the Anthropocene responsible for present ecological crises, Ghosh attempts to highlight issues pertaining to climate change, refugee crisis and ecological uncanny. The aim of this article is to attempt an ecological reading of *Gun Island* by highlighting upon the curse of the Anthropocene that is effecting potentially-devastating climate change, which in turn, is leading to a condition that can be termed as the 'ecological abject'. Anthropocene engendered climate change on the human as well as non-human leads to migration, which in turn could lead to the precarity of their existence. This theme is explored in *Gun Island*. The text attempts to highlight politics of mobility

by exploring contemporary refugee crisis, the plight of stateless citizens, diaspora and so forth. However, this article would not focus on these roiling issues as it would make the study anthropocentric. Since my focus is on ecological crisis, I would limit my inquiry to impact of the Anthropocene on the non-human. Another idea that I would explore is the ecological abject – a condition characterized by an aesthetic imaginary that believes in presenting the dark, uncanny, horrifying manifestations of 'strange strangers' pervading nature. These uncanny manifestations/infestations are paradoxically both perpetrators and victims of the Anthropocene, relentlessly working towards undermining its very existence.

The Curse of the Anthropocene

Anthropocene, the term introduced by climatologist Paul Crutzen in 2000, stands for 'the notion that human beings have become the primary emergent geological force affecting the future of the Earth System' (Angus, p. 9). It signifies the end of the Holocene epoch, which Jeremy Davies in his 'Introduction' to *The Birth of the Anthropocene* (2016), has remarked as the '11,700 year span of time that in the established version of the geological timescale still continues to the present day' (5). The end of the Holocene epoch is a watershed moment in both human and environmental history as it signified advancements in the field of culture, arts, aesthetics, sciences, innovation, technology, in fact in all walks of like. The advent of modernity and its materialistic trappings are part of the Holocene. Davies observes that "[the Holocene] is the only geological epoch so far in which there have been symphony orchestras and hypodermic needles, moon landings and gender equality laws, patisseries, microbreweries, and universal suffrage" (5). The coming of the Anthropocene signifies a process of negotiation on the part of humans to continue deriving the benefits of modernity's comforts and luxuries, albeit with the discomfiting realization that it will be at the cost of radically changed environmental conditions. The red flags seem to be evident everywhere, as seen in various kinds of ecological uncanny manifested with increasing trepidation across the globe. Even though Stratigraphy has not included Anthropocene in its list of geological epochs, the contemporary environmental changes that have come about due to human intervention makes it necessary to characterise an epoch by such a

placeholding terminology. It could be defined as an epoch characterised by unmitigated exploitation of the environment for serving utilitarian ends. It is in Otl Aicher's phrase, the 'world as design' (Aicher, p. 179), comprising of expressways, cars, trains, skyscrapers, malls, housing complexes, power stations, landfills, sea reclamations, and such other artificial, arterial systems. This world as design is made possible only by decimating nature. This exploitation is rooted to the culture of capitalism, and in that sense, is driven primarily by carbon economy. Tsunamis, tornadoes, wildfires, earthquakes etc., are causing havoc in many parts of the world, and even though these are natural occurrences and should not be linked directly to human intervention, it has to be acknowledged that climate change effected by global warming due to the prevalence of carbon economy, may have contributed substantially to these natural catastrophes. Perhaps, discourses revolving around the Anthropocene need to be analysed from the angle of political economy, which, Jason. W. Moore termed as 'Capitalocene' (Moore, p. xi). Examined from this context, certain questions arise: for instance, how have 'various human organizations and processes – states and empires, world markets, urbanization, and much beyond – reshaped planetary life?' (Moore, 2016, p. 2). Are the climate sceptics and denialists rejecting the climate change hypothesis because they are complicit with the developmental discourse of capitalism? Is the denial part of reluctance to give up the trappings of modernity and rampant consumerism? How effective can the rhetoric of 'sustainability' be to address the Anthropocene excesses? Should the focus be on fostering ecological pluralism and addressing environmental injustice? These are unsettling questions which does not have easy answers. A 'material turn' to environmental studies is gaining traction nowadays. It is a welcome trajectory, and one that has been attempting to raise a few pertinent issues.

As already stated, the pitfalls of the Anthropocene are manifested in global warming and climate change. Global warming has led to the rise of water levels in the seas and oceans due to the gradual but inevitable melting of the polar ice caps and glaciers. The rise in sea-water level poses serious threat to humanity. Threat perceptions are in the form of devastating storms, floods and tsunamis. Jeremy Davies observes: 'The Sea is … getting deeper. The world's oceans are likely to grow in height by between 40 and 120 centimetres before the end of the present

century, letting them spill onto coastal land, where cities have always clustered' (Davies, 2016, p. 1). If one goes along with the assumptions of Neocatastrophism, it is likely that such changes might trigger a sort of 'butterfly effect' which could have disastrous consequences.

Yet, the problem one encounters when the idea of climate change surfaces in conversations is that it is not identified as an issue that poses any clear and present danger. It is pushed to the realm of the future, an assumption founded upon probability rather than certainty. According to Antony Giddens, 'people find it hard to give the same level of reality to the future as they do to the present' (Giddens, 2009, p. 3). This 'future discounting' attitude makes it difficult for humans to engage in serious discussions on the reality of climate change. There is the perception that certain critical issues confronting human society, such as, human rights violation, war, terrorism, insurgency, global economic slowdown, market forces, problems confronting disenfranchised subject-positions (like refugees and stateless citizens), women's rights, the rights of the LGBTQ community, children's rights and so forth, pose greater threat to a nation's progress and development than that of the looming environmental crisis. Therefore, formulating policies for resolving these crucial anthropocentric issues are given more importance in national or international forums and symposiums. The culture of deferment and denial is endemic/ universal to all societies, and it is mostly justified by the culture of pragmaticism as underscored by Giddens:

> There is a high level of agreement among scientists that climate change is real and dangerous, and that it is caused by human activity. A small minority of scientists, however – the climate change 'sceptics' – dispute these claims…[One] can always say, 'it's not proven, is it?' if anyone were to say that he should change his profligate ways. Another response might be: 'I'm not going to change unless others do'…Yet another reaction could be: 'Nothing that I do, as a single individual, will make any difference'. Or else he could say, 'I'll get round to it sometime'… I would suggest that even the most sophisticated and determined environmentalist… struggles with the fact that, under the shadow of future cataclysm, there is a life to be lived within the constraints of the here-and-now. (3)

Despite such denialists' assertion, the symptoms that anthropocene-induced climate change has produced are there for all to see. Global warming has adversely affected the balance in the biosphere. It has resulted in uncanny manifestations in nature: unseasonal migration of birds, inscrutable beaching of whales and dolphins, miraculous sighting of 'beings' that were never part of particular ecosystems, virulent manifestation of certain types of pathogens that pose severe threat to the environment, and so forth. Apart from nature, humans too have been affected by climate change to a considerable degree. These issues need to be addressed in literature, and it is slowly finding space in the aesthetic imaginary of creative writers. It is heartening to note that Ghosh is taking up the cause of environmentalism in such a big way.

The impact of climate change on the environment is subtly indicated in several ways in *Gun Island*. The narrator Dinanath Datta (Deen), an antique book dealer, goes to the Sundarbans to meet his aunt Nilima Bose, the founder of the Badobon Trust (a charitable organisation having an extended network of free hospitals, schools, clinics and workshops in the Sundarbans) to learn about the legend of Bonduki Sadagar and to visit the shrine of Manasa Devi (with whom the legend of the former is tied). What comes out as an alarming discovery is that the water level of Sundarbans has risen perilously. A conversation between Horen Naskar (a boatman) and Tipu (son of Moyna) suggests this:

> *'As I remember, the dhaam should be somewhere there,' he said, pointing ahead.*
>
> *'But this stretch of river has changed a lot since I was last here.'*
>
> *In the end it was Tipu who spotted the site, with the help of binoculars.*
>
> *'Oyje!' he shouted, pointing directly ahead. 'There it is!'*
>
> *Pushing up his sunshades Horen squinted at a distant smudge on the riverbank.*
>
> *'The boy's right,' he grunted. 'it isn't where I had thought.'*
>
> *'How can that be? It can't have moved, surely?'*
>
> *'It's the river that's moved,' came the answer. 'When I last saw the place it was still a good way inland. Now it's at the water's edge.' (Gun Island 65)*

The change in the island's geological features is corroborated by Nilima Bose's account of her visit to the shrine as part of a delegation distributing food and other essential commodities to villages after the Category – 4 cyclone Bhola wreaked havoc on November 12, 1970, causing what is considered the greatest natural disaster of the twentieth century (which claimed more than three hundred thousand lives). Nilima indicated that the shrine was at 'a good distance from the sandbank, situated on a slight elevation, in the middle of a sandy clearing that was surrounded by dense stands of mangrove' (15). Thus, it is apparent that rising water levels had submerged the sandbank, leaving the shrine to the mercy of the elements. Nilima, in fact, anticipates its doom in the foreseeable future. She portentously states:

> I believe the dhaam's still there, but who knows how much longer it'll
> remain? The islands of the Sundarbans are constantly being swallowed
> up by the sea; they are disappearing before our eyes. (18)

The rising of sea levels is an effect of global warming melting the polar ice caps. The more the level of carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere remains unregulated, the more likely would the balance in the ecosystem be hampered. In a biodiversity hotspot like the Sundarbans delta, with its primordial water bodies decked by mangrove vegetation, rising water levels pose grave risks to its various forms of precarious lives, which include both non-human (endangered flora and fauna) and human (vulnerable human settlements).

The important thing to note here is that victims of environmental disasters are often innocent of what they are made to suffer. Even though devastations happen on a place, its trigger could be located thousands of miles away. The rising levels of the water in the Sundarbans presages devastation of the mangrove country in the foreseeable future. The fundamental premise of Chaos Theory is rooted to the idea of how 'a small change in one state of a deterministic nonlinear system can result in large differences in a later stage' (Weisstein, N.pag.). Thus, despite the Sundarbans being still comparatively 'backward' in terms of subscribing to the logic of the world as design, yet its ecological precarity is triggered by global warming, which is associated with the rise of carbon economy. If geological changes

are getting effected, it is on account of human upsetting the apple cart, going beyond the tipping point, meddling with the natural ecosystem. If the natural balance is disturbed and the ecosystem disrupted, it is a foregone conclusion that calamity would befall. Therefore, ecocritics have made impassioned pleas to humans to think of themselves as global species. Timothy Clark considers this possible through the constitution of 'a new cosmopolitanism, transcending given cultural, natural, economic and social boundaries and the accomplishment of a sort of communal super-subjectivity…' (Clark, 2015 p. 175). It appears to be the only way to resist the culture of utilitarianism of the Anthropocene epoch. Till now, measures to redress ecological crisis seem to be still governed by putative, hypothetical assumptions. It is like being caught in a double-bind – how could one be a climate activist and a consumer of modernity's trappings at the same time? How can one push the developmental agenda forward and still decry carbon economy? How can one drive a car and still proclaim to be a committed environmentalist? The blessing of the Holocene is turning out to be the curse of the Anthropocene. It is affecting the lives of both human and non-human. The tragedy is that nobody seems to be bothered.

Climate Change on the Non-Human

The Anthropocene has devastated natural ecosystems, thereby posing threat to one and all. Since, anthropocentrism concerns with fate of humans, the impact upon the non-human is not given a great deal of thought. The fact is that the Anthropocene epoch has been responsible for species extinction at thousand time's higher rates than they would have been if humans were not in the picture (according to the review published on May 29, 2014 in the journal *Science*). According to the report prepared by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2014, many aquatic life-forms were migrating north or into deeper waters to survive as their habitats underwent change due to climate change. These species were forced to change their behaviour and seek alternate habitats in order to adapt to changed natural systems. Such strange behaviour of strange strangers (non-humans) finds explicit mention throughout *Gun Island*. My concern in this section is to examine the effect of climate change on such non-human

beings as portrayed in the novel. Here, reference to the Irrawaddy dolphin, or zoologically-termed *Orcaella brevirostris*, is central to understanding how the Anthropocene has adversely impacted the living condition of these creatures.

In the novel, there is a character named Piya Roy who happens to be a marine biologist researching on Irrawaddy dolphins. She begins to perceive adaptation problems in the case of Rani, a dolphin with whom she has become familiar after she rescued the mammal from an iron netting in which it was entangled. Piya used to keep 'careful records of each individual in the pod' (91) and had tracked and 'mapped the pod's movements over many years following their diurnal, seasonal and annual migrations' (91) through GPS device inserted in Rani's body. Even though the factor responsible for the pod's adaptation problems could not be exactly determined, Piya felt that the proliferation of 'oceanic dead zones' (95) could be a contributing factor. These 'dead zones' were vast stretches of water with very low oxygen content – too low for fishes to survive. Piya explains the phenomenon in this manner:

> Those zones have been growing at a phenomenal pace, mostly because of residues from chemical fertilizers. When they are washed into the sea they set off a chain reaction that leads to all the oxygen being sucked out of the water. Only a few highly specialized organisms can survive in those conditions – everything else dies…And those zones have now spread over tens of thousands of square miles of ocean – some of them are as large as middle-sized countries. (95)

Agricultural effluents dumped into rivers generally created such dead zones, but in the Sundarbans a refinery that began operations a few years back was suspected to be the culprit. Despite regulatory bodies demanding 'safe levels' of discharge of effluents, this refinery must have been dumping toxic wastes much above permissible limits. It resulted in "massive fish kills" (96), as well as adaptation problems for Irrawaddy dolphins. Piya believes that the effluents discharged by the refinery were responsible in 'Rani and her pods [abandoning] their old hunting grounds' (96). Even more tragic was the phenomenon of collective beaching. Rani and the entire pod beached themselves under mysterious circumstances.

The reason for the entire pod doing so could not be pinned down to a definite cause. Yet, the effect of toxic wastes on the lives of these creatures could not be underestimated. Oceanic dead zones, trappings of technology like sounds emanating from submarines and sonar equipments, among others, could account for such strange behaviour as beaching. Piya states:

> [It] must be hardest on Rani, knowing that the young ones depend on her. There she is, perfectly adapted to her environment, perfectly at home in it – and then things begin to change, so that all those years of learning become useless, the places you know best can't sustain you anymore and you've got to find new hunting grounds. Rani must have felt that everything she was familiar with – the water, the currents, the earth itself – was rising up against her. (97)

In fact, there is reference to more mass beaching of Irrawaddy dolphins in Garjontola, a small island in the Sundarbans. Piya is apprised by an incognito whistleblower about an impending mass beaching, and she takes a journalist and a photographer friend to document this peculiar phenomenon. Piya noted that '[they] were swimming not in their usual meandering fashion but almost in straight lines, heading straight for Garjontola…it was the most devastating thing [she'd] ever seen. So many of them, throwing themselves up on the shore' (179). Such strange behaviour on the part of the species *Orcaella* was unprecedented and had to be rationalised or accounted for to effluents dumped by the refinery. There could not be any other logical reason attributed for such uncharacteristic, uncanny behaviour. Apart from Irrawaddy dolphins, the novel mentions many other non-human species whose unnatural presence/s in particular time and space accentuated the notion of ecological uncanny. It seemed as if these unnatural, spectral manifestations were ominous portents of an impending catastrophe. I would like to examine it through the lens of (what I have termed as) the ecological abject.

The Ecological Abject

When one thing of ecology, the metaphor that exemplifies its nature and character (according to Timothy Morton) is 'the mesh' (Morton, 2010 p. 14) what

it implies is the interconnectedness of beings and things on a vast, cosmic scale. The interconnected beings function differently; live as parasites or symbiotes, forms rhizomatic bonds, takes recourse to deterritorialization or reterritorialization, and so forth, under favourable natural conditions. Morton states:

> The mesh of interconnected things is vast, perhaps immeasurably so. Each entity in the mesh looks strange. Nothing exists all by itself, and so nothing is fully 'itself.' There is curiously 'less' of the Universe at the same time, and for the same reasons, as we see 'more' of it. Our encounter with other beings becomes profound. They are strange, even intrinsically strange. Getting to know them makes them stranger. When we talk about life forms, we're talking about *strange strangers*. (15)

What the Anthropocene epoch has unleashed is that it has meddled with life forms in such a horrifying manner that these 'strange strangers' have begun to behave even more strangely; in fact, they have become figures of abjection. This is what I imply by the phrase 'ecological abject.' Morton coins 'dark ecology' (16) as an ecological thought that embraces ugliness and horror, which are important as it 'compel[s] our compassionate coexistence to go beyond condescending pity' (17). Such ecological thought that embraces the abject is apparent in *Gun Island* through several instances of sightings of creatures in places where they are least expected: bark beetles, spiders, water snakes, shipworms, among others

Anthropocene-induced climate change is causing havoc to the ecology by disturbing the ecosystem in which beings and things are so precariously interconnected or meshed. Extermination of a species could wreak havoc to the environment as there could be uncontrolled proliferation of other species. For instance, Piya observes that the increasing incidences of forest fires in many countries could be due to uncontrolled proliferation of bark beetles. The reason for their increase of population is global warming. Such creatures could not survive for long in cold climes, but climate change in the Anthropocene epoch has enabled them to survive in these places, thereby affecting the ecosystem of these regions. Since these insects survive by eating up trees from the inside, their proliferation in places where trees are plentiful pose immense threat to these spaces. Piya taking cue from her friend Lisa, who is an entomologist, says:

[Bark beetles] are insects that eat up trees from the inside so that when there's a dry spell the dead wood is like kindling, just waiting to go up in flames. Bark beetles have been extending their range, as the mountains warm up, and Lisa found that they've invaded the forests around the town where she lives [Oregon]. (109)

Despite such looming threats, people fail to see the signs. The denialists, most often, succeed in framing a counter-narrative against the phenomenon of climate change and continue to function under the structure of the normative. There is a possibility that in the Capitalocene, deniers are governed by vested interest to downplay the perils of climate change. For instance, despite tell-tale signs of a looming pathogenic invasion of bark beetles (blighting the forest trees), the people at large were unconvinced with Lisa's apocalyptic warnings. Piya helplessly states:

She went to the town council to warn them that they had to do something. But no one paid any attention, not the mayor, or anyone else, least of all the people who were in harm's way. To them she's just a pushy outsider who doesn't know anything about the mountains and is trying to make a name for herself. (109)

To make matters worse, when a raging wildfire breaks out (as warned by Lisa), which resulted in the state declaring an emergency and calling for deployment of helicopters to douse the fire, Lisa was implicated in it. Piya ruefully says:

You would think that afterwards people would have thanked Lisa for her warnings and treated her as a hero… But no: what they did was that they blamed *her*! A rumour went round that she had started the fire herself because she wanted more funding for her research. Soon it was all over the social media. She was even questioned by a cop. Then she began to get threats – even death threats. Someone fired a bullet into her porch; a tree in her yard was set on fire. (109)

Political gaslighting has become a common phenomenon in an increasingly majoritarian conservative political milieu. In such a scenario, facts are manufactured

by the complicit apparatuses of the oligarchic state to muzzle the agency of the marginalised. Lisa's plight corresponds to such a targeted policy of victimization by those in power. This wildfire, which foreshadows the raging wildfire that ravages Los Angeles during Deen and Cinta's visit to the museum for a conference, also indicates the perils confronting climate activists. They are most often dismissed as apocalyptic seers or prophets of doom by denialists or capitalist stooges.

Even though warning signs are visible everywhere, with more and more uncanny occurrences happening at an alarming rate, people are still not willing to read the obvious message. For instance, encountering rare serpents in a bustling metropolis like Los Angeles was an unheard-of event. Deen, in one of his e-mail chat conversations with Tipu, is cautioned by the latter to be careful of snakes on his trip to LA. This is dismissed by Deen with the words, 'I'm going to LA. There aren't any snakes there…Don't be silly. I'm not going to get bitten in LA' (112). However, on a visit to Cinta's cousin's daughter Giselle (Gisa) who resided on a house near Venice beach, LA, with her girlfriend along with two adopted orphaned refugees, Deen is shocked by the sight of a "two-foot snake…its colour darkly metallic with a bright yellow underbelly (131), dead with its head crushed to a pulp by Gisa's golden retriever, who too succumbs to the snake's bite. The coast guard identifies the serpent as the venomous 'yellow-bellied sea snake' (132) and says that these were not a common sight before, but they 'had a bunch of yellow-bellies washing up here in the last few months' (131). When Deen enquires Piya about the strange invasion of serpents in LA, she replies that such sightings were reported just a day before at Ventura Beach, California. She further stated that these snakes generally inhabited warmer waters to the south. Their sightings in Southern California could be logically explained under the assumption of global warming and climate change. She explained that 'their distribution was changing with the warming of the oceans and they were migrating northwards' (134). Thus, the presence of these venomous reptiles in LA could be accounted for due primarily to global warming. Such events accentuate the element of the ecological uncanny, thereby bolstering the aesthetic imaginary (of strange stranger) of dark ecology.

Yet another instance of the ecological abject is the sightings of deadly spiders in Venice. Deen travelling to Venice to document the presence of Bengali

migrants comes across a spider in Cinta's house. Though spiders are rare in Venice, he chances upon a rare brown recluse (*Loxosceles reclusa*). Piya cautions him that 'its venom is more potent, by weight, than that of a rattlesnake; it breaks down the skin and eats into the flesh' (203). The surprising thing about this sighting was that it was the first recorded sighting of this species so far north. Piya's friend Larry indicated that 'the brown recluse has been increasing its range very quickly because it's getting so much hotter in Europe' (204). Thus, global warming is disturbing the ecological balance in such profound ways that manifestations of creatures that were never expected in certain places are now seen in alarming numbers.

The infestation of these creatures/critters can create a condition of ecoprecarity, be it drought, famine, wildfires, and so forth. Such a surreal manifestation of a "different kind of monster" (230) is shown to Deen by Cinta on their walk down the street towards the Fondamente Nove. Pulling out a hairpin, Cinta dug into wooden pilings, picking at the rotten wood. Suddenly, a "creature plopped out and fell on the pier… It was about two inches long, the colour of congealed coconut oil. Its tapering body widened into a funnel-like mouth that was ringed with tiny filaments" (230). Cinta identified the creature as a shipworm. She said that these creatures posed immense threat to the city of Venice:

> More and more of these are invading Venice, with the warming of the
> lagoon's water. They eat up the wood from the inside, in huge quantities.
> It has become a huge problem because Venice is built on wooden pilings.
> They are literally eating the foundations of the city. (231)

Thus, despite the apparently innocuous nature of infestation of these termite-like creatures which was not visible on the outside, the harm that it did on the inside was frightening, to say the least.

Global warming could be regarded as the sole factor behind such uncanny manifestations, like the ones discussed in the novel. Towards the end of the novel, a "miracle" is seen. Of the known total eight species of cetaceans inhabiting the Mediterranean Sea, seven are seen simultaneously which an unprecedented event

is Piya observed exultantly: 'Sperm whales … pilot whales … fin whales … bottlenoses – they're all there! The only Mediterranean species I haven't seen yet is Cuvier's beaked whale!' (276). This miracle can be considered as another manifestation of the ecological uncanny happening due to climate change. Even though the novel celebrates this event, it is worth pondering why such a "miracle" happened. Does such ecological uncanny auger well (or bode ill) for humans and non-humans? Going by the logic of the novel, such sightings could be ominous. Therefore, ecological thought embracing horror, or subscribing to the notion of dark ecology, seems to be the need of the hour. It could be one of the ways by means of which the normalizing strategies of denialists be countered. The unfortunate thing to note here is that people do not seem to be making concerted efforts to address the various issues humanity is confronted with on account of climate change. Emissions of Carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases have increased in the atmosphere leading to global warming and climate change. Even though people realise this, they are quite reluctant to give up their everyday comforts. Cinta smugly observes:

> Everybody knows what must be done if the world is to continue to be a liveable place, if our homes are not to be invaded by the sea, or by creatures like the spider. Everybody knows…and yet we are powerless, even the most powerful among us. We go about our daily business through habit, as though we were in the grip of forces that have overwhelmed our will; we see shocking and monstrous things happening all around us and we avert our eyes; we surrender ourselves willingly to whatever it is that has us in its power. (217)

Such a denialist position makes the task of conservation difficult. Meanwhile, both human and non-human life forms must suffer nature's fury in the form of winds, hailstorms, tornadoes, etc. Even though such events are supposed to be 'natural', the increasing frequency of occurrence is "thought to be an effect of changing weather patterns" (263), which could eventually be attributed to global warming. Carbon economy being the prime mover of capitalism, its rampant use has propelled this materialist ideology to such an extent that the right-wing historian

Francis Fukuyama has termed the Capitalocene as the 'end of history', albeit positively. However, in the wake of the massive thrust to consumerist ethos (which demands newer technologies/innovations), the relinquishing of carbon footprint is becoming more and more difficult. Therefore, global warming is becoming a global menace. It is impacting climate change, which in turn is posing immense threat to the ecological balance. It is affecting both human and non-human. The curse of the Anthropocene is looming large. If timely steps are not taken to redress the wrongs committed by humans in their quest for material comforts and luxuries, the consequences could be disastrous.

Therefore, raising consciousness about the perils of the Anthropocene is a task that is not meant only for climate scientists, climate activists, stratigraphers, ecologists, geographers etc. Creative writers need to show their commitment towards the rapidly depleting ecology as well. It is true that literature tends to be anthropocentric insofar as it emphasises on depiction of the human condition realistically/imaginatively. However, the need of the hour is to address the grave ecological issues confronting humanity, which are paradoxically of their own making. In that sense, Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* is a laudable effort in that direction. It is hoped that this work would go a long way in stoking the creative impulse of other writers, and in that way contribute substantively towards the bolstering of the cli-fi genre.

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CHINA'S HUMANITARIANISM: AID, PANDEMIC AND FOREIGN POLICY

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Abstract

The onset of the novel coronavirus or Covid-19 pandemic has proved to be a major opportunity for China to redeem itself despite the scrutiny into its role in pandemic. Through its soft diplomacy and humanitarian aid, China is currently making its footprint felt in regions where the US would have invariably been the key player. Covid-19 aid is doing what BRI could not achieve, i.e. horizontal and vertical spread of China's influence. Through its Covid-19 diplomacy, it seeks to portray the image that China is ready to steer world politics, but its actions have been deeply scrutinized by the US and other rising powers. Adopting a 'wolf warrior' stance, China is now pressurizing states to tow its line of thinking; through China's investment and aid, the 'strategic autonomy' of countries is being tested.

Keywords: *BRI, Coronavirus, revisionist power, strategic autonomy, wolf warrior diplomacy*

Introduction

China's policy on foreign assistance and aid is often coalesced with principles of sovereignty and mutual benefit (Cheng, 2019). Moreover, China's aid policy is often aimed to appease its domestic constituency and portray the image of an infallible government which is willing to lead the world now. Through the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which was initiated in 2013, China hoped to be in a commanding position to steer the future course of the global economy and create a platform wherein it could truly alter its status in the hierarchical world order. However, the BRI proved to be over ambitious and has not achieved any credible success as yet. The Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to heightened tension between major powers and can greatly alter the course of relations between countries. While the Covid-19 blame game has started between the US and China, but importantly, the supply of medical aid and its peripherals has assumed strategic dimensions. China is now keen to share its expertise in controlling the pandemic (Nyabuage, 2020). However, China's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic has come under severe scrutiny from different quarters. China criticized the tweet of the President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, refers to Covid19 as the 'Chinese virus' (bbc.com, 2020a). It must be recalled that President Trump put on hold America's funding to the World Health Organization (WHO), accusing it of becoming China-centric during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic (The Economic Times, 2020a).

In the coming days, through pandemic diplomacy, China will try to deepen its foothold in the 'high risk countries' and redeem itself as a 'care-giver' that can truly uplift the economic conditions of the least developed countries. As the Trump administration has sought to make China accountable for its failure to control the novel coronavirus at the 'source', many of the European powerhouses and Australia have also been very critical of China. As the novel coronavirus endemic spreads, a realignment of relations between countries is bound to take place which China will try influence by establishing itself as indispensable to many countries around the globe.

I

China's Covid-19 Outreach

While the origins, causes and responsibility for the spread of the coronavirus pandemic remain a matter of controversy, the fact remains that it has touched all parts of the globe, affecting relations between individual, communities and states. As the world continues to be overstretched in terms of healthcare facilities to deal with this pandemic, some countries have moved in swiftly to aid and assist others. China is perhaps the frontrunner in providing aid and medical assistance to numerous countries to fight this pandemic. The pace and the enthusiasm with which the Chinese have indulged in 'facemask diplomacy' that has taken countries by surprise. Again, China has been accused of indulging of 'wolf warrior diplomacy' due to its aggressiveness in attacking the critics of its aid which has made the democratic world uncomfortable. Irrespective of its motive behind its aid diplomacy and its wolf warrior diplomacy, the fact is that China has in a rather hurried fashion made its presence felt around the world as a medical 'caregiver'.

The coronavirus pandemic underscores the growing gulf between the EU member states, with Italy and Spain accusing Germany and the Netherlands of not rising to the occasion. China has taken full advantage of this vacuum and has embarked upon an aid blitzkrieg- which includes supply of gloves, ventilators, masks and medical experts to France, Spain, Italy, Greece and other countries (guardian.com, 2020). In the wake of the novel coronavirus pandemic, China has thus embarked upon a 'Health Silk Road'. The Indo- Pacific region too has witnessed a surge in medical diplomacy by China. Beijing has pledged to provide $1.9 million for testing kits and protective equipment to the Pacific islands such as Vanuatu, Tonga and French Polynesia and Kiribati (Needham, 2020). Incidentally, the Solomon Islands, albeit reluctantly, switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to Beijing in 2019 (Power &Tobin, 2020). It has also received US$300,000 from China 'to buy testing kits and other laboratory equipment to strengthen the capacity and capability of health authorities.' (solomontimes.com, 2020).

China's interests in the countries of South Asia are well documented and the Covid-19 pandemic has provided it with an opportunity to strengthen its stranglehold over these countries. China has stepped up its effort and has emerged as the key player to supply ventilators, medical equipment and masks to Pakistan. Moreover, China has already supplied over 10,000 testing kits, 10,000 sets of personal protective equipment (PPE) and 1,000 infrared thermometers to Bangladesh. Likewise, Nepal too has been a recipient of Chinese aid to counter the pandemic. Additionally, China has given a concessionary loan of $500 million to Sri Lanka to deal with the novel coronavirus crisis. (Latif, 2020) Likewise, on the diplomatic front; China continues its charm offensive in Africa. Chinese medical aid to African continent continues to grow exponentially while the countries receiving aid are unable to repay China. Chinas' philanthropy is now questioned more frequently than before on account of its intentions to continue to provide aid to such countries which remain indebted to it. China's aid diplomacy also extends to South America where 'more than 15,000 people have been killed by the novel coronavirus' (The Times of India, 2020). China's 'mask-diplomacy' in South America includes 'planeloads of medical supplies, teams of experts' (Puglie, 2020).

II

China's pandemic aid and its implications

As China pursues pandemic diplomacy, EU's chief diplomat Josep Borrell warned that there is "a geo-political component including a struggle for influence through spinning and the 'politics of generosity'.[i] Through aid diplomacy, China has been able to make inroads to regions which are vital to its national interests. Its logistics base in Djibouti and the funding of construction of new seaports at Gwadar, Pakistan and Hambantota, Sri Lanka point out that China is beginning to expand its sphere of influence.[ii] Incidentally, China has stepped up its medical efforts in Djibouti (Haoran, 2020) and Pakistan (The Economic Times, 2020b). It has also granted Sri Lanka a concessionary loan of $500 million to tide over the pandemic. (Kuruwita, 2020) Countries like Algeria, which is also part of the BRI,

has been supplied with medical equipment and ventilators by China. China exported goods worth around $560 million to Algeria which has now embraced China as a 'true friend' (xinhuanet.com, 2020c).

Through its pandemic diplomacy, China continues to supply test kits and other medical supplies to European nations. China is hoping to bring about a narrative that it has contributed to saving lives in the European continent, something which it has not managed so far. Through this act, it not only uplifts its international profile, but it also boosts the Xi Jinping administration on the domestic front as well. Furthermore, infrastructural projects and aid from China has also left many of the European countries exposed to China's pressure. China has invested heavily in the European countries and the Balkan states, which includes 'the expansion of the port of Piraeus in Greece' and 'building roads and railways in Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and North Macedonia'(bbc.com, 2019b). Countries elsewhere such as Djibouti, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan are already deeply indebted to China- through aid as well as through the Chinese investment in their development infrastructure. Given the urgency brought on by the current pandemic, aid in the form of medical supplies from China, is definitely welcome but it also leads to concerns over compromise of strategic autonomy in foreign policy issues amongst these states. So when it comes to voting on issues in the global institutions like the UNO, the weight of China may just be too overbearing on these countries, thereby hindering their autonomy.

On the other hand, European countries and others are wary of the 'wolf warrior' (Baker & Emmot, 2020) diplomacy pursued by China, *i.e.* the pressure being put on countries by China to express their gratitude towards Beijing for the aid provided by it and the defiant brazenness of its diplomats to absolve China from accepting responsibility for the creation and control of the pandemic (Landale, 2020). Further, European nations were miffed with the poor portrayal of its the health infrastructure by the Chinese government; the French government, for instance, was quick to identify the 'objectionable' articles about France's inability to protect its senior citizens in the website of the Chinese Embassy (Chaudhury, 2020).

III

Confronting the 'Dragon'

As the US withdraws from the troubled hotspots of the globe, its allies grow concerned about its growing non-committal attitude towards their concerns. Through provisions of aid to multiple countries in the current pandemic, China has to some extent demonstrated its ability to help the developing countries and build a narrative that it is capable of filling in the void left behind by the US. China has also been able to paint another picture though its aid diplomacy - that of Europe needing China.

The overzealous efforts of China to promote the 'health silk route' has certainly not gone unnoticed as many states perceive it as an attempt to cover its tracks in the creation and failure to control the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. In attempting to push its national interests forward through pandemic diplomacy, China has faced resistance from several quarters. China is hoping that all resolutions against it in any multilateral institution by the US or its allies will not be supported easily by the European states and more so by smaller non-European states who are now beneficiaries of its aid. Moreover, through its aid diplomacy, China has managed to bring about a narrative that it has contributed to saving lives in the European continent, something which it has not managed to claim prior to this pandemic. However, the medical equipment supplied by China has come in for criticism from countries like India, Spain, Georgia and Czech Republic. In the midst of the pandemic, many African countries have protested against the racial discrimination of Africans in Guangzhou (Burke, Akinwotu & Kuo, 2020; japantimes.co.jp, 2020). The US and European powerhouses like France, Germany and the UK have been very critical of China's handling of the novel coronavirus pandemic. Furthermore, reports of attempts by China to pressure the EU into diluting a report on coronavirus disinformation (Apuzzo, 2020) has only led to further mistrust between the EU and China.

States are increasingly concerned about strategic contests and gains in the neighbourhood of China as every 'rising' country looks behind its shoulders and ahead as well, especially in its 'umbra-zone'. China is seeking not only to 'recover its lost territories' (Holstag, 2015) which includes regions in the South and East China Sea, but also become the next concertmaster of world politics. While Japan is increasingly concerned about the Asia-Pacific region, India is concerned with the South East Asia and South Asia region and Australia about the security situation in the South Pacific region.

<div align="center">**IV**</div>

Conclusion

Through supplies of aid, China wants to be seen as part of the solution but it cannot seem to shake off the allegations that it failed to control the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. While countries such as the US, India, Australia as well as other European countries have extended aid to different countries across the globe towards tackling the pandemic, seldom have questions about their 'motive' been raised. The altruistic goal of Chinese aid has often been questioned. From the Chinese perspective, 'China Bashing' by its critics is an attempt to 'tarnish a 5,000-year-old civilisation' (Guocai, 2020). Therefore, blaming China may be a well-designed diversionary tactic to tide over the precarious health situation in their respective countries.

Accusing China of 'rogue aid' or of indulging in 'debt diplomacy' hardly hides the fact that the West too has indulged in similar activities which promoted their strategic and economic interests whenever possible; China merely seeks to emulate the US model of 'invisible boundaries' (Brown, 2018). As Pádraig Carmody notes, 'Attacking China or Chinese companies for engaging in commercial transactions, as do Western companies, would be self-evidently hypocritical for Western governments' (Carmody, 2020). While blaming China would be the easier way out for the US administration to cover up its failure to deal with the Covid-19

pandemic, there is no denial that China's severe censorship of media and the internet on the Covid-19 pandemic has only heightened the level of mutual suspicion. In China, the voices of the medical community have been censured and doctors have been warned against making their opinions public (cnn.com, 2020). This certainly has not helped refurbish China's image as a 'responsible stake holder' (Breslin, 2009; Zoellick, 2005) in the existing international order.

Given China's rapid rise and issues of regional security, its regional competitors-democratic Japan and India, given the domestic sentiments, will certainly align with the US when it comes to hard decisions. An enduring image of China contains an intolerant political system, censorship of the media and the internet, and promotion of 'strategic proxies' (Scott, 2010; Bernier, 2003). Its outlook of a 'regional bully' has not helped China's cause. China's rise as an economic and military powerhouse does not necessarily mean that it will be able to carve a world order which suits its needs. The liberal order may be under duress, but its ideals continue to be supported in various degrees by nations, institutions and the civil society. As such, through its initiatives like the BRI and the aid it provides during the pandemic, China might have enhanced its already exalted position in world politics, but it will have to do more to inspire confidence in order to become the primary decision maker and agenda setter in world politics.

End Notes:

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THE PROPAGANDA MODEL AND DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERNET AGE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE INDIAN POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT WITH REFERENCE TO ASSAM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTION, 2021

Hasmin Ahmed
Borun Dey

Abstract

Media and politics share a close proximity and affect one another. The media being an objective disseminator of news and information assumed to be unbiased in its reporting and reflect the views of all the sections of society. The role of the media was challenged in the Propaganda Model and viewed as reflective of the agenda and interest of the dominant elites. This scenario has assumed to make a shift due to the development of technology that allows for user-generated content, constant online presence, and interactivity. The key mediums for Indian political actors to connect with the citizens were rallies and public meetings in the past. But this communication medium has been transformed with the visual media and more recently due to the advent of new media and digital platforms. Therefore, the objective of this paper has been to evaluate the Indian political scenario from the perspective of the propaganda model with changes in the new media context. It has also focused on the political scenario of Assam regarding the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2021.

Keywords: News, New Media, Propaganda Model, Politics, Development

Introduction

Media is one of the preferred vehicles for political communication and it is evident that more or less every media is influenced by its political environment. Likewise, the politics of a country is affected by the market forces in operation; thereby creating a nexus between market and politics where the goal is power and profit. But in this interrelation, the most affected one is the audience as the public makes most of their choices and decisions of everyday life by relying on the information of the media. In this regard, the most significant are political decisions. The electorate learns about politics and other government activities through the media and studies suggest there is a sizeable impact in shaping political knowledge, behaviour, and attitude of the voters. Therefore, whatever becomes the media agenda becomes the public agenda. This is explained in the Agenda-setting theory formulated by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. The theory explains the relationships between the importance that mass media gives on issues and the significance that media audiences attribute to those issues. The media effects theories explain the influence of media content on the perceptions and decisions of the public. Therefore, it is proved through these theories that media can have effects on public decisions.

However, the news that media houses highlight has influences on both politics and market forces. This phenomenon is explained by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky in their 'Propaganda Model' in the book, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* published in 1988. The propaganda model explains the production of news and how it is influenced by the market forces from ownership to the dominant 'ideology' of the government. It explains the five news filters that a particular content went through before being presented to the audience.

The first part of the paper explains the propaganda model in the context of new media. The second part has analysed the model in the Indian political context with examples of recent events and the third part evaluate the working of propaganda politics in Assam by focusing on certain key issues of the Assam

Legislative Assembly Election, 2021. The last part deals with the concluding remarks and prospects for future study.

Propaganda Model and New Media

The concept of the 'manufacturing consent' was derived from a statement put forward by Walter Lippmann about 'manufacture of consent' in relation to the formation of public opinion and for him, the consensus in a democracy is not natural but involves various parties who can carry out manipulation for the formation of public opinion in a democracy. For Herman and Chomsky, in this process of opinion formation of the public media has an important part and the media position does not however accommodate the interest of all in the society but only a few dominant elites. The five news filters (ownership, advertising, source, flaks, and anti-communism) involved in the Propaganda Model are linked together and reflect a multi-level potentiality of the government bodies and dominant business entities to exert power over the flow of news content to the public. The five filters of the propaganda model are in brief discussed below:

- *Size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms*: The media houses are owned and controlled by powerful and dominant few business elites that have a strong connection with the political actors and have a common interest of power and profit. The few elites controlled the entire news production and even if they face any challenge from the radical media, they are imposed with heavy taxes so that they cannot make their voices heard by the audience. They maintain a close relation with the government bodies for licensing and other permissions.Therefore, the government has control over the production of news content according to the propaganda model.

- *Advertising as the primary income source of the mass media*: Advertising is one of the key factors that shape news content as the media houses rely on advertisements for revenue. Herman and Chomsky (2002) note that advertisers do not like controversial content and prefer to have light entertainment. The propaganda model argues that advertisers have a huge

impact on the content of news and they can remove their advertising from the media whose political views are contrary to them (Macleod, 2019, p. 52).

- *Sources of news information*: Due to the constant demand for news content, the government and corporate sector act as the most reliable source for the media houses. Herman and Chomsky (2008) argue that the source of news from them helps to maintain the image of an objective media on one hand and also protects them from government action and criticism. Therefore, the dominant elites exert their influence on the news content and the media did not oppose their 'agenda and framework' and helps to maintain it so that their relationship with them is not disturbed (p.94).

- *Flaks*: Herman and Chomsky (2008) describe flaks as 'negative responses to a media statement or program' (p.99). The flaks can be individual or collective and in the form of letters, petitions, lawsuits, etc. The flaks are problematic for media houses if produced in a large quantity. The corporate also sponsors flaks against the media houses that have views contradictory to their interest. Herman and Chomsky (2008) note that the biggest flak producer is the government that can impose any law, rule, or tax on the media houses opposite to their interest to maintain their status quo of power.

- *Ideology*: The propaganda model describes ideology as a tool in the hands of the political power that can be used to justify every action. Through the ideology of 'anti-communism,' the United States had control of every event in the country according to Herman and Chomsky. The main purpose of an ideology was to portray oneself as good and right and the others as evil and illegitimate so that their decisions received wide support from the public.

However, the advent of new media technologies and digital platforms has questioned the applicability and worthiness of the propaganda model in the internet age. The propaganda model was put forward when the internet has not developed yet. In the revised edition of their book in 2002, Herman and Chomsky mentioned

that the advent of the internet and other emerging technologies in communication have been able to take off the various barriers in communication and has made possible interactive communication that was initially not attainable. They also acknowledge the fact that the internet has strengthened and intensified the breadth of the individual as well as group activities through a networked society.

The Internet has changed one-way communication to a two-way mode and the new digital platforms such as Google Meet, Facebook, Zoom Meetings, etc. have led to multidirectional communication. However, they note that the internet as a tool of communication has limitations. Regarding the possible sources of information that the internet has opened up, a question was asked in 2009 to Herman and Chomsky by Andrew Mullen that whether 'the internet renders the Propaganda Model "increasingly marginal in its applicability".' They answered that traditional media have a growing place and there is an increase in the importance of advertisement on the Web; however, they said, 'It is possible that this might happen' (Mullen, 2009, p.20). They stressed that the internet can be utilized by commercial entities only as of the internet is a communication instrument by those having a popular name. Therefore, the internet as an information access tool was unable to meet the public needs (Lukmantoro et. al, 2019, p. 424). They further viewed 'media is nothing more than an instrument that works in compliance' with the political elites and economic elites. Media involves structuring the agenda and interests of those who control the state and business entities. According to Lukmantoro et. al (2019), the internet is used to integrate the different types of media platforms and to keep them under its control. Therefore, it is only a tool that extends the power of media corporate.

The new media has resulted in interactivity and user-generated content that transforms the whole communication scenario. Moreover, the new media and digital platforms that followed can be analysed from the lens of the Propaganda Model. Regarding the ownership of the new media platforms, one of the dominant digital platforms, i.e., Google founded by Larry Page and Sergey Brin owns 42.4% and 41.3% of Alphabet's class B common stock respectively. Google is one of the significant sources of news in the present context. According to Fuchs (2018), as the algorithms determined the ranking of Google's search results, therefore, the

centralized ownership of the company together with the huge market share it holds and as an important news source it results in the circumstance that 'ownership also means control over algorithms that determine news sources for a significant part of the population.' (p. 73). The private owner debars the users from the control of algorithms that determine the priorities of how search results and news are presented. The second filter of the Propaganda model seems to be flourishing in the new media era as online advertising has become one of the significant forms after television advertising. A digital platform such as Google or Facebook does not only function as a source of news but also among the largest advertising agencies. Multiple audiences in a huge number can be targeted at once and therefore the logic of advertising is different in social media from the traditional ones. Fuchs (2018) mentioned that 'the overall effect is an online advertising-user-spiral, in which more and more advertising revenue shifts from print to digital due to the targeting possibilities.' (p. 76).

The third filter in the new media context does not change as due to the constant online presence the demands for news and information have also increased. Therefore, the government remains the most reliable and authentic source of information to them. Although there is a rise in user-generated content, online attention and visibility requires time, money, and labour force. Therefore, everyone can produce user-generated content but only a few attract online visibility and attention. It is also because traditional media have occupied the dominance on Internet through their web news channels and dominant news providers as 'they have the resources and pre-existing audiences to give them a huge advantage over alternative media potential rivals' (Mullen, 2009, p. 20).

'Flak' in simple terms means 'mediated lobbying attempts' (Fuchs, 2018, p. 80). In the digital era, lobbying is not restricted to centralized media organizations but extends to social networking sites. Fuchs (2018) cited that ring-wing lobbying is extended to social movements and is not confined to politicians only. The lobbying is done in digital platforms through the groups and pages that support or oppose any issue through the use of hash-tags and makes the issue trending to capture or divert the attention of the public towards it. The last filter 'anti-communism' can be seen in the neoliberal ideologies of the online world. According to Fuchs (2018),

the ring-wing ideologies are shared in online mode through the use of visual means and tabloidization and it is further enhanced by user-generated content where production of ideology is not confined to an organization but can be produced by individuals.

Therefore, from the theoretical perspective, the propaganda model is well applicable in the new media context.

Propaganda, Politics and Indian Media

The politics and media relationship in India has changed drastically over the last decade due to the increasing influence of media in the political sphere. The advances in technology have resulted in market growth as the media industry is expanding its reach and also the number of outlets increased. But this has resulted in the influence of powerful and dominant corporate elites having a political background or party affiliation in the dissemination of information to the public. In this regard, renowned sociologist Sanjay Srivastava in an interview with DW News said that this trend is 'disturbing' in nature as the large media entities being owned and controlled by political actors, used it as a medium to undermine and attack their opponents and the elite-controlled media only disseminate that information that is favourable for the political actors.

The Indian political scenario shows to a large extent the existence of the news filters proposed in the Propaganda model. The thorough scrutiny of Indian media and political landscape shows the presence right from the ownership of large media houses by corporate having a political background to the existence of ideologies shaping the public discourse. The media outlet owners share direct or indirect links to political parties; while some of them are members of the Indian Parliament, many associates with the local politics. Concerning the national political scenario, the name of Rajya Sabha members, Dr. Subhash Chandra and Rajeev Chandra Shekhar can be cited in terms of national news channel ownership. While Dr. Chandra is a co-owner of Zee News, one of the top Hindi news channels in the country; Member of Parliament Chandra Shekhar was a former member of the board of broadcasters in Republic TV and directly owns two south Indian news channels namely, Suvarna News in Kannada and Asian News in Malayalam.

It can be advanced that the media houses owned by a politician may have an impact on the public opinion or in influencing the general public by dissemination of information that is a part of the political agenda of their respective parties. Krishna Kaushik (2016) mentioned that the five Indian news media companies namely, News24, Network18, India TV, News Nation, and NDTV are indebted to Mukesh Ambani, owner of Reliance Industries, Mahendra Nahata, and Abhey Oswal, industrialist. It is predicted that due to large investments the three businessmen may have control over 20 to 70 % of the media content. This shows the presence of the first filter of the propaganda model in the Indian scenario.

Although there are private entities, for advertising as well as for news, the media looks for the government. The government is a good source of advertising revenue as they spend huge sums of money for the promotion of the various programs and decisions taken from time to time. For example, the decision of demonetization in 2016 was followed by several advertisements endorsing e-payments as an alternative to cash. These kinds of advertisements try to promote a positive environment towards the policies and decisions so that the citizens cannot fully being able to scrutinize the government policies and criticize the government decisions. The government spent a hefty sum of money during elections. According to the Election Commission of India, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) spent Rs. 714.28 crores during the 2014 General Elections and a huge sum of it has been spent on advertising that is a source of revenue to the media houses. The parties have also spent a huge amount on digital media platforms such as Facebook, Google, etc. since the last two General Elections in the country. Since February 2019, the BJP has spent over Rs. 4.61 crore and Indian National Congress (INC) spent Rs. 1.84 crore according to Facebook's spending tracker (Outlook, 2020). In regard to the private entities, the media houses often try to cover up the issues to not lose their revenues. In 2015, the Nestle 2 minute Maggi was found to have high levels of monosodium glutamate (MSG) apart from high lead content above the permissible level and was banned for some time in the country. It was reported in various newspapers and news channel and had an extensive debate over the issue. Jean Dreze and Reetika Khera analysed the government advertisements during the 2004 General Elections and concluded that the media campaign 'lay

bare the intimate nexus that has developed between the state, the ruling party and the business world...brazen use of taxpayer money for party propaganda purposes is one symptom of this nexus.' (Somanchi, 2020)

The Press Information Bureau of India is the nodal agency of the Indian government that provides data and information related to government schemes, plans, policies, achievements, etc. to the media outlets across the country. It is often assumed that being a government body the news disseminated through this agency is pro-government in nature. Since most of the news is available through news agencies such as Press Trust of India or Asian News International and the same is distributed everywhere and the audience found similar content in every newspaper, news channel, and even in digital platforms that results in accepting the viewpoints depicted in the news. In some cases, even the news cannot be examined or checked by the news outlets because of limited sources or the government being the only source of news. In this regard, Rajgarhia (2020) gave the example of pro-government propaganda citing the criticism faced by Union Home Minister, Amit Shah and his response to it. The Union Home Minister on 20 November 2019 made statements in the Lok Sabha that 'the situation in Kashmir is completely normal'. However, the author claimed it as propaganda because it cannot be verified and there is limited access to an alternative source of information because of travel restrictions and also because of censorship on the local news sources. Therefore, the public is left with no choice but to believe whatever is said by the government agencies.

As mentioned earlier the media outlets try to avoid flaks as much as possible and also try to provide information that is suitable to the majority of the population to avoid the risk of revenue loss. In 2013, actor and former Member of Parliament Divya Spandana filed a defamation case against Suvarna News 24X7, a Kannada news channel and Asianet News Network Private Limited over two reports aired on the channel about her being involved in Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket betting and sought damages of Rs. 10 crores. Due to user-generated content, the presence of flaks is easier to observe in social media sites that generate criticism against the media houses to function as a lobbyist and partial in their news reporting and are often criticized for being a pro-government channel. A study of all prime-

time debates of Republic TV from May 2017 to April 2020 found that the debates are consistently are in favour of the BJP government and its policies and most important issues such as economy, health, education were not the prominent one and mostly consist of attacks on the opposition parties or groups or individuals that oppose the government decisions and featured hash-tags such as #ModiStrikesBack, #NPRForINDIA, #TheResetBudget, #CABPassed, etc. (Jaffrelot & Jumle, 2020).

Several real or imagined enemies are created in the media to generate fear among the public and to justify the actions of the government and gain support and suppress the criticizers of the government. In recent years, the government has become intolerant to criticism and there is a shift from 'anti-government' perspective to one where anybody criticizing the government is termed as 'anti-national' where not just the activists or rationalists but even comedians, farmers, journalists, anyone critical of the government has become 'anti-national'. The government in November 2020 passed three farm laws in the country and faced resentment from various quarters. The farm laws were criticized by several prominent personalities and they supported the farmer's movement against this. This has resulted in the slapping of notices from the National Investigation Agency and the government branded the protesters as 'Khalistani', a Sikh separatist group, and over 20 criminal cases were filed against them. It was alleged that the protesters through the help of Khalistani groups banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act plot against the Indian government to create a fearful and lawless state to cause animosity among the public and rouse them to rebel against the government. The protest was supported by international personalities such as environmentalist Greta Thunberg and pop superstar, Rihanna but they were criticized and trolled online.

Therefore, it can be deduced that the Indian media and politics work in close proximity and the government agenda is widely sprea d and blended with public thought through the media and this has been all the more possible because of the new media and its features of interactivity and user-generated content that allows for a constant free flow of thoughts and spread of the agenda faster than ever.

Propaganda, Assam Politics and Legislative Assembly Election 2021

It is evident from the above discussion that there is a nexus between media and political actors in the Indian political scenario and it holds in the case of the state of Assam. The media-politics nexus in visual communication assumes to be started with the launch of the first satellite channel NE TV by the Congress leader, Matang Singh who was a member of Rajya Sabha and Union Minister of State of Parliamentary Affairs from 1994 to 1998. In the current Assam scenario, the wife of the present Chief Minister of Assam, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma is associated with the news channel, News LIVE having a majority of its shares. It may therefore be assumed that through this ownership they may avail scope for considerable influence on the public opinion as according to the Propaganda model, whatever that is profitable for the government and its associated private partners is shown in the media and depicted to the public as true and significant.

With the advent of the new media platforms the Propaganda model although has reduced in its effectiveness because of possible two-way communication and user-generated content but its influence is eminent in politics even today. This has made possible a 24x7 political presence of the politicians online and to spread their agenda with every status and tweet. The importance accorded to digital media presence can be cited to the fact that in the Assam Legislative Election of 2021, the Indian National Congress (INC) has issued a notice on August 2020 for seeking application from eligible party members who intend to contest the election from their party and has sought Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and number of followers as one of the sought points among 18 points in the application form (The Sentinel, 2021).

From time to time, several issues are highlighted in the media, especially during the times of elections to capture the attention of the public and to have a significant influence on their voting preference. In the 2021 Assam Legislative Assembly Elections, the political parties tried to push agendas into public minds and some such agendas were such as 'CAA and NRC', 'unemployment', 'microfinance loan waiver', 'Ajmal the next Chief Minister' etc. find place in the election debate. Out of these the issue of microfinance along with 'Ajmal the next Chief Minister' found prominence in public discussion. The Assam Micro Finance Institutions (Regulation of Money Lending) Bill passed in December 2020 intended

to protect the borrowers from the harassment of agents and the dues could be collected only at gram panchayats or local offices. The present Chief Minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma during the election rallies assured the women borrowers of loan waiver and addressed that "I would advise you not to take microfinance loans henceforth. We will take measures such that you take loans from banks directly. It is difficult to repay microfinance loans with such high interest. If you have already taken microfinance loans and do not have the ability to return them, we will take care of it" (East Mojo, 2021). Even he tweeted on 29 March 2021 that "OUR PROMISE: Bandhan Bank & Micro Finance loans to people will be returned by Govt. SHGs, who are left out of grants of Rs 25K &50K, would get Rs 1L & 2L by next govt."It was widely covered by the media and soon became one of the burning election issues and received support from the public. Although the then Minister of Finance and Health announced it but it was circulated well in the television debates and on digital media platforms by the news media. This issue was one of the prominent factors for the huge victory of the BJP in the state as loan waivers came as a relief to the huge loan burdens. Another issue that was well circulated in the media and assumed to influence the public to a great extent was the statement made by the then Finance and Health Minister of the state while addressing a BJP peace march in Biswanath Chariali in support of the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019,"If Assamese people today cannot identify the enemy and a friend, then in 10 years Ajmal will become the CM and we will just watch." (Saha, 2020) This can be well related to the fifth filter of the Propaganda model, where the government along with the media inculcates a sense of fear against a potential enemy or create some imagined situation to counter the influence of the other side and maintain the status quo. The same was done in Assam by instilling a possible outcome if the other party came to power in the state. Although it was just a political statement many assume it to have a considerable influence on the voting preference in the election.

The issue of the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 was one of the prominent topics, and based on its new political parties such as Assam Jatiya Parishad fought the 2021 election in the state. However, the government through its political propaganda diverts the issue with the creation of several cash benefit schemes in the last few months of the government. The list comprises of schemes such as

'Arunodoi', 'SVAYEM', 'Kanaklata Women Empowerment', 'JiwikaSakhi Express', 'Indira Miri Sarbajanin Bidhwa Pension', 'Divyangajan Atmanirbhat Scheme', 'Aideu Handique Mahila Sanman' etc. covering every section of the population and alongside these schemes, the government has provided free ration to around 58 lakh beneficiaries since April 2019. In addition, the government also had announced providing free electricity up to 30 units for two months till January 2021. "The trends and leads are not unexpected. BJP's policy of beneficiary politics, as well as the clash of civilization strategy adopted for this election, seems to have resonated with voters." (Hindustan Times, 2021) It is assumed that it has led to the diversion of the public mind and the opposition and resistance that it faced during the CAA movement in the state. In the national political context, CAA is assumed to be a plan of the central government to divert the real issues such as unemployment, economic slowdown, rising infiltration, agrarian crisis, etc. According to Nationalist Congress Party President, Sharad Pawar, "CAA and NRC are ploys to divert people's attention from serious issues that the country is facing." (Firstpost, 2019) But in Assam, the beneficiary schemes were the plan of action for the diversion of the issue of CAA from the public minds in the state.

Due to the development of digital platforms, the government agendas are well circulated on social networking sites through the supporters of the political parties. The political agenda is spread through several groups and pages supporting a particular candidate or political party. For example, although BJP had an official Facebook page named, 'BJP Assam Pradesh'. There are several private groups and pages formed by party supporters such as All Assam BJP Supporters, Assam BJP, Vision & Mission Assam BJP, BJP Assam, etc. and there a number of pages and groups supporting a particular candidate such as the present Chief Minister of Assam has several fan pages and groups supporting his leadership such as Himanta Biswa Sarma Fan [CM Assam 2021], Himanta Biswa Sarma as Chief Minister, HIMANTHA BISWA SHARMA CM ASSAM, etc. in the Assembly Elections in 2021. These pages continuously spread the agenda of the political actors which was done in the past by the newspapers and television channels.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the politics in Assam can be well related to the propaganda model. There is politics and media nexus in the state; that is relevant from the ownership of media outlets by persons having a political

background and also the existence of some issues used by particular political parties as their election agenda and to set an imagined environment to influence the decisions of the voters and due to growing influence of the new media, it is all the more shaping the public opinions in the state.

Concluding Remarks

The propaganda model was proposed at a time when there was not much development of the Internet. However, the new media today have considerable influence on politics and that is evident from the growing importance credited to it in the political scenario of every country. The theories of media effects together with the propaganda model prove that there is an impact of media to an extent on the decisions of the public and explain how political actors used the media along with market forces for their benefit and to maintain the status quo in the society. Therefore, the need of the hour is to evaluate how these media effects together with propaganda influence the behaviour of the people, i.e., how the people make their choices and whether this media effects along with the propaganda influence their voting decisions and whether they had an impact on the political participation of the people. People's consciousness will ultimately make great sense.

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CLASS QUESTION IN THE WRITINGS OF BISHNU PRASAD RABHA

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Abstract

Literature embraces human concerns and experiences and expresses our opinions in creative moulds. It also serves as a reflection of reality and an expression of our ideology. Therefore, literature has been often used to promote, incite and advance revolutionary cause. Bishnu Prasad Rabha was one of the most dominant figures of Assam and besides his immense con-tribution to the literary and cultural fields, he actively participated in the political field being motivated by the political ideology of Marx and Lenin. His writings clearly reflect his ideol-ogy of communism. Rabha used writing as a tool to express his revolutionary aspirations and to arouse revolutionary consciousness among the oppressed masses. Defying the recent ten-dency to establish Rabha only as an extreme nationalist artist and Kalaguru (Master of Arts), this article tries to bring forward how Rabha addressed the class question of Assam, especial-ly his message to all the downtrodden classes of peasants, workers, women and indigenous communities who he entrusted with the responsibility of leading a socialist revolution.

Bishnu Prasad Rabha, often referred to as the 'Biplobi Xilpi' (Revolutionary Artist) was a multifaceted artist and a prominent revolutionist who was vocal about the rights of the masses. Rabha, from his very childhood, was influenced by the anarchist movement started by a few rebel Indians by exploiting the opportunity created by the Swadeshi movement. This handful of rebellious youths inspired by the Soviet Revolution always believed that indepen-dence from colonial rule would not bring the people overall freedom. This freedom was poss-ible only through leading their way towards the path of socialism. Even after India got inde-pendence, people who believed in this ideology, engaged themselves with greater enthusiasm in promoting the belief among the masses that the achieved independence will not be able to bring greater development to the lives of peasants and middle-class sections of our society. Rabha actively participated in raising this consciousness amongst the masses both before and after independence (Mahanta, 2014). Rabha's article '*Agyatbaxor Kotha*', "… the fruit of In-dian independence was snatched away only by the richer section… British left, money rule started.." (Rabha, 1997, p. 1182). Therefore, Rabha, who became a member of RCPI in 1945, favoured continuing the independence struggle on the basis of 'revolutionary class-struggle'.

Literature in its various forms and modes carry enormous power and potential and acts as a powerful instrument to articulate change and mobilization in the society. Literature, thus, has been used in different reformations and revolutions in the world like the American Revolution, French Revolution and many others, to articulate and to bring consciousness among the masses. In 1942, Mao Zedong, in his '*Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art*', emphasised that the goal of literature was not to express the author's own private feel-ings or artistic inspirations. Instead, he said that literature and art should inspire the masses by presenting positive examples of heroism and socialist idealism (Zedong, 1959). Rabha was among those revolutionaries who used writing as a medium to articulate and arouse con-sciousness among the mass. A reading of Rabha's writings reveal that he believed in the unit-ed strength of all the downtrodden and dominated classes that could bring about revolutio-nary changes in the society rather than one specific class. In this article we identify the role and revolutionary responsibility of three groups that find significant mention in his writings.

The Peasants and Workers

Peasants from different parts of the world have been playing crucial roles in different movements and revolutions around the world. Like Mao, who entrusted revolutionary re-sponsibilities on the peasants, Frantz Fanon also talked about the inevitable role of the pea-santry in the anti-colonial movement in his book '*The Wretched of the Earth*' (2004). Revolutionary attitude of the peasantry against exploitative conditions was witnessed in Assam too in the 18th century, when peasants revolted against the Ahom administration under the banner of Moamoria Rebellion. The root cause of this rebellion was in the repressive mandatory la-bour service called the Paik System. Rabha recognized this strength of the peasantry and hence he assigned great political and revolutionary responsibilities to the peasant class. To-gether with the peasantry, he also acknowledged the power of the working class emerged as a result of simultaneous policies of colonialism, capitalism, industrialization and the like.

Bishnu Prasad Rabha donated almost 2500 *bighas* of inherited land among the poor landless farmers and embraced their lifestyle to have a closer understanding of their problems and to declass himself as an expression of his commitment towards the cause of peasantry. This was because Rabha was aware of the policies and practices adopted in different com-munist countries like Soviet Union's collectivization of agricultural land between 1928 and 1940 during the tenure of Joseph Stalin; Agrarian Reform Law crafted by Che Guevara in Cuba that aimed at bringing transformations in the lives of peasants. It was also done in re-sponse to the Indian government's failure in successful implementation of zamindari aboli-tion, tenancy reform and the like. This apart, Rabha also wrote extensively addressing the peasantry and working class informing them of their rights, the exploitative practices and the course of action required. For example, Rabha wrote-

"You feed the world

Tearing apart the land

You provide the rich with

Strong weapons

Factory is your creation,

Fields wider…

…………………..

Onward onward onward

Army of peasant power

O' worker friend

Let's march onward

Wake up wake up wake up

Young workers

Persecuted oppressed

Peasants stronger….." (Rabha, 2008, p. 134)

(Flexible rendering from Assamese by the first author)

Through this poem, Rabha speaks of the significance of the peasantry as the producer class. Likewise, he brings forward the exploitation of the workers who were denied the rights to the products of their labour. Rabha foregrounds the role of the working class within an in-dustrial setup by depicting that although different machineries make a factory, without man-power (labour power) a factory cannot be run or built up. Which is why, Rabha in this poem proclaimed that a factory is the creation of the workers. In the same vein, he highlights that agricultural product, food grains are products of human labour particularly of the peasants. This is because the zamindars and land owners do not really put any effort in the production process. But profits earned goes into the hands of feudal lords and the factory owners. There-fore, Rabha expects and urges the peasantry and working to fight against the oppressive and exploitative practices and the phrase 'wake up, wake up' is a reflection of this.

Similarly, Rabha addressed the labourers of the newly established industries of Assam like tea, oil, coal, electricity who were the primary producing force of these industries-

"On whose strength earth's coal-stone rely;

Whose hearty Ganges is earth's in-streaming oil;

Whose arm force brings electricity

Tearing apart blank bust of outer space;

Those food and landless world's millions of proletariats

Uproar in imprisoned heart." (Rabha, 2008, p. 272)

(Free rendering from Assamese by the first author)

With the arrival of colonialism witnessed the off shooting of industries in Assam. To work in these industries- tea, oil, railways, electricity, coal- huge numbers of native and mi-grated workers were employed. Coal mines and oil fields demand hazardous tasks. Workers in these industries were not adequately paid as per the drudgery they undergo in these indus-tries risking their lives. Most often workers would be under debt bondage or the bonded la-bour system in which a worker has to provide labour service for a fixed duration to the credi-tor in exchange of advanced cash. This denies the worker the right to choose his employer or even to negotiate the terms of the contract which gives the creditor opportunity to make the terms of the contract in favour of himself with utmost exploitation of labour. Ranjit Das Gup-ta in his article '*From Peasants and Tribesmen to Plantation Workers: Colonial Capitalism, Reproduction of Labour Power and Proletarianisation in North East India, 1850s to 1947*' has discussed the plight of tea garden labourers most of which were recruited through allurement, deception and naked violence. They were provided very low wages and were kept under strict surveillance and if a worker was absent from work for more than seven days he was liable to imprisonment and chastisement (Das , 1986). These workers whether in coal, oil or electricity as Rabha wanted to depict in the poem are the primary force of production are landless and are even deprived of sufficient food to survive.

Gramsci in his '*Prison Notebook*' argued that the ruling class can maintain hegemony or dominance over the masses through 'civil society'. Through the instruments of 'civil society' like religious and educational institutions, poems, songs, media, the ruling class or bourgeois develop a hegemonic culture that disperse its political, social and cultural values and norms in such a way that it takes the form of 'common sense' among the masses. There-fore, Gramsci argued that capitalist power is needs to be challenged by building a 'counter hegemony' through creating alternative ideology in contrast to bourgeois ideology by organic intellectuals. Because of such bourgeois hegemony the peasants and workers could not gain consciousness about the exploitations they had been facing and to fight back. Justification of such exploitations becomes a part of their common sense, which was created through differ-ent instruments and agents of the ruling class (Gramsci, 1971).

Rabha's short story '*HiyarPung*' depicted such processes of consent creation within the Assamese socio-economic structure. In this story, while the protagonist Lakhra has lost everything he had - land, field and even his home to the Mahajan (village money-lender), the Ojaa (village exorcist) tries to console him saying that all those were the wish of God and Lakhra only was unlucky that he had to go through that. Hearing his words Lakhra becomes furious and tells him that the people like the Ojaa, the rich, have spoilt the minds of the poor like Lakhra himself and it was neither the wish of God nor of luck; but of the localized insti-tutions like Mahajan, Ojaa etc. The people like the village exorcist are the representative of bourgeois ideology who tries to justify the works of the ruling class by spreading their ideo-logical values and norms and tries to get consent from the subordinated class (Rabha, 1997, p. 676-689).

Indigenous Communities

Bishnu Prasad Rabha mentioned the role of indigenous communities like the Mising, Bodo, Hajong, Karbi in the formation of larger Assamese nation and the importance of unity and integrity among different communities, the people living in the hills and the plains in his poems, dramas, speeches and articles. In his article '*Bor Asom*' (Greater Assam), he wrote that if the indigenous communities would not be given their dignified status in the society the sparkle of revolt among

them would definitely destroy the base of the Assamese nation. Rabha belonged to the Bodo Community by birth, although he used the title Rabha as his father was brought up by a person from the Rabha community after the death of his grandfather, his philosophy towards life, society and politics did not limit himself to the thoughts and processes one community alone. Rather, he established close connections with different communities and Assam, learned several languages and was accustomed with traditions of several communities. These communities are not free of exploitation and they are subjected to cultural, linguistic and various other forms of exploitation (Doley, 2008). Chandan Kumar Sharma in his article '*Tribal Land Alienation: Government's Role*' (2001) discusses tribal land alienation from a historical perspective. He brings forth how colonial policies brought about tremendous changes in the pattern of land use among these communities, dependence on forest affecting their relation with nature (river, forest and other natural resources) reshaping their relationship with other communities. The British created feudal interest in the land belonging to these communities by the grant of 'zamindari' who were to collect revenue but many of them also indulged in importing non-tribal labourers to work in tribal areas so that more revenue could be generated. This paved the way to commercialization of resources which were earlier regarded by the tribal as their community holdings like bamboo, thatch, reed and wood in the forest and fish in the rivers - everything was brought under taxation. These indigenous peasants were not able to meet the growing revenue demand of the British administration which made them bound to take loan from Marwari money lenders who also migrated to Assam for trade purpose during the colonial rule and sometimes the peasantry had to sell their land in order to meet the revenue demand (Sharma, 2001). Rabha could un-derstand their plight and he described in his article '*Samajtantrabaad Hole Ki Laabh*' (1997) that only through socialist revolution freedom of marginalized groups like workers, labourers and indigenous communities can be achieved. Here, he vehemently criticised the Tribal League which was established for bringing welfare to these communities but, in contrast the leaders of the league established their own leadership over the tribal masses

by giving them false hope of peace, prosperity and freedom. He brings forth how leadership squeezes these indigenous populations in the "*squeezing machine of law*" (1997; pp. 990)- a machine that protects the rich and exploits the poor. Because like other parties such as the Congress and Muslim League; Socialist Party, Forward Block and the Tribal League too has its faith in the machinery of the law. To substantiate his argument, Rabha even brought in the example of Rupnath Brahma, who despite having a very honest personality could not do welfare to the indigenous communities even after being a Minister for so long. According to Rabha Brahma's failure owes to his belief in law and other class institutions which were discriminatory in nature. Such institutions can never bring felicity, peace and freedom (Rabha, 1997).

Owing to the indigeneity of these communities, Rabha believed that they hold great responsibility in building up an egalitarian society. Therefore, Rabha through his writings highlighted their problems and prospects and worked toward raising their consciousness re-garding their roles and responsibilities toward a socialist revolution that would them ensure dignity and freedom from Caste practices prevalent within Assamese society. Rabha tried to provide a glance of such negligence in his only novel '*Mising Koneng*', based on Mising so-ciety. In this novel, Rabha portrayed an incident when the male protagonist Kumong, who was then just a school going teen-age boy goes to drink water from a public well of a Hindu village. Knowing that he belonged to Mising (an indigenous community inhabiting parts of the Indian states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh), a middle-aged man who was present there scolded him for touching the well as according to the man the well became impure with his touch. This incident incited questions in Kumong's teen-aged mind that whether Misings are not Assamese, why they have been treated as non-Assamese despite being the aboriginals (Rabha, 1997). Rabha believed that such practices should be abolished and the dignity of these communities must be restored. They had no idea that socialist revolutions in different part of the world have established new classless societies. Rabha's commitment to the cause is reflected from his words-

"Tribal! Wake up tribal!

Forsaking your age-old slumber……

………………………….

See once the new earth

Brightening up by the new sun

Surmounting the darkness;

Open your eyes and see

The fresh tidings of the new era."

………………………

In the lonely woods of assam

Used to roam several animals - huge and terrible

Fighting with them number of your kins

Had lost their lives.

………

Assam's primitive men and women- tribal!

Open once the golden pages of that era

Peruse the ancient stories of your old period.

…………………..

O' indigenous tribal belle!

Mother Assam.

Tribal is the first man! Father of Assam

Creator of the Assamese nation.

Listen listenlisten o' tribal women!

How many full moons, how many moonlight

Have passed with time quietly

One day while you were sitting alone -

Secretly whispered in your ear

Taught you the chant of creative power.

Initiated with that chant

Learned with creative power

Your young body got brightened up

Thus, carrying for ten months ten days

You gave birth to the first Assamese

Making the lap of Assam elegant.

Today you are the ever-respectable mother Assam-

You are the indigenous Assamese." (Rabha, 2008, p 161-165)

(Free rendering from Assamese by the first author)

From the above excerpts from the poem Jag Tribal (wake up tribal) it becomes evi-dent that Rabha accorded the aboriginal status to the indigenous communities which are clear from his reference to them as 'AadimAsomiya' (Indigenous Assamese). He also called them the father of the Assamese language. His mention of indigenous women in the above excerpt informs that he also addressed the women question in his writings which will be dealt with in the next section.

Women in the writings of Rabha

An analysis of the writings of Bishnu Prasad Rabha also reflects his concern for the women and his attempts at addressing the women question. He was against the oppression done to women in every capitalist society. Rabha wrote a number of articles on the problems faced by women in capitalist society and what benefit a socialist society can provide to wom-en with. In his article '*Narir Samasya Ki Hobo*' he wrote, "religion, society, politics and gov-ernment have pushed women down to the lowest category. Today women have nothing as their own. They have even lost their freedom and cannot do anything on their own - cannot go out, read, and write. They cannot eat, dress, give speeches, discuss politics, sing or even dance. Today women are prisoners in their own home" (Rabha, 1997, p. 988). Here, we can see the similarity between the ideas of Rabha on the

status of women with that of Kate Millet. Kate Millet in her book '*Sexual Politics*' slammed the institution of patriarchy as it establishes the relationship of dominance and subordination between men and women. She wrote that military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, and finance - in short, every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands and these institutions license man's dominance over woman in the society (Millet, 2000).

His '*Sovietor Nari*' is an important document through which he wanted to show the world the difference in the lives of women between a socialist society and a capitalist society. He vehemently criticised the Indian tradition which severely discriminate between men and women in every aspect of life. According to Rabha, the Indian society terming its women as chaste, virtuous wife makes them eternally dependent upon man and that is why the independent image of Soviet women, in the eyes of many Indians becomes depravedness. But the actual truth is that, here, in this country, marriage is considered as the only way of survival and livelihood for a woman and for which the growth of humanistic qualities in women has always been suppressed. Husband is considered as the provider of food, cloth and shelter for a woman and that is why she has to worship her husband like a God no matter whether he deserves it or not. The society frames hardest punishment against a simple fault of women but the same society forgives even the disgusting crimes by a man. In contrast to our society, Rabha said that in the Soviet, men and women enjoy equal rights in the eyes of society, law and economy. Parents there do not get their daughters married just to ensure their survival because they know their daughters are capable of earning money and taking care of them-selves. A mother shares the responsibility of her children equally with the father (Rabha,1997, p. 996-999).

Rabha not only limited his ideas on the status of women from the economic perspective but he also touched the sensitive issues of reproduction. With sharp contrast to Indian society as portrayed by Rabha, there is no absolute right of a father over his child in the so-cialist society of the Soviet. A woman can bear and rear a child even without the name of a father and such s child would by no means

be regarded as illegitimate in Soviet society. In such cases, the mother and the child are never discriminated against or alienated from the rest of the society. Still, the couples are encouraged to register their marriage in order to secure their child's future but it is not in any case mandatory. And these changes in the Soviet have been introduced after the establishment of socialism and more drastic changes according to Rabha were destined (Rabha, 1997, p. 996-999).

Through these writings Rabha clearly shows how a socialist society can bring welfare to the lives of women and establishment of such socialist society is not possible without a revolution. Soviet society which was an inspirational and benchmark society for Rabha went through such socialist revolution which according to Rabha altered the soviet societies in a better way giving women their due rights. Rabha also understood that if women do not come out along with their male counterparts to lead a socialist revolution there will be only little change in their status even if a socialist society is established. To achieve their due rights they must participate in the revolution to establish the goal of socialism. Rabha wrote -

> "Taking seedlings of new era, of new mind,
>
> Planting them in ploughed muddy earth,
>
> Let's march on flying flaming flag
>
> Poor worker faction of slender young women,
>
> Ruined in greed, burnt in hunger, lean, withered
>
> Weaver of the land of assam.
>
> …………………………….
>
> The bugle of war is blowing
>
> It's time to be ready taking the oath of life and death
>
> …………………
>
> Get dressed like a warrior and let's proceed to the last battle"
> (Rabha, 2008; pp. 140)

(Free rendering from Assamese by the first author)

Rabha's commitment to the women question in Assamese society is reflected through the above lines where he depicts the deplorable status of women. The lines also depict his recognition of women as a revolutionary class who through their own labour and awareness of the cause shall fight for their own freedom.

We see that Rabha used his writings as a means to address different issues of inequali-ty, exploitation, discrimination whether it is economic, political, social or cultural. He used his writings also to arouse consciousness and awareness amongst the exploited sections of the society Rabha was exemplary in the sense that he did not confine his assessment and analysis of the socio-political and economic condition of Assam only to a particular marginalized group or community

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COMMENTARY ON THE DYNAMICS OF US-GERMAN RELATIONS: FROM 'GUARDIAN-WARD' TO PARTNERSHIP IN CRISIS?

Urbi Das

Abstract

Germany is an indispensable U.S. ally in Europe, a significant NATO member and a strong economic partner. Yet, relationship between Washington and Berlin has not always been cordial. While Germany, namely the Federal Republic made an economic transition holding the U.S. hands, the equations established during the cold war no longer fit the riddle. With the changed leadership in America and Germany trying the gain its lost power and heritage, there is bound to be change in the way the partners perceive each other in the present century. The article in a commentary on the changing nature of U.S. - German relations and the two nation-states endeavour to rebuild their relations in light of the changing nature and emerging complexities of the present-day world politics. The article recalls the cold war days and how Germany was positioned in U.S. foreign policy goals and thereafter integrated into the world politics, to briefly discussing the recent rugged areas and issues in U.S. - German relations.

Keywords: Cold war, Post-cold war, Power, Germany, U.S.A.

The United States of America was undoubtedly the largest economic power in the 20th century. It is quite a celebrated argument that if the 19th century belonged to Europe, the 20th century was to the America's. To this end, the culmination of the second world war appeared to be a blessing in disguise when the United States appeared to be the most power nation economically and to a large extend militarily (taking into account the Soviet threat). It is interesting to note that both US and Germany harboured similar aspirations in international politics, with Germany having a long history of assertiveness in Europe. Again, the aspiration of the United States of America to becoming a superpower can be traced back to the victory of United States in the Spanish-American war in 1898. As the discourses of power would say that two lions cannot reign at the same time, similarly the culmination of the World War II witnessed a Germany stripped off its power, position and divided in between the Capitalist and Soviet bloc's. Needless to say, both U.S. and Soviet were trying to curb Germany's destructive potential and shaping European politics in their own image.

At the Yalta Conference that took place from February 4–11, 1945, the Allied powers namely, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin agreed upon plans for the unconditional surrender of Germany. The Americans and the British agreed upon establishing 'friendly' government to be reinstated along the borders of the Soviet Union while the Soviets pledged for enabling free elections in all territory that were to be liberated from Nazi Germany (U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs). Subsequently, the conclusion of the Potsdam Conference brought about the division of Germany into four zones to be occupied by the four Allied powers, that is, U.S.A., USSR, UK and France.

From the American perspective, the transition from the Yalta to the Potsdam conference in addressing the question of Germany was a temporary condition which was to be continued until a more satisfactory plan was devised. The practical feasibility of the decisions undertaken in Potsdam Conference regarding the post war developments in Germany appeared to be blurred as the powers failed to adhere to the agreements they had undertaken in the conference and began to

pursue their own interests in their respective occupation zones. There will little possibility of any economic unity and agreements between them appeared to be a distant goal. The most serious disagreement was between the U.S. and the Soviet zone of influence where frequent disagreement developed into frictions. The disagreements were primarily regarding the post war shaping of Germany. The Soviet Union extended its communist model of economic and political systems towards its sphere of influence in Germany, where nationalization and socialization appeared in full swing. While this was the situation in Eastern Germany, the western zones of influence in Germany followed a different pattern. The Allied powers headed by the U.S.A. wanted to make Germany a peaceful member of the world community urged for a democratic, pluralistic and capitalist system of state and economy that would make Germany a viable partner of the liberal powers. Soon the Americans realized that any means of cooperation with the Soviet on the issue of German economic reconstruction and political unification was difficult and therefore had to be discarded.

The United States of America in the entire period of the cold war was committed to preventing communist expansion across the continent. American statecraft took the shape of diplomatic, economic and military means, directed towards the singular aim of containing communism. Its diplomatic measure was the non-recognition of GDR in 1949. Washington firmly stated its position that the existence of GDR was 'without any legal validity,' and that the United States would 'continue to give full support to the Government of the German Federal Republic at Bonn in its efforts to restore a truly free and democratic Germany,' and finally establishing full diplomatic relations with FGR on May 6, 1955 (Livingston, 2014).

Here the doctrine of pre-emption can be extended from its traditional military doctrinaire to understand America's economic statecraft. Pre-emption is generally understood as a military term to denote a perceived security threat and to act against it. Germany's inclusion in the European Union guided by the USA can be considered as a pre-emptive economic statecraft, which suggests the inclusion of Germany in the free market framework under liberal internationalism

thus controlling its economic apparatus within the folds of the Union. The US made all possible efforts in mould Germany and Western European political-economy in its own imagine, The European Recovery Program with its thrust on the Marshall Plan was the single most determining factor of American involvement in the European reconstruction effort. The Truman doctrine that remained the most important guidelines of U.S. foreign policy to be conducted in the next years contained the principal objective of American foreign policy.

It must be noted that, Germany, because of its aggressive history had been excluded from any international arrangements following the Second World War. The Treaty of Dunkirk and the Treaty of Brussels exemplified such arrangements where European countries sought inter-governmental pacts among themselves excluding Germany. The Treaty of Dunkirk was essentially a bilateral treaty between the United Kingdom and France and sometimes regarded as a precursor to the formation of the Western Union, was signed to counter the threat of Germany and Soviet Union. Again, the 1948 Treaty of Brussels which laid the foundation of the Western Union excluded Germany and it a bid to counter any possibility of aggression included France, Belgium, Luxemburg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Germany that is West Germany's re-entry into the world politics has been guided by the United States of America that pushed for a greater European unity and emancipation of the market principles under liberal principles. Under the guardianship of the U.S., West Germany experienced impressive export-led growth with an average growth rate of 8.2 % during the 1950s (CRS, 2010). Even for that matter, the United States guided Germany's entry into the European Union and made credible efforts to mend relations between the age-old animosity between France and Germany and also to convince Britain for Germany's membership. Therefore, it is well evident that through its economic pre-emption the U.S. endeavoured to build strong and stable institutions in West Germany, forge mutual trust, create a suitable base for international institution and inter-governmental networks to operate and regional integration to take place and finally a strong robust trading partner.

As the economic means of containing Soviet influence took the form of Marshall Plan, militarily one of the strongest alliance was sought by the United States in the form of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The NATO was created in 1949 by the United States, Canada and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union. The NATO remained the cornerstone of American defence mechanism throughout the cold war and also during the post-cold war (Reed, 1987). The strategic policies towards containing Soviet ambitions in West Germany was also emphasized by Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of post-war West Germany, who made a public statement on January 30, 1949 emphasizing the 'guarantee of German security by the Western powers as well as a defence of Europe on the Elbe' and also called for membership of Germany in the North Atlantic security alliance in terms of complete equality' (Pommerin, 1995). Thus, NATO was the symbol of European-American alliance that reaffirmed Washington's commitment to bolstering security of Germany and Western Europe.

Throughout the cold war, mutual distrust between the America and the Soviet Union was fuelled by a series of events such as the Berlin Blockade, communist victory in China and the Korean War. All these events strained the atmosphere and led Chancellor Adenaeur to plead for American protection (Byrnes, 1958). The stalemate continued and in 1951, in response to the renewed call for reunification and neutralization of Germany, the FGR offered an alternative 14-point proposal for all-German elections as a part of the initiation of the process of reunification. This although was accepted by the Soviet Union and GDR in its primary stage, was later declared unacceptable due to NATO's activity and continued East-West divergences and was referred to as the 'lost opportunity' to achieve the reunification of Germany. West Germany under Adenauer government found it unacceptable since it called for a German government which would be neutral and not protected by the United States, which meant that it would be vulnerable to Soviet ambitions in the region (Cooney, 1984).

The year 1969 was a turning point in the relationship between East and West Germany. In West Germany, a social-liberal coalition government came into

power headed by Willy Brandt who pursued a new course for foreign policy. The Basic Treaty signed by East and West Germany on November 8, 1972 opened up diplomatic relations between the two states. It was worth mentioning that this period of sober relation and openness between East and West Germany, known as Ostpolitik, coincided with the overall period of détente between the USA and Soviet Union (McWilliams & Piotrowski, 2005). Germany's fate dwindled amidst the tussle between communism and capitalism, detente and renewed tension until Gorbachev's perestroika and the final call for unification that took place on 3rd of October 1990. The Post-cold war scenario was a different outlook for Germany as the disintegration of the Soviet Union led to the integration and unification of East Germany with the West Germany.

The closure of the 20th century thus marked a new beginning for the nation that had long lost its place in the community of nation-states. Situated at the heart of Europe, surrounded by nine neighbouring countries such as Denmark in the north, Switzerland and Austria in the south, Luxemburg and France in the west, and Poland and Czech Republic in the east, Germany therefore serves as a link between the East and the West and also between the Scandinavian region and the Mediterranean. Significant to note, Germany is one of the strongest economies in the European Union, the largest in Europe and fifth largest in the world. Germany accounts for one-fifth of European Union's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (CRS, 2010). In the post-cold war, Germany is Washington's largest trade and investment partner. Its position is Europe is also significant as it has the maximum neighbours in Europe and eight out of its nine neighbours are members of the European Union. With the end of the cold war, the understanding of security changed and Germany as united country had the opportunity to develop its own foreign, economic and security policy. The interesting point to note here is that the United States of America had promoted German rearmament, sustained its continuity even after the end of cold war and unification of the German state.

However, even though the unification and the economic perspective was guided by the United States, Washington and Berlin does not see eye to eye on all issues. It is a thrust to break-free from the old 'guardian' and to have an independent

view of national interest and international relations that led the newly united nation-state to curve out its own role and search for an independent foreign policy. The U.S. in the 20th century had an upper hand in determining international affairs, but, in the 21st century all the cards are not in Washington's hand. The 21st century saw the emergence of China as a new player with its own economic statecraft with a massive economic potential, huge investment and trade opportunities along with a huge military build-up. Added to this, problems in the post-cold war have become more complicated with the question arising of the future of NATO, its enlargement and contributions of individual members, the changed leadership in both Germany and U.S.A. and their world view, the emerging economic powerhouses like China, the huge exodus of refugees and frictions on issues of migration, the renewed role of Russia under Putin leadership, non-conventional security threats like terrorism and climate change; where the erstwhile 'ward' is now mature has a different take on foreign policy. Equations among countries can no longer be defined in the linear manner as a huge array of complicating factors now determine bilateral and multilateral relations. The deadliest realities of the post-cold war had been the 9/11 incident which broke the facade of the so-called peaceful post-cold war era with globalization and peace as watch-words. Therefore, the two countries differed on various instances as how to deal with this crisis and shape its world view accordingly. Though Berlin has been a supporter of U.S. in the war on terror, it denied to support and join the U.S. in 2003 Iraq war and sided along with Russia instead of the U.S. This marked a break from the US perceived role of NATO allies and suggests that Germany was on its way to make a role of its own in international arena. It suggests that Germany is now mature and require neither the US umbrella nor its guardianship.

Under President Trump, there had been quite a number of cases of difficult exchanges with Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel. The lack of warmth in the issues and exchanges exemplified by recent events has led many policy analysts to predict a whither in US- German relation. There clash came to limelight in the G-7 Summit in 2018 on Climate Change issues with President Trump's reluctant attitude on issues concerning global warming. Again, Germany and US clashed over issues of trade surplus and President Trump calling Germany's immigration

policy as a 'catastrophic mistake' for the open-door migration policy followed by Germany that have allowed more than 1 million migrants from conflict and poverty ridden areas of Middle East, Asia and Africa to enter the country since 2015. Apart from that, the two countries have differed on the role of NATO and its force contribution as President Trump had consistently urged the NATO partners including Germany to acknowledge the 2 percent GDP criteria. The Trump Presidency has particularly been detrimental to U.S. German relations, with Trump going to the extent of calling European Union an economic adversary. President Trump allegedly brought out the reality that US- German alliance as though it had been masquerading for decades now, was never a partnership of equals (Karnitschnig, 2019). To add to the existing crisis, China is progressively becoming an important trading partner and its 'charm' seems to be alluring Berlin to a large extent.

It can be argued that, theories are often at play at the systemic level and there is seldom one such grand theory that can fully explain the trajectory of bilateral relationship throughout history. It can at best explain the generality of relations in a given time-frame when operated with few variables and concepts. The relation between U.S. and Germany is dynamic and has been changing throughout the course of history. While it is true that the present nature of U.S. - German relations draws essence from the cold war period but it did not shape itself in the image as perceived by U.S. diplomats in the aftermath of the cold war. Germany as it stands in the present century in very different from the yester years. As a nation that boasts of its heritage, culture, and history had been constantly broken, divided and moulded to fit into the image of the two powers throughout the Cold War, has now endeavoured to successfully leave its own mark in world politics.

Again, not to forget that U.S. and Germany are bound by history, cultural exchanges, shared economic ties and responsibility to maintaining peace, security and stability in Europe and the world. The leadership should respect and value their shared desires and engage in mutually beneficial areas, especially when some of the threats encountered by nation-states are non-conventional, mutual and

therefore require concerted and coordinated efforts. This would benefit not only both these two democracies but also the stability and future of Europe. The United States and Germany are each other's strongest economic partners with the US being the biggest market for German exports and Germany virtually driving the European Union. The question lies as to how much the leadership is eager to embrace the cob-web model of liberal internationalism that argues win-win situation for all. But the harsh reality lies in accepting that howsoever liberal and equal it might seem, there is always a hint of power in every liberal mind as exemplified throughout the history of international politics.

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THE NEO -LIBERALISM AND THE STATE : A DISCURSIVE FORMATION OF THE POST-LIBERAL INDIA

Bikash Nath

Abstract

The new foundation of the liberalism have its particular significance in contrast to its own past avatar in the aspect of the democratic constitutionality of the functioning of the state where the consent of the people is guaranteed through regular elections and above all , a participatory kind of democracy when the rights and obligations of its citizens are given a broad pattern of inclusive agency .The conditions of the neo-liberalism have been arranged in such a way that any deviation from the great apparatus of the neo-liberal groundwork of the society and the polity could be considered as the path in contrast to the established norms of that particular bio-political force that could not be challenged through the conventional political idioms of understanding . Not that the state has been ossified and indistinguishable from the remnants of the pre-liberalism stage of politics but in the new incarnation of the state ,it has been making its presence in a subterranean way but it is more forceful whenever any process of public refusal of the grand narrative of the functioning liberalism is made by some unfaithful political forces. In a neo-liberal political economy, the presence of the

state could determine metabolism of the finance capital and its varied intrusions into the people's livelihood . It does not mean that the big houses of the finance capital would bound to hear whistle blowing of the state in any untoward context of the constitutionality of the state's existence but on the other hand the power of the physiological imperatives of the finance capital is further accentuated in every aspect through broadening of the discursive forms of the state's existentiality .So, in such an aspect the rigorous character of the networks of the finance capital and the continuous unfurling of the role of the state has been determined in response to the demand and nature of the expansion of the networks of the finance capital. The essay would particularly try to study the impacts of the neo-liberal groundwork and how it contributed in transformation of the nature of the functioning capacities of the state.

The present epoch of the space of the political has been the most matured phase of development of the idea of progress in terms of its relation to the state and the other prerogatives of freedom and wellbeing .But that particular state of the nature of progress has been crisscrossed with the paraphernalia of the universal category of the state as the omnipotent power of translating every thought of being into the rational imperatives of the authority and as the medium of delineating the justice . In the state of the 'political society' the reified nature of the functioning mechanism of the state as an independent unit devoid of the other alternatives of disciplining the masses as the ontological conditionality of a supreme importance that could defy as well as negate the whole process of the individuality and social rationality of the human species being has been particularly positioned as the ultimate feature of the socialized productive phenomena. The idea of progress has been given a relative framework of distinction against the nature of the forms of

underdevelopment where the level of understanding about the capacity of withstanding the social ills is severely unrealized. So in such a situation, the totality of the ideas about the forms of progress has been turned into the authoritarian belief of the reified particularity of the transgression into the real as substantiated by the rhythm of the civil abstruseness. The state is by nature not a state itself and the state has the composite formation of the million states which are hidden in the broad paradigm of that aspect. The chief proposition about the necessity and its existence is that only through the mechanism of the state the individual as well as the interests of the nationality could be served more diligently and in fact it is assumed that the absence of the state means the absence of the settled livelihood. Any kind of discussion about the lager interests of the people under the impact of a specific political territory is brought into the necessary determined space as state. But it is not considered that there has been as yet no existence of the state which is understood in conventional terms of the political. Why the existence of the state is nowhere in the sense of the biased political society because of the fact that the state has still been the centre of the accumulation of the interests of the superhuman being who are in control of the specific territory of the political and that particular rationality of the interests being influenced by the big finance capital have a great prejudice against the people's choices. Beyond the specific character of acting as the centre of the accumulation of those interests for a specific class it could try to create an identity after gathering the historicity of some of the myths around the necessity of defending the space of the political.

The Neo-liberal foundation in terms of its relation to the state and economy above all has been determining now absolutely the rhythm of the space of the political and every urge for progress under the space has now been claimed through the context of the liberalism that could only contribute to the strengthening of the ideas of freedom and wellbeing as well as shaping the interests of the individuality. In a well-run democratic foundation of the state, it is surmised that the authoritarian or dictatorial ambitions of the one superhuman being could be defeated through the distribution of the interests in terms of the rights to produce and procure the benefits of those commodities in relation to the organic and inorganic whole of the social - production relation. No doubt, the philosophy of liberalism has been organized around

the principles of free trade and the production of the commodities under the hegemonic mobility of the capital as the functioning entity with wide diversifications and that particular entity has been organized in such a way that the people could glance the vision of the memory of their meaning of existence in its civility .But that particular sense of civility could be realized under some broad conditions of the rituals which are again determined and regulated by a functioning authority whose power of extension is gone through the process of participation of the common masses in producing the consent for their hegemonic ruling paradigm . The role of the classes those are directly or indirectly connected in the act of producing or controlling the flow of commodities could be guaranteed through an agreement based upon the recognition of the mass of the production as the macro management of the hegemony of the 'microscopic minority' and the role of the common masses is defined in relation to the right to hold property and the right to join in the functioning of the state but with strict provision of only in the act of participation but not in joining with wholehearted senses in presentation of their applied ideas .The espousal of the mere right to participation so does not mean always which has been much emphasized in the scholarly debates the right to present the grievance or the ideas of transforming the ideals of the whole mechanism of the liberal foundation of the state itself . The decentering of the common masses in the act of participation could occur even when sufficient provisions are made for the way of participation in the democratic activities of the state .In a neo-liberal set up ,the decisions and the whole process of the constitutionalism are defined through the consent of the two forces which are quite in synthesis with each other .Those two forces are namely ,the force of the economic transfiguration and the other ,determinants of the internalities of the functioning ruling paradigm .

I

The essay would primarily look into the categories of distinction which has been emanated after the introduction of the liberalization of the economy by the Indian government in 1991. It is generally agreed that in worst economic situation that the policy makers had to tackle in the early 90s due to the collapse of the India's for ex reserves to $5.8 billion which is now stood at above $600 billion

compelled the government and the bureaucrats in the Departments of Finance and Commerce to uphold the change of freeing the economy from the internal trade barriers and instead of that a congenial international trade policy had been adopted where more opportunities were provided to the powerful capitalist nations to invest and to do business in India. Our point of analysis would not try to define the territory of the fiscal and other trade regulations which have been arranged newly in consideration of the opportunities to be provided to the foreign companies but in lieu of that we will try to limit our analysis upon the erosion of the boundaries of the state not only in relation to the transfiguration of the ideals of freedom but it would be analyzed how the state as a whole has been obliterated in deliverance of the 'public goods 'which concerns deeply with everydayness of the people's lives those who are really poor in availing of the right to decent life. The decency in patterns of lives does not mean only the guarantee of a safe economic base to be provided to the individuals and nor does it mean that the wellbeing is best served where ultimate conditions are framed to uplift the environment of the democratic consensus based upon the strengthening of the capabilities of the persons and through sufficiently deriving maximum constitutional privileges to the pockets of the common masses .When the foundation of the neo-liberalism and the state has been founded upon a base where the individuality is thought to be the other name of the object there the situation could develop into a form where the basic agency of freedom could be detached from the aims of the fulfillment of the distinctive nature of welfare .The function of welfare could not be guaranteed until the true worth of the capabilities of the human being could not be ensured and if the whole base of the productivity would go towards the design of the big finance capital regime then the matter of concern could grow up in the aspect of proper evaluation of the agency of progress .When we do try to give the distinction of the agency of progress to the functioning form of a state it does mean that the state will go for strengthening and developing the consensus around the conceptual categories of progress in its specific sense but in normatively oriented egalitarianism ,the specific sense of judgment of development is altogether different from the conventional approach of development in pure material aspects.

Since the independence of the country, various governments led by different parties have been giving emphasis on the provisions for the improvement of the conditions of the weaker sections of the society in terms of providing material avenues as well as developing the communication between the state and its internalities .For example , the reservation of quota based on caste in aspect of securing jobs or in education for the weaker castes as well as giving certain provisions for the empowerment of women could be cited when the state has been trying redeem itself even after giving heavy concessions to the forces of big capital .The state has been giving scope to those measures irrespective of the change of government and it has been now conformed to the rhythm of the constitutional narrative in its macro distribution. The substantiation of the output which has come out of the implementation of the several measures in terms of direct benefit to the people those are thought to be the main beneficiaries of the schemes is rather not glorious when we define the exact location of their impacts upon the running of the governance. The problem which has grew up in the context of governance is that the beneficiaries are not sufficiently made enlightened to join in the process of participating in the activities of the state and for which the distinctive agenda of the post-liberal India has remained at the stage of bankruptcy and with utter form of illusions.

How the illusions have been made and remade with active agency of the functioning paradigm of neo-liberalism in exaction of the consent of the masses for the space where the mass of the being could be turned into a spirit where the beliefs upon the universal reification of the systemic apparatus of the political have become the other name of the time and that is the most interesting phenomenon of the consequent policies of the neo-liberal perspective. All the ingredients of the functioning and the relevance of a capable state are there but somehow the link has been missed out between the spirit and the time. The question is not about the strength of the agency of deliberating the real touch of governance through the paradigm of the structure of the state but it is about the utter powerlessness of those agencies of deliberation of governance before the mighty presence of the spirit which is controlled by the time. The dilemma before the new post -liberal state is that it could not fulfill exactly the aspirations of that spirit which has been

moulded by the intervention of the trajectories of finance- capital where the role of the state has been minimized through the imperatives of the acceleration of the pace of the forms of finance-capital. Where the minimization of the role of the state has occurred there the entry of the agency of the finance-capital has been ensured after the capturing the moment of the spirit.

Is the spirit of the empire of finance -capital different from the spirit of the disciplined masses? There are obvious differences in certain aspects but beyond the time as entity which is also a cultural rallying point there are no specific differences because the success of the spirit of the former lies in the fact that it could make transgression in the space of the time whenever it wants but the spirit of the latter is depended upon the movement of the former .Of course, we are observing the routes of the transgression only when both the spirits are in coalition with each other antithetically .

The post-liberal India's dilemma lies in the fact that the new spirit which has been growing up due to the increasing level of expansion of the networks of the finance-capital and at the same time, the regeneration of the contents of that spirit have been made in order to posit the externalities of the time as inclusive and derivative. Several measures have been taken up in furthering the capacities of the people in their meeting up of the daily needs and in some respect, it has given sufficient results in consideration of the objectives of the specific programmes. But beyond those results in broad terms there have hardly been any measure to strengthen the base of the time where the people as a whole could equitably participate as well as make their voice to be heard in determination of the aspects of the time. The records of the India's successive governance mechanism have provided one point very clear that in aspects of defining the area of development it is more essential to frame a policy rather than its successful implementations which are bogged down by bad governance. When the traits of governance in the organized frame is preferred to the bureaucratic hurdles but in its place a technocratic cum exclusive distinction about the identity of the data in its persons are given so much importance that the people become obsessed with the procedure of the that technocratic dilemma rather with the actual thought and meaning of freedom. So,

in such context what the actual aim of development through the intensity of the programmes those are initiated for stabilizing the rational of the public goods is turned itself into the tenacity of the programmatic obfuscation rather than its outcomes. The aspect of development is the oriented approach to continuously expanding the infrastructure of the people through the base of freedom even at the point of backwardness of the economy because before the actual initiatives concerning the changes in the economy in its broader aspects it is essential to give emphasis upon the trajectories of the real basis of freedom where the different and multiple elements of the political -economy are scientifically organized in such a way that the producers would get their real worth of their participation in actuality.

When we do make distinctions in the context of the political then it is to be understood that the economy is also hidden in the space of the political and vice versa. But, in the neo liberal context of the political what has been happening is that the economy has sought to be understood to be alien or far distant from the logic of the political and if the economy has made any impact upon the political then it is centered around the irregular and unscientific discussions of the subject in the agencies of communication. If there is any stress on the scientific assessment of the data of development in the governmental agencies then its message could spread to the level of the knowledge where understanding is left to the experts only. There is undeniably one point very clear that by those forms of knowledge about the state of the economy among the people the rational has been established that what the people wants is not the distinctive channel of knowledge through which the understanding could grow up around the conditions of knowledge about the reality. But generally, a hazy picture has been drawn up to preclude the necessary functions of those conditions of knowledge and the aura of an elusive kind of development narrative is made popularized where the political is turned into a vaporized substance. The real is thus made into the substance of the unreal and disjunctured from the actual set of the effects of the production relations. It does happen under the extreme reification and standpoint of the growth as the essence of progress and in consideration of the hypnotizing discourse of the growth for which the nature of the actually defined space of progress could be stigmatized with the otherness.

The lure of the neo-liberal finance and its trajectories of influence has helped no doubt in mapping of the ideals of the people's conditions of the habitation and the environment in the sociological aspects around the mythology of the citizen as an individual agent in the discursive location of the culture of the objectification. It occurs when the people's habitation is built up in different socio-archaeological space and the real benefits are disjointed from the actual centre of the centre. The question is not about the crisis or glory to the neo-liberalism but the real question hovers against the notion of the liberalism itself. The prehistory and the historical evolution of the philosophy of liberalism amply proves one point that it is the best method of continuous revelation of the state of the socio-cultural inversion from the centre of its revelation but without debunking the infrastructure of the monolithic prehistory of the laws of the people.

II

In India since the 1950s, the economy was set on the politics of the vacuum where the ideology around that centre of the politics had been formed in order to define the interests of the people when the people in its spirit was still remained unrecognized and certain vacuity was there in terms of resettling the interests of the privileged against the vast multitude of the poor. The mechanism of the five - year planning for systematic and unequivocal distributive search for justice had been met with the ending of that search as well as justice from the actuality .What the planning system determined instead of providing the solid objectives of progress was that it opened up the sources of entanglement of the praxis of politics with the ideas of freedom save the strengthening of the boundaries of reason through which the ideas could be set for application in real terms . The reason was put before the facts in such a way that the facts were withdrawn from the picture of further analysis and since then another form of the discourse of the governance around the ideas of the programme of development had been given shape that what the facts revealed was not the main thing of introspection but the reason with the programme of development was the main matter of concern without its long-term consequences. When the prospects of economic downturn occurred and the when facts could not be ignored no more ,the stalwarts of the policymakers swiftly decided

to change the course of policymaking and there never was the problem in respect of changing that course of policymaking because the reason had already been given precedence that the facts could be understood and the elements of those factual objectivity could be discerned only through the discourse of a new fundamental 'structural adjustment' programme. By the basic points of the 'structural adjustment' programmes it is to be understood through which the changes were made in interpretation of the facts and the truths behind those facts remained in the same position and the philosophy behind the interpretation of those facts had been arranged in such a way that the essence of the negation of the earlier positions of the policymaking was negated not through the dialectics of the social whole but it was standardized through the revolution from above .

The character of the neo-liberal trade and economic perspectives since then have been followed as the most reified moment over the essence of the time. The success of the measures in the 'structural adjustment' has been estimated through the results of the hard statistics of the relative growth in terms of share in the foreign exchange reserves and the haphazard growth in the Gross Domestic Product of the nation as evaluated through the primary international agencies like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund etc. The assessment of the international agencies is basically geared towards the rehabilitation of the accumulation of the resources of the host country against the background of its weak infrastructure and huge financial backup is provided in order to justify as well as strengthen the measure of expansion of the networks of trade and commerce controlled chiefly by the big corporate sectors under the direct hegemony of the richer nations .When the infrastructural investments have been made to make ready the space of the economic whole for further entry of the agency of the bigger international finance capital there the political is sacrificed from the point of the people's gaze . Of course, the political as the amalgamation of the law of the peoples and the manifestation of the people's consciousness about the existence of their spirit which has been moulded through the intertexuality of the time and culture could reveal itself with the potentiality of negating the abstraction of the real when the contents in the society of the political is matured enough.

How is possible to assess the impact of the different levels of the trajectories of the growth in the economic senses upon the space of the political? Is it the fact of the truth that the growth under neo-liberalism has so far created the conditions of interpreting the discursive points of the 'political liberalism' in a new fundamental way? In the discourse of the political philosophy about the necessities of welfare in terms of providing capabilities to the downtrodden for sufficiently joining in the urge for economic activities related to productive activities ,the effects of the liberalization of trade upon the erosion of the boundaries of the political is generally overlooked and the philosophy of the welfare economics has failed in offering an alternative trajectory of growth which could amply cater to the need of the people's everyday lives and beyond that an integrative rapprochement could be arrived at where the rights of the peoples could be secured in participation as well as sharing of the allocations of the resources based on equity and justice and when the anarchy of power of the nobility of the finance capital would not create any hurdle in the path of the realization of the actual law of the people. When the modes of the resource utilization under the impact of the new uses of the instruments of labour have been posited as the process of effectively turning around the constant of the production relation ,there occurs the assumption that the solid movement of the changes in the instruments of labour as well as the centre of the production relation could define the territory of the people's way of living and thinking not in abstraction from the reality but it could define the forms of reality in the most transient way . So, there develops the two antithetical philosophical concerns regarding the way of progress under the neo-liberal trade regime. One is that the determinants of growth under any condition could not be sacrificed whether it could affect the totality of the rights of the people and the other is the logic of the detrimental effects upon the centre of the political because the nature of the language and its structuration has been felt by the people who have been the weak participants in the process of that structuration of the knowledge about the centre of the political when that centre has already been relocated.

There has been the growing hiatus between the actual field of activity and the pronounced aims of the particular schemes under the governance and in between the stakeholders who have been supposed to benefit from such schemes have

been left bewildered. Now, there is the development of the psychology of unconscious reference to the eternal glorification of the mode of production but without initiating a balanced and healthy pattern of transformation in the particularities of the mode of production. When the conditions of the growth have been interpreted only in the aggrandizement of the utilization of the resources but sidelining the real agency of the process of utilization, there naturally develops the unwanted philosophical juxtaposition of the reality with the base. The base is here political as well as economic. When the ingredients for the economic changes have been sufficiently moulded or given preference in broad amendments to the raw materials for progress, there the macro hegemonic preponderance of the impacts of trade and commerce or other measures of investment cum disinvestment largely determines the character of the development /growth in its totality. If the facts of the measures of growth are taken for granted without scientifically analyzing the specific measures of the contents of growth then it should be understood that the metaphor and the tropes of measurements are systematically positioned in painting the scenario of the metaphor as real and in a sense more than real . When the substance of those tropes of the power of knowledge about the positioning of the metaphorical semblance of growth is made to rush forward the moments of the happiness then the elementary effects of that power of knowledge turned itself into an nonentity .But the lure of the happiness is posited against the poverty and the consequent dispossession of the people from the means of enjoyment of freedom and the happiness in order to redefine the functioning necessity of further galvanization of the measures of reforms in the liberal economy .

How the position of the strength of the state would be determined in the cauldron of the growth as the force of mobilization of the spirit? It is not an easy task for the state itself to locating its interests in the philosophical orientation of the mechanism of different traits of the neo-liberal functioning which could in different ways influence in mitigating the social materiality of the time among the classes .In fact , the state under the hegemony of the politics of the neo-liberalism substantially could contribute to a consensus which is redeemed with the logic of building the base of the people's space of the rights and the liberty. But in the rush for strengthening the potential back up of the neo-liberal distinctions in respect of the

accentuation of the utilization and eventual production of the commodities for the market in terms of the global scale, the danger arrives in the form of planetary deterioration of the earth as the centre of vast transformations. Such kind of extreme objectification of the goals of culture when the realm of the political has already been in dialectical distance from the universality of the object in transition which is meant to determine the spatial transfiguration in the orbit of instrumentation of labour against the concentration of the finance -capital and its structure of power.

The generation and regeneration of the structural conformism to the rationality of the finance-capital occurs at the juncture of centralization of the finance regime in its political for reconstructing the essence of its fundamental duties towards the class which is most deeply engrossed in the act of production. That particular reconstruction takes place when the pressure of the infrastructure for the spread of finance -capital becomes too heavy and also ,when the position of the movement of the ruling ideas is needed to be seriously ordered against the changing structure of the political as centre of the harnessing the contents of the spirit to a transcended world of reality where it becomes difficult to read out the cognition of the agency of deconstruction .The tragedy of the 'modern commons' is that the political is deeply felt to be matured enough of transforming the base of the social metabolism but that difficulty in specifying the agency for deconstruction of the ethnicity of the whole of the centre of finance -capital because of the super hegemonization of the real from the potentialities of subsumption .

The success of the neo-liberalism lies in the context of its overwhelming dominance in settling of the political to its design of proliferation of the power of finance-capital. It happens in an extreme decentering of the centre of the infrastructure to a visual which could be seen but beyond the point of consciousness of the producing class. Because the contents of the decentering have been missing for which the centre is always changing its course of spatial distinctions. The distinctions have been characterized and justified in actual extension of the realm of identified ethnicity of its mobility of finance -capital. The mobility of finance -capital in a regime where extreme observations have been put upon the movement and expansion of the reach of capital by some other powerful international agencies,

the governments elected through the democratic elections always try to define the objectives of governing the state with more reforms and controlling the inflation of expectations rather than going into the ending of the unnatural competition for the prices in the market.

III

Is it not true that the economic transformations in the post-independent India have been bringing tremendous upheaval in the social conditions of living? How has the conditions of the social been shaped in conjunction with the transformation in the economy? Is poverty the real base point of analyzing the grievous shortcomings in the realm of the social? In respect of the first question we could say that in the post-independent India large scale transformations have occurred in several key sectors of the economy .For example , in respect of the agricultural food production India has reached at the stage of self-sufficiency but in distribution and providing right to a decent living we have failed to provide the effective framework to eradicate the inequities of acquiring food and this has occurred due to the extreme inequalities in holding land rights as well as the lack in objectives of the agrarian and industrial production of wealth and other social discriminations whether in terms of gender or caste . It is not that only through the availability of food the discriminating attitude towards the weaker sections would be removed but the idea of food is a metaphor to understand the normative impact of the essence of a functioning state-society. Food without that essence is a reflection of the myth which is surrounded by the logic of the spirit which is in abstraction from the mass.

The state always wants to be a neutral agency in deliverance of the mechanism of the production as well as making provisions for availing the capacity of holding the necessities of livelihood by the people. But the neutrality of the state is tinged with the will of suffering of the poor and that particular will is subsumed under the discourse of welfare which is again the method of legalizing the authority of the centre of socio-political power structure dominated largely by the persons full of extreme capabilities beyond its limitations. So, to be neutral is to take a political position of accentuation of the prevailing class interests of some specific

classes and of course, if the state and its functions would gear towards the deconstruction of the will as well as the production of those interests which could spearhead the normal capability of a human being to an extreme position of capabilities. It could occur only in a space where the political and the discourse around the welfare goes beyond the phenomena of the rights. In any legitimacy of the construction of power in a form of the state, the need of the rights revolves around the definite idea of the political and its branches of hegemony but in actuality the rights have a great metaphysical entity if those rights are not protected with the will to decentering any semblance of hegemony which could grow up with the entity of the rights in its derivatives.

The social conditions of living have been transformed drastically but only in order to emphasize the already existing preponderance of the social hierarchies where the changes have occurred in aspect of routes of the realization of those hierarchies but whereas the base of the social hierarchies has remained in the same position through which the paraphernalia of distinctions in terms of conditioning the hierarchies have been evaluated .If the economy has been entering into the stage of the so-called trillion dollars it has happened only in figures but not encompassing the potentiality of transformation of the base of those hierarchies and that is why the rational of the measuring the value of an economy through the medium of the centre of hegemonic finance-capital is rather full of myth in its consciousness. So, in terms of the existence and formation of the hierarchies in the praxis of the social, mere philosophizing of the economy and the trajectories of growth will not provide huge encouragement to the determinants of the ethical consensus based on the will which is devoid of the mere economic malcontents.

In fact, the whole subjective orientation of the space and practice of the economy is an abstraction from the essence of its subjects and in the process of that abstraction the interests of those subjects are invented to suit the objective of that particular process of subjectivity .When the growth as the specific object of analysis is particularly developed with the practice of the elements of an economy, there the totality of an approach in penetration of all other interests in to the vortex of that totality is made in order to legitimize the sphere of the activities of the

classes who are beyond the control of the order in an economy . The territory of the production relations and the outcome of the objectification of labour in its relation to a particular kind of productivity resonate with the double meaning .i.e. one is the employability of the workers and other the increasing rate of growth in terms of the expansion of the territory of the production relations as a whole. The employability of the workers in a particular condition of work again depends upon the organization of the work in its specific purposes and which means in a given space of work how the process of trans individuation occurs to the living philosophy of the workers and how they could philosophize themselves in the form of a language in order to get rid of the hegemony of the political will is highly important. In extreme manipulation of the particular space of a work where the workers relevance is denied in substantial construction of a knowledge which is sought to be spread that the language of the working class is the language of the owners of the space of work there the whole causal effects of work is substantiated with the structure of power what is violent and politically preposterous to the interests of the majority. The whole structure of work and the varied components of that structure of power have been synthesized in the antithesis of the social against the domination of the political in such a way that a cultural pattern has been developed in order to nullify the antithetical potentialities of sublation of the sub-real. In fact, the matrix of the cultural pattern of the peculiar combination of work and the spirit has been stratified in order to reify the spirit as the metaphor for progress. The greatest harm is done to the space of the political when that reification of the cultural pattern in the specific form of a spirit is established as the objective of further organization or reorganization of the human in its constitutionality through which we want to mean the articles of the constitution in the organic whole of human which are made into subsumption over the real .There has been nothing of the meaning of the real beyond the specters of that spirit as well as the process of subsumption .

Another important issue which is concerned with the space of the social is that how that particularity of the social is conformed to the fluctuating rational of the economy and in what forms the whole of the social as the specific mode is structurally adjusted to the mode of production and its consequences in a living material set up or the economy itself. The preliminary initiatives around the centre

of the technology and its consequent mode which could go hand in hand in the moment of producing commodities have been organizing the features of the social to embark upon methods of deliverance of the matter which defines the objectivity of galvanization of the unorganized nature of the social for the eventual entanglement with the rhythm of the cultural complexes of the economy that is invented from the tradition of dialectics of the social.

The big question is not that how the economy or the forms of social formation could be determined through the intervention of the definite production relation but the question is how the level of the social is forced to adduce to the growth as object and its transformation in a way that goes beyond the limitation of the space as given under the social. The problems occur when the pace of those transformations in the object could not go forward in mitigating the exact performance of the object as growth among the members of the social whole which are full of nothingness and hence not within the significance of the language of the production .The social is a complex of the abstraction of the object which is at the same time a reflection of the truth in the moment of the complex but the considerations of the abstraction is thwarted when the logic of the existence of that complex is questioned by the force which is determined to bring transgression to the idea of the spirit of the object itself. In India , the object of the economy has been presented as to bring down the sordid malcontents of the previous mode of the production relation and through division of the interests between the organizers of the new mode of the process of generating the positive environment for the economy and the followers of that new mode of production and in between those groups the interests of the vast majority of the population have been ingrained in the form of the poverty and which has to be conquered through the extension of the networks of the organized space of that objectified process of growth .That specific process of growth has been isolated from the other necessities of the composite whole of the social and its cause is posited as the sine qua non to freedom and the idea of development . The contrast arises when the practice of doing with the elements of freedom and development has not been equipped with the strength of the right to join in the internalities of the profits that comes out of the role of the big worth of the finance-capital. Generally, in the context of the democratic

norms in governing a state and particularly of the aspect of well-being certain measures are taken in to account .For example , the importance of the democratic practices which could translate the ideas inscribed in a democratic constitution and in fact even if the ideals of democracy or the presence of the democratic institutions are held intact but if the democratic practices are rather poor and in an environment of weak follow up public action then the pressure of the economic inequalities could rather become more sharp upon the state of the majority who are really in deprivation and other multiple kinds of stagnation .Particularly in that context the public action with support of the state could much lessen the burden of those inequalities . But of course a definite and truly egalitarian perspective must have to be offered in that context.

IV

The concept of the well-being and its varied measures have been analyzed in one of the writings of the eminent economist Professor Partha Dasgupta thus 'Measures of well-being can take one of two forms : they can reflect the constituents of well-being , or alternatively , they can be measures of the access that people have to the determinants of well-being .Indices of health , welfare and freedom of choice , and more specifically , basic liberties , are instances of the first ; and those which reflect the availability of food, clothing , shelter , potable water , legal aid , education facilities, health care, resources devoted to national security , and income in general, are examples of the latter….The constituents of well-being can be thought of as outputs, and the determinants of these constituents their inputs.' There is also a constitutional guarantee as reflected in the Articles 39 & 41 of the Directive Principles which has dealt with particularly the various important issues of the common people. But still, in aspect of income inequality India's policy makers have failed to eradicate the imbalance in terms of access to resources and other ingredients of the liberal economic foundation where the top rich class has become successful in reaching out to the competitive set up of the international trade regime as well as gathering wealth which is phenomenally high in comparison to the resources of the poor or the lower middle classes. It is also true that measuring inequality through the income distribution is not the sole yardstick in terms of the

effects of particular economic system and which has been pointed out in one of the essays by Professor Amartya Sen '…there are limitations in trying to get at poverty measurement only through income-confined measure of poverty -no matter how sophisticated .Surely , we must take note of what low income and other disadvantages do to people to make their lives more deprived ,but not be bogged down to confining ourselves to the instrumental space of incomes only.' Beyond the measure of income inequality in the paradigmatic approach of development, it is emphasized that the 'development consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency.' How the elements of freedom could contribute in strengthening the base of the person's 'wellbeing' and the 'agency aspect' which in turn could put an end to the deprivations in terms of the person's right to a decent livelihood as well as his positionality in regard to the democratic ideals of the state have been analyzed critically in the voluminous writings of Professor Amartya Sen. In fact , in the emergence of our identities in society it becomes imperative in recognizing two vital points of importance in relation to the specific process of identity formation ,i.e. one is whether the social identities formed with the choices of the people and the other is whether it has been formed by the 'passive recognition' of the people. In such discussions about the phenomena of development, the question is not 'how much is produced but what is produced and how it is distributed 'and it has been opined very bluntly that ' the new development strategy …must reject the thesis that poverty can be attacked indirectly through the growth rates filtering down to the masses .It must be based on the premise that poverty must be attacked directly .' To eradicate various lacks and backwardness in terms of purely economic growth and how the outcome would be organized more ably in making out a congenial atmosphere for freedom of choices ,the Third World countries basically have been following after the decline of the USSR largely the political economy of the capitalist regimes .With the aid of the IMF and the World Bank the activities of the poor undeveloped nations have been largely funded by the Western Capitalist nations and through which the economies of the Third World have been sought to be freed of the previous drawbacks in the organization of the resource utilizations and above all ,the formation of a strong market-commodity relations based upon the indigenous growth of the mobilization of the networks of capital and the market.

For the specific objective of the material backwardness as well as to strengthen the bases of freedoms it became necessary to orient the political economy with the principles of the liberalism by which it is assumed that 'there are many conflicting and incommensurable conceptions of the good ,each compatible with the full autonomy and rationality of human persons' and due to those characteristics of the good it is emphasized on the presumption 'it is a natural condition of a free democratic culture that a plurality of conceptions of the good is pursued by its citizens.' In order to establish an well-ordered society it is essential to put emphasis upon the idea of 'justice as fairness' and through the conceptual understanding of the well-ordered society it is meant to a social space where the citizens will agree based on 'what is just free and equal moral persons with different and opposing conceptions of the good.' The paradigm of the political standpoints of liberalism in respect of the justice as political is confirmed to three basic characteristics:

a.   It applies in the first instance to the basic structure of society (assumed in the case of justice as fairness to be a democratic society). This structure consists of the main political, economic, and moral institutions, and how they fit together as one unified system of social cooperation.

b.   It can be formulated independently of any particular comprehensive doctrine, religious, philosophical, or moral. While we suppose that it may be derived from, or supported by, or otherwise related to one or more comprehensive doctrines (indeed. we hope it can be thus related to many such doctrines), it is not presented as depending upon, or as presupposing, any such view.

c.   Its fundamental ideas- such ideas in political liberalism as those of political society as a fair system of social cooperation, of citizens as reasonable and rational, and free and equal -all belong to the category of the political and are familiar from the public political culture of a democratic society and its traditions of interpretation of the constitution and basic laws, as well as of its leading historical documents and widely known political writings.'

So, in a society of the goods where the justice is not conventionally positioned against the necessities of the political ,the ideals of political liberalism based upon the democratic institutions and the relevance of the sufficient categories of choices in matters of freedom could give a definite shape to the forms of a well ordered society .But , that kind of liberalism is usually conformed to the ideas of liberalism in economic aspects and where a deep relationship could develop between the two segments of the social whole (between the owners of the big finance capital and the political reality).

The most extreme viewpoint which has been offered by the supporters of the neo-liberal economic policies is that there is no alternative of the capitalist framework for bringing a prosperous pattern of livelihood to all and in fact to put an end to the web of poverty it becomes highly necessary to open up the economy for the other countries which could contribute to the growth of those countries through their investments in varied sectors of an economy. In India , the bureaucratic transformation of the fiscal and trade policies were oriented in order to get rid of the imminent financial collapse in the early 1990s and since then it has been asserted that the positive evaluation of the dominant currents of the international economics with particular reference to the potentiality of ending the centuries old poverty and other socio-economic backwardness as well as giving a competitive base to the commerce and industry of the nation which had been lagging behind not only in per capita income or other measures of income but it had been failing to match up with the other late industrialized nations like South Korea or Thailand. The proponents of the neo-liberal free economy are conscious of the fact that in the competitive edge of the production relations the earlier mindset of the policies of import substitution or protecting the indigenous big capital through the policy of licenses rather had become a big burden for establishment of the secured base of the finance capital through which it was hoped to give a great momentum to the social whole also. A whole gamut of the previous policies of the state were termed as 'wrong' in aspect of the specific direction and it was particularly emphasized upon the change of the course of the state's activities towards the industry and commerce in a fundamental sense. In fact, the dramatic turn of the events after 1991 has particularly brought changes to the federal structure of the Indian state. The changing

structure of the economy in terms of the basic policy orientation towards the industry and trade has been determining the 'political mind -set in the country'. But against the neo-liberal set up of the economy ,the claims of the opposite school of thought have been analyzed with the comparative analogy of the 'structural adjustment programmes' and its failure in providing decent pattern of living for the poor. The major thrust of the argument of the critique of the neo-liberalism is that 'liberalizing trade…has been taking place within an investment -reducing deflationary regime.' Angus Deaton in a paper written jointly with fellow economist Jean Dreze (2009), also reiterated it in his Nobel Prize lecture (2015) that 'In spite of the historically unprecedented rates of growth in India since 1980 , in spite of upward sloping calorie Engel curve , and in spite of its near record levels of child malnutrition , per capita consumption of calories and protein has been falling …' If the two strands of thinking could be surmised then it is clear that one point of view particularly ,the liberal trade policy supporters has given importance on lessening the role of the state in determining the policies in terms of fiscal aspects or trade-industry regime and on the other hand , the critics of the neo-liberal set up have been arguing for increasing role of the state in the affairs of the political economy . Against such viewpoints of the supporters and critics of liberalism, there is another view where the role of the state has been shown to be affirmative and proactive in protecting the 'vulnerable groups against economic adversity resulting from the operation of the market.'

The economic reforms introduced in the 1990s revealed the internal dynamics of the powerful elite when there was urgent departure from the status quo which became problematic in maintaining the coherence between the governance and the actual political reality. The political fickleness in terms of the governing the state with a strong elected government has been largely controlled and disciplined through the rhetoric of neo-liberalism and the strength of the state has been organized through the medium of the transformed economic basics. In a deflationary regime and in fact the perennial character of the crisis in the capitalist neo liberal market economy ,the greatest misdeed is done to the foundation of the people's belief on the ideological apparatus of the state and that kind of melancholy has been impacting us severely and for example even in the perfectly organized

capitalist economies like Unites States of America the whole question of inequality has been damaging the centre of the democracy itself 'we are paying a high price for our inequality -an economic system that is less stable and less efficient , with less growth , and a democracy that has been put into peril.' In a neo-liberal regime, the function of the state should be definitely oriented with the programme of providing each citizen of the country with the organized forms of the 'capability' and in a functioning democratic liberal state the pragmatic notion of the capability will open up 'the range of options a person has in deciding what kind of life to lead.' But to energize the citizens under a truly democratic consensus, the need of the hour is to lessen the power structure in respect of the economic, political institutions because the decisions of mobilizing the state apparatus and its ideological correlations have been formed with the basic feature of the power that it 'has to do with whatever decisions men make about the arrangements under which they live, and about the events which make up the history of their times. Events that are beyond human decision do happen; social arrangements do change without benefit of explicit decision. But in so far as such decisions are made, the problem of who is involved in making them is the basic problem of power.' In such a moment where the power is expressed through the capacity of taking decisions and in another way where the power of taking decisions have been manifested in an authoritarian way but the continuous changelessness in the mobility of the democratic ideals and lack of practicing those ideals could a praxis which would develop a specific and peculiar class of 'inactionary'. Of course in a liberal economy too , the state has the supreme power of leading the citizens to reach at their objectives as well as the 'power to coerce' but at the same moment it has the responsibilities of ending the process of alienation from the real base of growth and by dint of the conscious efforts made by the state's governance to deconstruct the reality from its cobwebs of malcontents those severely could put obstruction in the realization of the goals of freedoms and thus contribute to the erosion of the faith on the democratic norms as a whole.

The problems generated by the uncontrolled liberalism could put obsessive reliance on the discourse of growth save the infrastructure of the growth through which the persons could end their various disabilities from the living social whole. In Indian perspective, we have been witnessing serious efforts in accentuation of

the pace of reforms in ably participating in the international free trade regime but not fundamentally changing the centre of the social concentrations of power when the social is ruptured from the spirit which has been determined through the unequal centre of the political-economy.

The necessary task now before the democratic state apparatus is to equip the superstructure of the base of the people's consciousness in such a pattern that increasing level of their active participation in the practical politics of the state would be guaranteed through the mechanism of distributing the resources in a definite and advanced production relation based upon the mutual agreement of the state and the people. The political society has the capacity to make derivation out of the periodic crises of the neo-liberal economic set up a reliable political standpoint where the liberalism in the true sense would be established which means the exact settling of the space of the rights and freedoms of the people amidst the deconstruction of the methods of the political economy.

End Notes :

[1] Dreze,J., Sen, A. (2002). Democratic Practice and Social Inequality in India, Journal *of Asia and African Studies,* 37(2),6-37, doi: 10.1177/002190960203700202.

[2] Dasgupta, P. (1990). Well-Being in Poor Countries. *Economic and Political Weekly*, *25*(31), 1713–1720.Retrived from http://www.jstor.org/stable/4396588.

[3] The Article 39 has specifically mentioned 'the State shall direct its policy to secure that the citizens have the right to an adequate means of livelihood ; that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are distributed to subserve the common good; that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment ; that there is equal pay for equal work for both men

and women; that the health and strength of workers and that the tender age of children are not abused ; that the children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment .' In the Article 41, it has been mentioned about 'right to work, right to education and right to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.' Bakshi, P. (2018). *The Constitution of India*. Universal Law Publishing, Gurgaon, p.cxxxix.

[4] Amartya, Sen. (2017). *Poverty Revisited: A Postscript*. In Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee, Pranab Bardhan.

Rohini Somanathan and T.N. Srinivasan (Eds.). *Poverty and Income Distribution in India*. Juggernaut, p.606.

[5] Sen, Amartya. (2000). *Development as freedom*. New York: Anchor Books, p.xii.

[6] Sen, Amartya. (1990). *On Ethics and Economics.* Blackwell Publishing, New Delhi, Pp.58-89.

[7] Sen, A. (1999). *Reason before Identity*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.6.

[8] Haq, Khadija. (2017). *The Crisis in Development Strategies*. In Haq, Khadija. (Ed.). Economic Growth with Social Justice –Collected Writings of Mahbub ul Haq. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, Pp.124-125, doi: 10.1093/oso/ 9780199474684.001.0001.

[9] Rawls, J. (1982). Social unity and primary goods. In A. Sen & B. Williams (Eds.). *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, Pp. 159-186. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511611964.010.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Rawls, J. (1995). Political Liberalism: Reply to Habermas. *The Journal of Philosophy*, *92*(3), Pp. 132–180. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/2940843.

[12] Bhagwati, J. (2010). *What Went Wrong*? In Mukherji, R. (Ed.). *India's Economic Transition –The Politics of Reforms, Oxford* University Press, New Delhi, Pp. 27-51.

[13] Mukherji, R. (2007). *Introduction- the State and Private Initiative in India*. In Mukherji, R. India's economic transition: the politics of reforms, Oxford University Press, Oxford; New York, p.22.

[14] Ahluwalia,I. & Little, I. (2012). *India's Economic Reforms and Development –Essays for Manmohan Singh*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.6.

[15] 'Given knowledge of the historical trends, it was alarming indeed to find that in Sub-Saharan Africa, in the course of the 1980s, under structural adjustment programmes advised by the IMF; high rates of export volume growth had been associated with steeply falling per head food grains and food staples availability.' Patnaik, Utsa. (2007). *The Republic of Hunger and Other Essays*. The Merlin Press, p.4

[16] Ibid, p.161.

[17] Deaton, A. (2016). Measuring and Understanding Behavior, Welfare, and Poverty. *The American Economic Review*, *106*(6), 1221–1243. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/43861121. Also in Deaton,A. & Dreze, J.2009. Food and Nutrition in India: Facts and Interpretations, Economic & Political Weekly, 44(07),42-65.

[18] Nayar, R. (2010). *Globalization, Geopolitics, and India –An Introduction*, In Nayar, R. (Ed.) *Globalization and Politics in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.23.

[19] 'Beyond the structural changes, the political process of economic liberalization was also revealing of the underlying power dynamics. As I analyse this, the basic picture that emerges is one of the political and economic elite attempting to accommodate each other, but within the context of considerable fragmentation of political power; these political dynamics, I will suggest, was economically consequential. To highlight only some of the main events, as the balance of payments situation deteriorated throughout 1990, the issue of India

approaching the IMF for a 'structural adjustment' type of loan was again at the forefront; India accepted such a loan in 1990 with a caretaker government in charge. In early 1991 then, just a couple of months before the 'big bang' announcement of new liberal economic policies, the CII floated a 'theme paper' in April 1991, arguing for radical shifts in India's economic policies towards a more open and competitive economy shifts in India's economic policies towards a more open and competitive economy. When the Congress government, with Manmohan Singh as the finance minister, actually announced the policy shift, the main forces supporting such a shift included the narrow political leadership, the technocratic policy elite, a segment of Indian capital, and external actors, expressing their preferences mainly in the form of policy conditionality set by the IMF.'

Atul, Kohli. (2006). *Politics of Economic Growth in India, 1980-2005, Part II: The 1990s and Beyond*. In Balakrishnan, P. (Ed.). (2017). *Economic Growth and its Distribution in India –Essays from Economic and Political Weekly*. Orient BlackSwan Private Limited, Hyderabad, p.52.

[20] Stiglitz, J. (2013). *The Price of Inequality.* Penguin Books, London, p.xii.

[21] Dreze,J. & Sen, A.(2002). *India Development and Participation*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, Pp.35-36.

[22] Mills, C. W. (1958). The Structure of Power in American Society. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *9*(1), Pp. 29–41.doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/587620.

[23] 'The state has one basic resource which in pure principle is not shared with even the mightiest of its citizens: the power to coerce. The state can seize money by the only method which is permitted by the laws of a civilized society, by taxation. The state can ordain the physical movements of resources and the economic decisions of households and firms without their consent. These powers provide the possibilities for the utilization of the state by an industry to increase its profitability.'

[24] Stigler, G. J. (1971). The Theory of Economic Regulation. *The Bell Journal of Economics and Management Science*, *2*(1), Pp. 3–21. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/3003160.

REVISITING AMARTYA SEN'S NOTION OF JUSTICE :
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Partha Protim Borthakur

Abstract

The issue of social justice has always been a concern and a question, right from the origin of the state to the present. Despite John Rawls contribution is widely acknowledged as seminal in this regard, Amartya Sen's understanding of justice engages with the Rawlsian project and attempts to tease out an alternative conception of justice. Sen's analysis of justice concentrates on social realizations and not on the quest for perfect institutions, as he suggests that there is no universal theory of justice but that different societies will work out their own accounts if they allow deliberative and democratic procedures to flourish. However Sen's notion of justice based on public reasoning and actual capabilities of the people, to what extent possible to achieve in a multicultural and multilingual state like India, where religion and superstitious beliefs of the people (like witch hunting, untouchability), determines the lives of the individuals in the society, contributed by inadequate representation of dissenting voices, is still a question. Focusing on such issues of paramount importance, the paper thus seeks to revisit and analyse Sen's understanding of justice.

Keywords : *Social Justice, John Rawls, Amartya Sen, Social Realization, Capability.*

Introduction:

In political philosophy the question and discussion on justice cannot be omitted, whether the concern of the researcher is in the area of value-free theoretical analysis or in that of the assessment and recommendation of rules, procedures and institutions. The sphere of social justice, which is the zone of our apprehension, is informative as it shapes the basis of life in society. Throughout the ages the concept of social justice has been discussed, however, the discipline was further enhanced during the European Enlightenment in the 18th and 19th centuries (though they differ in their approach to justice), complimented by the political atmosphere of transformation and also by the social and economic conversion in those areas. Ideas of social justice became a common reference point in almost all political discourses and philosophical enquiry. As such, concepts such as rights, liberties, equality, needs and deserts have been accommodated into justice's sphere which has increased its influence in political philosophy over times. From the publication of Plato's *Republic*, to the emergence of new approaches and theories on analysing the concept of justice, complemented by changes in Europe (due to Renaissance and Industrial Revolution), the concept too got developed and elaborated, becoming a vital exercise in the modern era of political philosophy (Pappas, 2003, p. 50-62). This practice arguably reached its high point in 1971 with the publication of, *A Theory of Justice*, by John Rawls. Reviving the themes of classical 'social contract' thinking, especially that of Immanuel Kant, Rawls understood and defined justice not in terms of law of nature or something based on reason, but as a fair distribution of primary goods among the people which consist of the basic rights, liberties, opportunities, and also benefiting the least advantage persons (the marginalised people) thus making the procedure fair and just (Rawls, Justice as Fairness, A Restatement, 2001, p. 41-42).[1]

Besides, in the existing scenario, democracies in the world cannot be judged by the institutions that formally exist (like the three organs of the government- executive, legislature and judiciary). Taking the case of India, a multicultural and multilingual state where needs of the diverse sections of the society have to be protected and given adequate representation, a theory of justice has to focus on actual lives in the assessment of justice. Though we cannot ignore the importance

of the institutions and rules influencing the part and parcel of the actual world as well, but when the focus is on the actual lives of the masses, while assessing the notion of justice, the implications are very wide ranging in terms of the nature and attainment of the idea of justice. Under such an circumstance, an alternative having a influential and significant analysis of the idea of justice is provided by Amartya Sen, when he formulated the demands of justice not only in terms of principles of justice that were entirely concerned with just institutional arrangements for a society, but also emphasised on the broader outlook of social realizations, the freedoms that people can achieve in reality, thus giving importance to the reasonable behaviour and original lives of the citizens (Sen, Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny, 2007, p. 117).

Unlike, former theories of justice that endeavours to limit the questions of justice, to the nature of perfect justice; the central theme of Sen's theoretical proposal is to eradicate manifest cases of injustices. It can be seen in his book, *Poverty and Famines,* where Sen analyses the causes of starvation in general and famine in particular through various case studies in various parts of the world (the Great Bengal Famine of 1943, Ethiopian famines of 1973-75 etc.)and has come to the conclusion that poverty is a very significant problem and not that simple as is it seen and so the actual causes of deprivations need to be understood and removed (Sen, 1982, p. 52-87). As we commonly pursue justice in terms of our understanding of the present world, how it is being ordered or controlled and to visualize and analyse the change by becoming a part of it, hence the paper tries to analyse critically the practicality in Sen's notion of justice in the present world especially in Indian context.

Amartya Sen's Idea of Justice:

Amartya Sen in an article written in 2006, *What Do We Want from a Theory of Justice*?, concluded that political philosophers should categorically end chasing, in the style of Rawls, the grand question, what a just society should be (Sen, 2006, p. 215-238).Sen provides a detailed critique of universal accounts of justice and advances the idea of value pluralism within the design of social justice (Sen, 2009, p. 5-9).[2]He promotes the notion that people should have their own

perspectives and accounts of justice; thus socially, just outcomes will not be universal across all cultures and societies. However, there is less doubt that the tradition of theories of justice that Sen has in mind has been positioned and dominated by the spirit of John Rawls from which he has learnt so much, hence Sen endeavours to put forward an alternative to the dominant theory of justice by critically engaging with it in his book, *The Idea of Justice*.[3] Sen differentiates between the two models of classical Indian philosophy, 'Niti' (strict organizational and behavioural rules of justice) and 'Nyaya' (concerns with what emerges and how such rules affects the lives that people are actually capable to lead), wherefrom he draws the idea of realization perspective on social justice (Sen, 2009, p. 20). Sen criticizes the earlier philosophers like Rawls for neglecting and focusing on 'niti centred' approach and thus underrates the essential combination of just institutions and correspondent actual behaviours that makes a society practically just, from which he formulates his central argument. Sen thus subsequently emphasizes the opposite 'nyaya centred' approach according to which, 'what happens to people', must be the core concern for a theory of justice and thus provides a better understanding for justice. It should also be mentioned that Sen calls into question the fundamentally deontological approach to justice that we find in Rawls and hence puts forward more of an apparent consequentialist approach (though he himself does not refer to it as a strict consequentialist idea of the classical utilitarian era) in order to remove manifest injustices.

Moreover, Rawls argues in the opening pages of his book, *A Theory of Justice*, that his aim is basically to derive principles of justice for a 'well ordered society', that is society of 'strict compliance', where the objective of each and every individual is to act in a fair and just manner to create a perfectly just society (Rawls, 1999, p. 3-5). Sen considers this as a *transcendental institutionalist* perspective to justice, categorized by the focus on perfect justice, thus overlooking the non-institutional aspects of human relations, which in practice, and would determine how actual societies would function (Sen, 2004, p. 315-356). Thus what differentiates Amartya Sen from earlier theorists was that his evaluation of justice aimed not at recognizing the nature of just (whether it is just institutions or society) but rather to construct a theory that helps people to realize and make ways how to

reduce injustice and advance justice, as well as understanding the factors affecting the degree of justice in any existing society.

Sen vehemently focuses by providing examples of various cases of injustices in society such as slavery, the discrimination of women, the lack of universal healthcare in most countries of the world, the lack of medical facilities in parts of Africa or Asia, the tolerance of chronic hunger, for example in India, and the extreme exploitation of labour can all be recognized, besieged and removed without any need to hypothesize at all as to what would be perfectly just social arrangements or what would be just institutions. Sen makes his argument more clear when he uses another analogy. Sen argues that, when we were asked whether a Van Gorh or a Picasso is the better painting, it barely helps to be told that Da Vinci's Monalisa is the best painting in the world (Sen, 2009, p. 101).Though this analogy does not makes the picture clear as what comprise the best painting, but what Sen here wants to point out is that in order to practice justice we have to make comparisons, meaning whether pursuing that method will help make the world a somewhat better place as opposed to that method, unlike the ideal world (as emphasised by Rawls) where this process for comparison has a very limited scope and platform.

Sen in his book, *The Idea of Justice* has emphasized (also being an advocate of Social Choice theory), that we cannot attain justice by making an equal distribution of primary goods or benefiting the least advantage sections by giving them some special privileges, we have to go beyond it as justice cannot be indifferent to the lives that people can actually live.[4] In an article written way back in 1990, entitled, *Justice: Means versus Freedoms,* Sen articulated a freedom based idea of justice (Sen, 1990, p. 111-121). Making 'capabilities' as the most appropriate method for assessing wellbeing rather than the utility space or Rawls's primary goods, Sen in his 1979,'Tanner Lectures', and more expansively in his 'Dewey Lectures', argued that capability can provide more appropriate informational basis for justice (Sen, 1985, p. 169-221). Sen agrees that an index of primary goods signifies a vector, which is why it comprises more than income or wealth, but cannot act as a useful tool as it is still directed to serve the general purpose, rather than analysing the individual differentiation. Sen alleges that this is

incorrect because what really reckons is the way in which different people convert income or primary goods into good living, as poverty is dependent upon the different characteristics of people and of the environment in which they actually live (Sen, 2009, p. 66).

However, Sen was also conscious of the fact that, in diversified and multicultural society citizens will definitely have different voices and interests and will have different choices; hence citizens will apparently differ as to which conception of political justice they think most reasonable. Sen here therefore pursues an approach that is based on open impartiality, favouring Adam Smith's 'impartial spectator' rather than Rawls 'veil of ignorance', which he calls 'closed impartiality', as Rawls account considers only members of the given focal group (Sen, 2009, p. 133).What differentiates the Rawlsian method from the Smithian approach is the 'closed' nature of participatory exercise that Rawls invokes by restricting the 'veil of ignorance' to the members of a polity that are being constructed.[5] Sen on the contrary to Rawls traditional concept of 'primary goods', rebuilds his own capabilities approach as elements of his theory of justice by borrowing from the social choice theory. Sen's while assessing the notion of justice builds its own concept at this time, when he adopted the comparative method (comparing the values and priorities of the people and ranking them after proper scrutiny and public reasoning) in order to make the demands of justice much more possible to achieve. It means that a theory of justice has to be based on partial orderings (through ranking the alternatives based on the connection or commonality of distinct rankings portraying different reasonable positions of justice), that all can endure the scrutiny of public reason seen in any democratic structure. Though Sen also argues that by taking the comparative route while dealing with the cases of justice people will agree on a particular pair wise rankings on how to enhance justice, despite the comparative assessments on the values and priorities of the people involved through discussions and scrutiny remains incomplete (Sen, 2009, p. 31-51).

Perhaps, Sen's notion of justice, which is pluralistic, multi-dimensional and existential because it is an arrangement of various aspects of what can be called variables of justice, in our own view, has given a new direction in the arena of theorizing social justice. Sen is definitely correct to believe that comparisons of

relative justice and injustice should also be a major concern to move from an ideal theory of justice to a workable idea of justice. Yet it is not wholly acceptable that the existing genuine problems seen in various parts of the globe and their going unaddressed will be solved by some general shift – perhaps moving away from the social contract model while perpetuating justice. Moreover, the definition of social justice is still not and settled one and the principles conflicting but the practical aspect of social justice cannot be ignored, as such David Miller has emphasised that the practical relevance is necessary for a theory of social justice which is right and in order to have universal validity (Miller, 1976, p. 20-22).

Revisiting Sen's Notion of Justice:

Sen's ambiguous relationship with liberalism, and calling into question the fundamentally deontological notion of justice that he finds in Rawls and putting forward more of a consequentiality approach (a key feature of utilitarianism) with his comparative approach to justice and assessment of states of affairs in terms of their consequences of people's wellbeing through the method of public scrutiny has created a new road map towards global justice. The key aspect in Sen's account is how we should approach justice is by public reasoning and deliberation. For that reason, he has placed democracy at the heart of his account of justice. For Sen, democracy, in order to deliver justice on ground and create a just society must go beyond the niti (procedural) aspects of ballots and elections to freedom of expression, the right to information, and the practice of public discussion (Subramanian, 2010, p. 33-42).The importance, in this context, of a free media and of parliamentary democracy for the pursuit of justice is supreme. However, he is also aware of the fact that democratic procedures do not ensure just outcomes, and observes that though in the constitution there is place for fundamental rights and protections of minorities, but people are always exploited and discriminated. In his book, *Engaging Freedom*, Dhiren Bhagawati, distinguishes between majoritarian and libertarian democracy and emphasizes how libertarian democracy pursues a narrow and limited scope to individual freedom (Bhagawati, 2009, p. 19-31).He argues that the real democracy is when people gets the opportunity to participate in the life of the community as its equal members and gets the opportunity to express their voice in the formulation of public policy. However, analysis's like

John Dryzek, one of the major thinkers in deliberative democracy, have criticized Sen for a 'facile treatment of Democracy', in the sense that it seems institution-free and does not discuss who should participate in discussion, how this process produces outcomes, and so on. According to Dryzek, Sen thinks of deliberation in terms of public reason (singular), and thereby places too much emphasis upon logic and reason in deliberation (Dowding, 2011, p. 83-98). Dryzek points to those who suggest that such an idea of reason diminishes the views of those who find it harder to articulate their viewpoints. Besides, it is also not clear that any agreement where people agree partially through orderings will rank actual social arrangements as more and less just. As such the question again arise that, why should public reasoning, rather than focusing on institutions, on configurations of rights or duties that need to be implemented, will focus on removing manifest cases of injustice. Onora O'Neill believes that, Sen seeks emphasis of these welcoming claims about imperfect as well as perfect obligations, and his argument probably directs further than he explores; as such it rules out drawing any very clear boundary to justice (O'Neill, 2010, p. 384-388).

Perhaps the most debated aspect of Sen's approach is the difficulty in translating his theory into an operationalised measurement index. As such, how Sen's capabilities can be transformed into something that is reckonable is still a question not discussed by him (Macpherson, 1973, p. 53-70).[6] Martha Nussbaum agrees with Sen that the capability approach as a scaffold for examining social justice is far better than the utilitarianism, resource-focused analysis, the social contract tradition, or even some accounts of human rights (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 33-59). At the same time, she argues that to make the capability approach more useful for exploring social justice, Sen needs to take a more definite stand on which capabilities are important in our ethical judgments and our conceptions of justice. According to her, without endorsing such a list, the capability approach cannot offer reliable prescriptions on gender justice (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 39-44).Nussbaum also holds that Sen's treatment of freedom needs to be more specific. Freedom, she argues, can have both good and bad dimensions and not all freedoms are of equal value. Nussbaum further proposes a list of ten capabilities which according to her are valuable normative guidance, relevant in any aspect, although she also emphasizes that the list could be modified by context.

Critically Analysing Sen's Idea:

Sen's understanding of the notion of justice, has illuminatingly discussed the enormous difficulties of achieving a perfectly just society, but that does not take away the importance of searching and establishing ideal principles of justice. Evaluating Sen's own analogy of comparing between the picture of a Picasso and a van Gogh, he is right that we do not need an ideal theory to adjudicate and present, *Mona Lisa* as the best painting in the world for the purpose of the comparison at hand, but that does not in itself wipe out the importance and position of *Mona Lisa* in this context (Sen, The Idea of Justice, 2009, p. 16-17). If for a time being we assume to agree on deciding to set a criteria through which we can evaluate whether *Mona Lisa* is indeed the best painting in the world. The same criteria can also be applied to compare between the paintings of Picasso and a van Gogh? If this is possible, than we can derive and arrive at a conclusion that the transcendental 'theory' of painting is also sufficient for the comparative purpose. Further Sen argues that in contemporary societies due to plurality of values and reasoning, there can be different descriptions of a perfectly just society or even with no agreed description at all. For instance while analysing Sen's notion of justice, considering the question of gender inequality, we will receive different suggestions and results for improving the unequal social position of the women (like, providing reservations for women, abolishing gender hierarchy, restructuring the social institutions etc.), depending on the variety of our evaluation pattern and understanding of the phenomena and also on the social situations on which we are actually standing. Thus in order to solve this complex problem exemplified through the question of improving the status of women, does press us to move to a higher level of abstraction. However, if we do want to move this higher level, the problem will be such, that people would obviously disagree with one another, though might reach an agreement but would be based on options and thus has the chance of rejection. And, importantly, an individual might, through a process of reflective equilibrium, clarify what he/she thinks, as the framework of reasoning that Sen has applied fails to address this problem. Debra Satz while analysing Sen's idea, points out that, when such a situation arise a person can never figure out which ranking to select or which superior position to move, among the various alternative

available for him, without working out his own conception of what 'perfect justice' entails (Satz, 2012, p. 280-282).There are times when we need a Mona Lisa to guide our judgments about Picasso and Dali. It can also be argued that an approach focused on ranking the available alternatives through a comparative method is at risk of ignoring unpresented possible choices (Silveria, 2016, p. 21-22).

However it should also be noticed that Amartya Sen's criticisms of perfect justice as finding difficulty in figuring out what to do in complex non ideal cases has been the central point of the beginning of Sen's idea and the departure of Rawls's theory. However, in *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls does not begin by trying to provide a particular solution for the very intense injustices that motivate Sen (Rawls, 1999).Rather he simply denotes such injustices as wrong. For instance slavery is wrong; likewise extreme poverty and avoidable deprivation is wrong and thus should be removed in order to perpetuate justice. It seems like Rawls never believed that a separate theory of justice should be designed to measure these practices and categorizing it as right and wrong or in Sen's view just and unjust. Rawls formulates his theory by taking such wrongness, injustices practised in the society as the starting point and later goes on to develop his principles of justice. In this sense Rawlsian theory cannot be discarded only as a theory formulating ideal justice. Thus, Rawls's ideal theory was never originated to play a extensive independent role in dealing exclusively with these practices, and so Sen's charge that ideal theories of justice are 'redundant' at least in this context, misses the mark (Satz, 2012, p. 281-282).

This takes us to another point of limitation which concerns, Sen's emphasis on the importance of public discourse and reasoning in scrutinising capabilities. Sen argues that in order for a society to decide on which freedoms and capabilities should be prioritised, there need to have public discussion. Although in principle it is very much useful as it promotes peoples participation beyond cultures thus strengthening democracy. However, the problem lies in how this can be actually translated into action (especially in a country like India), and if it is exercised how effective it will be in giving a voice to the most vulnerable is still a question (Agarwal, Humphries, & Robeyns, 2003, p. 3-12). Besides, Sen's prescriptions to justice (or a wider range of normative concerns) should also address issues like the differences

between sound and unsound public reasoning in order to function properly (O'Neill, 2010, p. 384-388). Evidently, as public reasoning speaks on behalf of the entire mankind therefore Sen accepts that it needs the support of 'free, energetic and efficient media' (Sen, 2009, p. 337)**.** Yet what is to be done if the media is working contrary to it? Where as in the present scenario it is seen that, media power is driven by partisan agendas, and news are often made and paid for deliberation, under such a situation the so called free press can further corrupt the public discourse and can confuse the public, even if no voices or considerations are excluded. Further, Sen emphasizes the importance of 'unobstructed discussion and scrutiny', but gives limited information on measuring this reasoning to set standards in discussion and scrutiny or about which publicly offered deliberations have normative force (Sen, 2009, p. 386-387).

Moreover, Sen seems to believe too much on the institution of state as a neutral actor, with the propaganda of achieving national interest. The reality at present is that states often seek to realise the interests of the 'dominant social classes'. Consequently, if the most vulnerable are not engaged in the discussion, it is unlikely that their voices will be heard, resulting in the continuation of the status quo. However, while evaluating the history of India it can be concluded that religion is still a very powerful force in the social and individual life of the people. In fact, despite constitution granting women equality and equal right to worship, it is seen that most of the temples in India have strict taboo on women worshipping gods and goddesses. However Amartya Sen's abundant use of Indian literature, history and philosophy as being methodologically consistent with his attempt to formulate a non parochial conception of justice, fails to mention the persistence of problems associated with caste system and untouchability. As caste system being one of the major social problems in India, however, the most alarming feature of Sen's work is its complete silence on the subject of caste-based discrimination in India, and the depleting conditions of the untouchables.[77] Though Sen's notion of justice based on public reasoning, emphasizing on the social realizations and freedom of the people, should have taken the issue of caste seriously as such socio-political and religious-cultural problems cannot be neglected and overlooked, while taking into consideration the capability aspect of the people. As Neera Chandoke has rightly

argued that communities that have suffered from multiple historical injustices is not because they are economically deprived, but also socially backward, politically insignificant in terms of the politics of 'voice', and so before romanticizing and advocating for a global notion of justice, Sen should focus on such local and direct issues of social justice first (Chandoke, 2015, p. 30-36). The recent democratic uprisings in various parts of the world against terrorist atrocities and fight for their basic human rights is a sign of Sen's rightful assessment of the idea of justice where people are agreed and protesting to remove the injustices from the society which will ultimately enhance global justice. However the problem that has arisen is that (not addressed by Sen), the world in where we live has so much of deprivation of one kind or another (like about 30% of the population of India live below poverty line), can the actual lives of the people be realized? Sen's emphasis on understanding and uplifting the lives of the people and focusing on the fairness of global arrangements, (rejecting the questions like whether poor are getting poorer or rich are getting richer) fails to address a simple question- how to strengthen democratic process at the global level. It is seen that the forces of globalization like the, Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and financial donors, has created new forms of disparities and has widened the gap between rich and poor, while exploiting the deprived sections (Stiglitz, 2005, p. 228-241). Justice has not been ensured to significant sections of population in underdeveloped societies and indeed we found new forms of injustices haunting the plebs. Thus in practice, Sen's understanding of justice and its explicit critic of the Rawlsian theory, limiting it to nation states and his emphasis on public reasoning that should accommodate voices from different societies and cultures puts justice within the domain of the liberal marketplace of ideas now vehemently spread through internet and the other social networking mediums, and hence does not go beyond the structure of liberalism.

Conclusion:

It is and should be the objective of each and every justice oriented theory to move towards a world of shared responsibilities and shared benefits of a 'fair globalization', and to an ethics of 'global justice', and it is only possible, by actually serving the interests of all of the world's people specially the marginalised and deprived ones. The paper recognizes the fact the though Sen admits the importance

of Rawls's approach, its influence not only in his work but also on the later philosophers and the proximities between both the paradigms of justice, however cannot disregard the theoretical dissonances and its importance in political philosophy. Formulating an alternative approach to justice, differentiating it from the traditional notions, Sen's idea of justice has been heralded as a theory of justice 'for an imperfect world', as 'dedicated to the reduction of injustices on earth practically rather than to the creation of ideally just castles in the air' (Osmani, 2010, p. 599-607). But despite the dual ambition of practically implementing political philosophy to the actual lives of the people, with the intention of limiting the gap between the institutions and people's realisation through the instrument of public reasoning and of centering justice to the heart of development thinking, Sen's notion of justice however, in practice does not do much in the real world, beyond generic references to famines, gender injustice or malnutrition. Besides, the state in this current era of globalization has abandoned its distributive functions and has transferred its power to the capitalists, making social justice dismal, despite legislating welfare laws and adjudicating measures to deliver social justice. In this changed world, the concept of social justice at a new dimension needs to be explored. The question therefore, is how to formulate the principles of social justice. Even after 70 years of getting independence, are the provisions of Indian constitution appropriate and able to create the ladder of equity and deliver social justice? In fact the caste system is getting itself adopted with new changing society. The problem for us is now to find out whether the new world has forced to renourish and redefine Sen's notion of social justice in order to make it practically more feasible.

***Endnotes*:**

[1]Rawls main concern were social and economic inequalities and he tries to deal with them by looking at the firmest convictions about basic rights and liberties, the fair value of the political liberties as well as fair equality of opportunity.

[2]Amartya Sen argues that the various theoretical arguments advanced by libertarians, utilitarians, egalitarians and the like have real significance in the sense that they contribute to our understanding of justice.

[3]One of the many pleasures of *The Idea of Justice* is Sen's vast analysis of India's culture and literature, which helps him to emphasise and formulate the public reasoning aspect of justice seen in many societies across the nation.

[4]It should be noted that social choice theory should not be confused with rational choice theory, as the latter defines rationality as the pursuit of self-interest. However, Sen assumes that fairness involves a reasonable concern for the interests of others and his depiction of social choice theory reflects this thinking.

[5]The impartial spectator approach that Sen applies, does not seek unanimity. It may not even reach an agreement that is clearly just. Perhaps, it will yield an outcome that is plausibly just or at least not manifestly unjust.

[6]According to Macpherson any democratic theory must treat and measure an individual power in terms of (quantity) developing his capacities and measuring hindrances in using his capacities, that is impediments to the maximum attainable in principle at any given level of social productivity and knowledge (1973, p. 70).

[7]Surprisingly, Sen's major works such as *Development as Freedom* or even *Inequality Re-examined*, also fails to mention the genuine and common problems associated with untouchability and the chronic poverty of that sizable community.

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LANGUAGE AND GENDER: INTERACTION AND CONTESTATION

Barasa Deka

Abstract

The identity of a community and its members are intimately related to the cultural attributes, which is exhibited to present their distinctive character and difference with other such communities. Language as an identity marker is considered to be crucial as it is attached to the preservation and recognition of distinctiveness. In a multicultural and multilingual context the identity concerns are very sharp and at times give rise to conflicting claims. The linguistic assertion of communities is attached with political implication and may invoke the issue of domination. However, language not only plays an important role in identity construction of a community in the larger societal structure, but it also produces specific identity construction with the community. Keeping in mind this particular concern, this paper attempts to explore the construction of gender identity through language in the particular context of the study. It seeks to understand how language, through the literary expression of a period reinforces existing gender relation and role. At the same time it also explores how through the same medium of expression such constructions have been questioned. The paper presents its analysis in two historical phases, in the context of Assam, to understand the interaction and contestations of language and gender.

Key words: *Assam, Gender, Identity, Language*

Introduction

The idea of a nation as a community or group of people is characterized by certain commonalities predominantly in terms of cultural attributes. When such communities are attached with the natural aspiration to turn into a Nation-State, they invariably look for consolidation of such common attributes. However, aspiration for consolidation of commonalities such as common language in a multilingual context is fraught with various implications. As the Nation-State is far from being a homogenous entity, an inherent conflict between the tendency of homogeneity and existing diversities emerges within it. The visualization of a Nation-State alongside a common identity, which is largely western centric, may not necessarily reflect the trajectory of Nation-State and nation-building process in other parts of the world such as emergence of India as a Nation-state. The understanding of the Nation-State on the conditions for the establishment of a common language as the national language may restrict the reflection of the aspirations of the heterogeneous composition of it.

In a multicultural context represented by diverse communities, language becomes a crucial marker of cultural identity of a community and its members. Therefore, linguistic identities express very strong stake to be represented and recognized in the concept of national identity. Language is very intimately attached to the rise of modern nationalism wherein the creation of political boundaries also meant the allocation of a particular status to a language. In India, the post-independence reality in terms of the linguistic reorganization of states clearly indicates the essentiality and inescapability of linguistic identity of various communities. Therefore, while invoking the issue of language in India; one needs to be aware of the sensitivity of its multilingual and multicultural context of application.

In the anthropological sense, language is a part of culture, because it too is a historically derived system of conscious and sub conscious patterns shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society (Friedrich, 1960, p.544). The

embeddedness of both individual and communities in the linguistic identity plays very significant role in the processes by which they define themselves and are defined by others. The crucial political implication of language as a marker of identity is dominantly reflected in the upsurge of identity politics which is intimately related with the demand of rightful recognition and status of a particular language. Such identity politics is more rigorously expressed in a diverse and multilingual context where certain groups live under increasing fear of loss of identity and assert it in order to maintain their distinctiveness and language comes to pay central role in such assertion. Therefore, the interaction between language, political power and identity becomes very intriguing in the context of India.

Understanding the role of a language in such a context, leads one to comprehend that the construction and preservation of identity of a community and its members are intimately related with the preservation of a language. This also determines the choices, opportunities, advantages and lack of them for the communities and its members in the larger social set up. Notwithstanding the role of language in this manner, this paper tries to understand language as a tool of identity creation within a community by reflecting on gender relations and gender equality. The attempt is largely to understand how language, especially the literature of a time continues to represent men and women in a socially and culturally constructed identity and how defiance of such identity takes place within the same mode of expression. The context of the paper is a region representing immense diversity that is the Northeastern region of India and within it more specifically the state of Assam.

When language is considered to be one of the most important markers of identity of a community, the construction of gender identity through language is also very significant to interrogate. The specific objective of the paper is to understand how language has contributed in continuing the preexisting inequalities between sexes. It also seeks to investigate how language through the medium of literary works reiterates the gender role and division of labor corresponding to the

existing patriarchy. However, the paper does not limit itself to the study of only one stream of writings, which reinforces existing gender inequalities, but it largely aims at looking into the other stream of writings where the socially and culturally constructed gender roles have been questioned. This paper purposively focuses on a set of writings by women writers on gender issues in the context of Assam. However, the period which the paper concerns itself also witnessed reflection of women's issues through male writers. Therefore, such references were also brought in to substantiate the arguments. The paper has been largely divided into pre-independence and post-independence period, in terms of historical phases, depending on the historical events of the time and production of the literary works. The paper does not only concern itself with the literary works of these two phases but also with the historical events considered to be defining moments for women's life in Assam. In the first phase the references would be drawn from the 1920s onwards. The rationale for the considering this period is conditioned primarily by two reasons. Firstly, there was increasing fervor of the anti-colonial movement in Assam and secondly there was a significant step towards organizing women in terms of a women's organization to raise women's issues.

The 1920s-30s is considered significant because of the way women's issues encircled in the public sphere. Assam's participation in the Nationalist Movement took defining shift in this era and it was also marked by the establishment of the first All Assam Women's organization known as Assam Mahila Samiti in 1926. The corresponding literary development was the publication of the first women's magazine in Assam 'Ghar-Jeuti'. These two events brought about new understanding of how gender issues unfold in the context of the region and specifically of Assam. The understanding of women's issues through the efforts of the organization and the literary works, specifically the articles in 'Ghar-Jeuti', widened the scope for analyzing the interaction and confrontation of the above mentioned two streams. In the post-independence period the attempt is to understand the events and writings from the period of 1960s to the 1980s. The period is marked by the rise of various identity movements and also publication of

another significant women's magazine 'Aideor Jonaki Baat' later renamed as 'Jonaki Baat'. This paper follows a historical methodology focusing of the events and writings of certain historical moments through which construction of women's identity has been analyzed.

Construction of Gender Identity through Language: The Contextual Analysis

Northeastern region of India presents a picture of plurality, diversity and immense complexity. Therefore, it is essentially important to understand the unfolding of the gender relations within the region to comprehend the literary expression of it. Women of the region cannot be considered as a homogenous category and any conformity with this line of argument may contribute to the loss of objectivity in the process of understanding gender reality of the context. The understanding of gender relations in the region presents two very important and often contradictory points of reference. The first position is drawn from the prevalent belief that gender relation in the region is considered to be based on more egalitarian values than the rest of India. Women's visibility in the public sphere in the forms of active participation in economic activities, the absence of traditional forms of control on women are seen as the marker of gender equality and hence absence of patriarchy. The other position critically challenges this myth of gender equality in the region. The ethnographic and administrative view of gender equality in societies does not seem to look into the functioning of the societies within. "Administrator like Dalton and Robinson have recorded the 'freedom' of the local women, not only among the hill tribes, but also among the plains people, in both social and family matters and the absence of familiar Indian customs like purdah or female seclusion" (Mahanta, 2008, p.243).

However, the deep rooted patriarchy within these societies becomes visible through understanding of the internal functioning of these societies. This has given rise to the need of interrogating the myth and reality of gender equality in the region. The diverse and heterogeneous nature of the societies has much bearing

on the understanding or location of women within the same. Therefore, when one engages oneself in understanding women in Northeastern region, the need is to visualize them through their societies, both tribal and non-tribal. While trying to understand the status of women in the region, these peculiarities have been largely ignored, and therefore, contributed towards creating a myth of gender equality. In an attempt to emphasize, how the women of this region, enjoy high status and equality, different from other societies, there is a tendency to avoid the dynamics within societies in order to understand them. In fact, very few studies have been conducted to understand tribal women within the norms of their own society. Writing about the Nagas, Verrier Elwin, remarks, 'tribal women is in herself exactly the same as any other women, with same position, love, fears, the same devotion to the home, to the husband and children, the same faults and same virtues' (Elwin cited in Zehol, 1998, p.1).

Although there have been multiple interpretations of the way women is understood, coming to the context of Assam, it can be argued that more or less communities are based on patriarchal practices. Certain religious traditions developed in the region have also been considered as contributing to the making of such practices even stronger. "Neo-Vaishnavism of Sankardeva believed in the servant-master component which in a way was applied to various relations between king and the subjects, guru and the disciple, God and devotee and husband and wife. Thus, it was based on a model of submission/ domination to a superior authority" (Mahanta, 2008, p. 349).

The construction of gender identity through language and depiction of the status of women and defiance of such construction can be seen through the portrayal of women of Assam in various literatures representing not only their agency but also their victimhood under the prevailing social customs and tradition. During the colonial period, the portrayal of women can be witnessed in a number of literary works in multiple ways. The writings of litterateur such as Jyotiprasad Agarwala, Rajanikanta Bordoloi, Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Dandinath Kaita not only depicted

women as the protagonists but also reflected their status in the family and society in Assam. In his famous story "Bhodori" Bezbaruah tried to depict the rural women of Assam as symbol of tolerance and devotion. On the other hand, in another writing titled "Rudai", it is reflected that women despite being tolerant and devoted towards husband, sometimes are compelled by the circumstances to get her husband physically assaulted by the villagers to make him reform his character" (Deka Hazarika in Baruah 1992, p. 64-66). Jyotiprasad Agrawala's dramas reflected the strong women characters such as Queen Mother on the one hand and also women such as Sewali and Kanchan Kunwari who represent the victimhood of women due to rigid rule and customs of the society on the other (Agarwala, cited in 2017,p.57-98). Rajanikanta Bordoloi's novels such as 'Monomoti' also depict the picture of strong women such as Pamili who came on their own in the male dominated world.

In a period, when women's education was entangled with superstition and they were struggling to be part of the public sphere and gain rights, it is most likely that women's contribution to literary works would be negligible. However, the revolutionary step to break the image of victimhood and raise the voice of agency came through some educated women in their literary contribution in Assam. Chandraprabha Saikia's first piece "Devi" possibly the first short story published by an Assamese woman, appeared in Assamese magazine Banhi in 1921 under the maiden name of Kumari Chandraprabha Das. The theme of the story represents the struggle of a child widow, was presented in a manner that the feminist perspective in it became visibly evident. This may be considered as a unique way of presenting literary works which tries to break the existing patriarchal structure. Saikiani's rigorous pursuit of gender equality was later on reflected in her Novel 'Pitri-Bhitha' published in 1937, which can be considered as the first Assamese novel by a women writer dealing with feminism. Saikiani's contribution is very unique in that period considering the sensitivity of the subject matter 'Pitri-Bhitha' dealt with. Dandinath Kalita's 'Sadhana' in 1928 also expressed feminist concerns albeit limited manner. However, issues of gender equality, property rights for

daughters gained strong expression in 'Pitri-Bhitha' in a very deep and engaging manner.

The entry of Baptist missionaries in Assam triggered the debate on women's education which was widely debated in the Baptist journal Orunodoi and in other Assamese journals of the time. This debate was basically concentrated within the visible struggle between custom and tradition and the idea of modern education for women. "The struggle between modern ideas and deep entrenched custom and traditions was strongest on the issue of western education in general and women's education and women's freedom in particular" (Mahanta, 2008, p.3). Women's issues concerning education, participation in the nationalist movement, rights and equality circulated in the late nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century through the formation of women's organizations and publication of women's magazines in Assam. Education for women not only became one of the major goals of the women's organization, but the writings of the first women's magazine 'Ghar-Jeuti' (1927-1931) further gave boost to women's issues in that period.

Mahila Samitir Ittibriti (The History of Mahila Samiti), authored by Chandraprabha Saikiani, published in 1961 is considered to be a very significant testimony of the historical development of women's movement in this region. Saikiani's *Itibritti* needs to be located in a continuous historical process in the journey of understanding women's activism in Assam from the pre independence to the post-independence period. Women's mobilisation and their active role in the nationalist movement are also reflected in this work. The defiance of traditions and struggle for women's rights is expressed through the narration of the events preceding the formation of the first women's organization in Assam, the Assam Mahila Samiti.

Ghar-Jeuti, the first women's magazine in Assam needs to be seen in terms of the issues it reflected representing the two streams of writings in the construction and defiance of gender identity. It worked as a catalyst of women's activism in Assam. The formation of the first women's organization, Assam Mahila

Samiti in 1926 and the publication of 'Ghar-Jeuti' in 1927 have to be put in the context of a shift which was taking place in the larger society regarding redefinition of women's role, more specifically making them relevant in the public sphere. Although this magazine was not the mouthpiece of the organization, but it well articulated the concerns raised by the organization. Ghar Jeuti was published under the editorship of Kanaklata Chaliha and Kamalalaya Kakoti from Sibasagar. In the period marked by absence of women's education and rights, publication of this magazine is considered to be one of the revolutionary steps which fueled the silent social revolution in Assam (Mahanta in Compilation of Ghar-Jeuti, 2008, p.0.2). This was the period when only a few educated women came up to voice their concerns for the large number of women who were under deep backwardness and lacked any agency. However, the publication of such a magazine was not without the support and inspiration of educated males such as Barrister Tara Prasad Chaliha and writer Durga Prasad Majinder Baruah. In the process of the rise of women's consciousness, the efforts of a section of educated men in Assam can be seen in conformity with the ideals of the social reform movement laying the foundation of women's movement in India. The writings in the magazine can be considered an effort towards spreading consciousness amongst women about the prevailing inequalities they are subjected to. However, it cannot be argued that the writings in the magazine are entirely based on the defiance of the gendered role for women. There was also reflection on how women should continue to perform the prescribed duties without defying them. The interaction between victimhood and effort to create agency can be witnessed in a sharp manner.

In the first edition of Ghar Jeuti in 1927 two very interesting articles by women writers came up. The first one by Smt. Sashiprabha Baruah titled 'Tirutar Kartabya' (Duty of Wife/Women) reflects on the qualities of a married woman. The article very clearly indicates that the private sphere is the sphere of activity for women and they should be confined to it. Women should emulate the qualities such as tolerance, politeness, loving, caring, peace-loving and sacrificing. The field of women's activity is her family and the maintenance of the family should be

her primary duty. It says 'Trutai nijor xukhor kotha nabhabi porar xukhar karone bhabibo lage'(women should think about the happiness of others than their own, p.4). This article seems to have reinforced the existing patriarchy in Assamese society. However, in another article 'Nari Jagoran' (Women's Resurgence), by Smt. Kanaklata Chaliha there is an attempt to create consciousness amongst women regarding the inferior status they are made to live in the society. This article provided an elaboration of the rise of women's movements in various parts of the world and also pointed out how women in Assam are silent spectators of the prevailing gender inequalities which are indicative of the backwardness of the women of this part. In another piece by Smt. Chaliha 'Narir Unnati' (Women's Progress) published in the second edition, she talks about how public sphere is also a sphere of women's activity. She has highlighted how some women have taken up jobs and got education by crossing the boundaries of household, where men have also played positive role to encourage women to reach out their potentials. She writes 'I pray to God that in every Assamese household we have fathers, husbands and brothers who encourage women to engage in public life' (translation Mine, p. 22). The article further talks about how Assamese women can draw inspiration from the women who have defied the traditional roles and made progress in life.

The magazine also published articles on women's issues raised by male writers. In an article written by Durga Prasad Majinder Baruah titled 'Tirutar Thai'(Status of Women), he tries to interrogate the reasons for the inferior status of women in the society. He highlighted that biological inferiority in terms of physical strength may be considered one of the reasons for their inequality. However, the article refutes the argument by referring to various examples of how women have shown their physical strength in various wars in Europe. The heroic of Assamese women too is not alien to Assamese society, but they did not get the adequate place in the history. The pages of Ghar Jeuti well reflected the need of women's education and provided the much needed space for the debate on women's education during that period. The article written by Kamalalaya Kakoti titled

'Assamiya Chualik Bujoni' (Advice to the Assamese Girls) pointed out to the importance of women's education and how parents are still very skeptical to educate their girl child. The article well reflected on the unhealthy future of a society where women are kept uneducated. The publication period of Ghar Jeuti was not only marked by women's activism in Assam, but also the active period of anti-colonial movement. Some of the writings in the magazine reflect on women's duty towards the nation through invoking some legends in Assam such as 'Joymoti'. In an article written by Smt. Jagyadalata Duora titled 'Joymoti' reflected on the life of the chaste women legend in Assam, who sacrificed her life for the sake of her husband. The article depicted the women to be extreme dutiful towards husband and make extreme sacrifices. This duty is also considered to be the duty towards the motherland.

The post-independence period in Assam is marked by resurgence of host of movements primarily concerned with the question of identity. The Assam Movement once again created a space for women to become increasingly visible in the public sphere. Parallel to the intense period of the movement the publication of the women's magazine 'Aideor Jonaki Baat' later known as 'Jonaki Baat' in the year 1983 carries a very important significance to highlight women's issues. This magazine was published from Dibrugarh under the editorship of Aparna Mahanta and it very strongly brought the issue of gender equality to the forefront. The feminist concerns, which were raised in the thirties by a small number of women, witnessed a larger shift in the post-independence period in terms of raising issues of private-public dichotomy, the sex and gender debate and host of other issues concerning women. In the first edition of the journal Smt. Subarna Bhuyan in an article 'Nari lajjasila, Purush Domoniya' challenged gender inequality based on biological determinism. She pointed out how women of all societies are subjected to domination on the basis of socially constructed system establishing women as an inferior sex. Therefore, there should be clarity on the questions of gender equality, women's freedom and security. In the first editorial of the magazine, Aparna Mahanta stressed on the role of women in the democratic movements. Dr.

Swarnalata Baruah, in her article in two editions of 1984 titled 'Puroni Axomat Narir Sthan' narrates the myth and reality of gender equality in Assam. In the March -April edition of 1986, the editorial 'Axomar Natun Sarkar: Amar Abhinandan aru Asha' emphasized that the new government which was formed after Assam Movement need to acknowledge the contribution of women and give them their due share. It talks about ensuring justice to women who faced multiple harassments during the course of the movement. This magazine constantly took up women's issues concerning women that lead to the further understanding of gender question in Assam.

It appears that both 'Ghar Jeuti' and 'Aideor Jonaki Baat' constantly engaged themselves in raising issues concerning the location of women in the larger societal set up. There has always been a voice to challenge to what exists and taken as given. The second stream of writing which is defiance of the existing system became more prominent through the engagement of women writers in the issues of gender equality and women's rights. It is also very significant to understand that both these magazines came up in very crucial historical junctures, where women's visibility in the public sphere was mediated by certain larger issues such as Nationalist movement and the Assam Movement. However, how far such representation of women's issues through magazines and also other literary work have redrawn or redefined the gender relation in the society is a much larger question to be addressed.

Concluding Remarks

To engage in understanding gender issues in the context under consideration is a difficult task in the view of the entanglement of the issue with multiple other issues. The politics of the region and mobilization around group identities make language a very sensitive issue. The understanding of gender relations in Assam is linked to how gender identity interacts with mobilization of group identities. Therefore, apart from language playing a crucial role in constructing and deconstructing gender relations, the mobilization of group identities and participation

of women in various identity movements also plays significant role to understand the unfolding of gender question in Assam. The linguistic reproduction of socially and culturally defined gender roles through literary works and the defiance and challenges to such construction interacts most often in a contradictory manner. Therefore, language itself becomes a tool of defiance, challenging which is considered to be naturally given. Literary works becomes the space to articulate women's activism and the quest for agency. The writings of the time corresponded to the rising activism of women and their effort to spread consciousness about their rights. However, the depiction of women through literary works, the challenges to a particular kind of construction of gender identity, the participation of women in various movements in Assam need to be put in a larger context to understand the gender question in Assam.

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RE-VISITING THE IDEA OF POWER THROUGH NEHRU'S IDEALS OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY : A THEORETICAL ESTIMATE

Priyadarshini Ghosh

Abstract

The term Power has been one of the most contested concepts in political science. Disagreements on defining what constitutes power have been primarily with regard to the elements of power. Foreign policies of states have structured itself on both hard and soft elements of power. Even though the term soft power made its appearance within the literature of politics and international relations through Joseph S. Nye's writings, however, the concept itself predates Nye. For observers and students of Indian foreign policy, imprints of soft power were found in Gandhi's ideas of non-violence and Satyagraha and in the ideological underpinnings of Nehru's foreign policies. This article seeks to contextualise power in Nehru's foreign policy. What kind of power did Nehru visualise India to be? Drawing parallels with Joseph S. Nye's concept of soft power this article will try and sketch out the contours of Nehru's foreign policy, as to how Nehru situated power within the domain of foreign policy per se. The ideals of India's foreign policy which Nehru so enthusiastically incorporated into our Constitution were based on the ideas of power that Nehru had. This is where this article's significance lies in making a critical theoretical estimate of Nehru's ideas on power and its implications for India's foreign policy.

Keywords : Foreign policy, Influence, Nehruvian Idealism, Power, Soft power.

Introduction

Independent India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was convinced that India was destined to play an important and beneficent role in the comity of nations. As early as in 1948, he had declared that India had already become the fourth or fifth most influential country in the United Nations. India's foreign policy objectives owe much to the visions that an idealistic Nehru had in mind. He was undoubtedly the architect of independent India's foreign policy. However, his zeal for diplomacy was not backed by the necessity of military and economic hard power. Nehru and Indian foreign policy had high hopes on our moral high ground because as a nation we were collectively proud of the non-violent traditions crafted by Gandhi during the Indian war of independence. Over the past decades, the idealist strain or the so called 'Nehruvian idealism' has diminished and eventually disappeared altogether influenced by the exigencies of *realpolitik*, however, one cannot but argue that that much of the basic ideals of India's foreign policy still has the imprints that Nehru had drawn.

This paper will seek to draw an outline of the major characteristics of Nehruvian foreign policy which shaped India's foreign relations after independence, contrasting those ideals against the backdrop of the concept of soft power as conceptualized by Joseph S. Nye in the late 1990s. The paper will try to argue that the logic of co-option through political values, culture and foreign policy was deeply embedded in independent India's foreign policy discourse, which formed the basis of the constitutional heritage that we gave ourselves when the Constitution was adopted. The main objective of this paper is open a debate or a discourse that perceives the long cherished ideals of India's foreign policy to be pre-dated much before the term soft power gained prominence in national and international parlance.

Defining Power Dichotomies

The term power has been one of the most frequently used and also one of the most highly contested terms in the discourse of politics and international relations *per se*. For centuries, political theory visualized power as being centralized in a state apparatus or in a series of political institutions. In classical political theory,

power was embodied in the sovereign whereas in a monarchical society, power was invested symbolically in the body of the king, the incarnation of divine right. During the initial phase of the development of modern political science, Frederick Watson (1934) had said, 'The proper scope of political science is not the study of the State or any other specific institutional complex, but the investigation of all associations in so far as they can be shown to exemplify the problem of power' (Watson, 1934, p. 56).[1] Both traditional and modern thinkers alike have demonstrated the significance of power in politics, from Machiavelli, Hobbes, Nietzche to Max Weber, Laswell, Kaplan, Morgenthau and others. It might not be wrong to conclude that there are probably as many conceptions of power as there are theorists.

Power is frequently associated with the notions of control, coercion and influence. Although there are varied definitions and usages of the term power, yet it can be simplified to three connected but different approaches- (i) power as a resource; (ii) power as a strategy; and (iii) power as an outcome. As a resource, power refers to the sum total of capabilities an entity or a country has to influence the behaviour of another entity or a country respectively. However, defining power only in terms of possession of capabilities would be myopic. This was emphasized by Steven Lukes (2005) when he said, '...sociologists and strategy analysts, for example, equate power with power resources, the former with wealth and status, the latter with military forces and weaponry. But merely possessing or controlling the means of power is not the same as being powerful. As both France and the USA discovered in Vietnam, having military superiority is not the same as having power' (Lukes, 2005, p. 213)[2]

Power as an outcome, seek to understand the extent of an entity's capability not from the inputs that make it powerful or from the context within which its actions were undertaken, but rather from an assessment of whether the entity was able to attain its desired ends, the ends for which the exercise of power took place to begin with. The claim of power in this approach rests simply on whether the initiator was able to influence the targeted entity to act in the desired way, even if that entails undercutting the target's own interests. This in a sense conveys

the essence Robert Dahl's definition of power, which happens to be one of the most often, quoted definitions on power. Dahl (1957) defined power in terms of relation among people. He preferred to use the terms 'influence' and 'power' interchangeably. Dahl said that his 'intuitive idea' of power can be defined as, 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do' (Dahl, 1957, p. 207).[3]

When India became independent, the world outside was caught in the throes of the Cold War and great power competition. Throughout his tenure as Prime Minister, Nehru served simultaneously as the foreign Minister of India. This was but natural, for among the stalwarts of the Congress, he alone had a genuinely internationalist outlook and 'had always been fascinated by world trends and events' (Guha, 2007, p. 152).[4] Nehru from the very beginning did not want India at that nascent stage of independence to get caught into the vortex of this great power politics. As he himself had put it, 'we lead ourselves' (Nehru, 1961, p. 3).[5]

In a letter written to K.P.S. Menon in January 1947, as the latter prepared to take up his assignment as India's first ambassador to China, Nehru articulated his vision of what came to be known as 'non-alignment':

> Our general policy is to avoid entanglement in power politics and not join any group of powers as against any other group…We must be friendly to both and yet not join either. Both America and Russia are extraordinarily suspicious of each other as well as of other countries. This makes our path difficult and we may well be suspected by each other of leaning towards the other. This cannot be helped (Nanda, 1976, p. 134).[6]

It is clear from the above paragraphs that Nehru both as a statesman and as India's Prime Minister, wanted to keep India out of the power game being played in the international arena in the late 1940s. What becomes interesting is to consider how one conceptualizes power here. Are we talking here about hard power where military power is the only and the most pertinent indicator for assessing a country's power potential? Or, can power be operationalized by any other dimension?

Representative of Nehru's ideas was a speech he delivered on 'Peace and Empire' at Friends House, Euston in July 1938. This began by speaking of 'fascist aggression' but went on to see fascism as merely another variant of imperialism. In Nehru's mind there was little doubt that those who sought complete freedom for all the subject peoples of the world had to oppose both fascism and imperialism. In other words, he was against all forms of subjugation by means of military or hard power. Yet, at the same time he wanted India to play an important role in the global arena. And in order to play that role, Nehru banked upon India's moral currency, India's faith in international law, in bilateral and multilateral treaty agreements and in promoting world peace and freedom from the clutches of colonialism for the suppressed people.

This sentiment found its echoes in the debates of the Constituent Assembly while drafting our Constitution. When it came to the conduct of international relations, India's status as a country, morally opposed to military aggression and political domination found expression in the Constituent Assembly debates. A case in point is the Draft Article 40, the closing provision of the Directive Principles of State Policy, which was taken up for debate by the Constituent Assembly on 25 November 1948. It said the State shall promote international peace and security by the prescription of open, just and honourable relations between nations, by the firm establishment of the understandings of international law as the actual rule of conduct among governments and by the maintenance of justice and respect for treaty obligations in the dealings of organized people with one another. It directed the State to adopt certain principles in its dealings with the world at large. An amendment was moved at the beginning of the debate that proposed to include a more succinct version of the Draft Article.

A large section of the Assembly emphasized the importance of world peace. Members felt that India should not just play a role in effectuating world peace; one claimed that India was best placed to do so: peace, non-aggression and spirituality were key aspects on India history and culture. There was quite a bit of discussion around international law and its role in the world. Members viewed international law as playing a critical role in ensuring amicable relations between

nations. Members viewed the Draft Article as an expression of India's intention to pursue an independent foreign policy. It was argued that now, unlike before, India would not be dragged into the quarrels of other countries and would not align with power blocs.[7]The Draft Article was adopted with an amendment which later found place in the Constitution under Article 51 which states that the State shall endeavour to —

(a) Promote international peace and security;

(b) Maintain just and honourable relations between nations;

(c) Foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with one another; and

(d) Encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration.

Power depends on the context in which the relationship exists. The best guarantee to measure how much power one exerts on the other is to understand the other's preferences. At times, desired outcomes are achieved without commanding, when the other believes that the objectives that a country is following are legitimate. In such a situation, the means of coercion becomes unnecessary, because the desired objective of co-option is achieved by the means of attraction.

A distinction has been made on the means adopted to achieve success in foreign policy decision-making. Hence we have two types of means- 'hard' means which includes military might and economic strength and 'soft' means which constitutes the means of attraction by 'co-option instead of coercion'. It was Joseph S. Nye who coined the term 'soft power' for the first time in his book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* published in 1991.Nye (2004) has differentiated between - (a) Command power- the ability to change what others do can rest on coercion or inducement; and (b) Co-optive power- the ability to shape what others want can rest on the attractiveness of one's culture and political values.[8]

Although coercive power traditionally dominates realist literature, but another source of power is also widely discussed in the works of even classical

realists like E. H. Carr's ‾ 'power over opinion' and Hans Morgenthau's ‾ 'policy of prestige', both of which mirror the concept of soft power as suggested by Nye. Foreign policies that attract support, based on popular ideals serve the purpose of endowing these policies with an appearance of legitimacy.

Peter Van Ham (2010) in his book *Social Power in International Politics* offered us a constructivist notion of 'social power' that captures 'the ability to set standards, create norms and values that deemed legitimate and desirable without resorting to coercion or payment'(Ham, 2010, p. 21).[9] Social power resides in such diverse practices as agenda-setting, issue or problem framing, public diplomacy, norm advocacy or discursive power. Van Ham also wrote that on the fringes of soft power several other concepts have flourished. Stephen D. Krasner's (1982) definition of a 'regime' as a set of explicit or implicit 'principles, norms, rules, or decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue area' is hence relevant to our debate.[10] This was even recognized by E. H. Carr who argued in his book *The Twenty Years' Crisis* that the Anglo-Saxon control over ideas constitutes a major source of global power. The power of ideas and norms are hence, hardly new to the discourse. Since power is hardly ever an end in itself and is almost always a means to achieve other goals (from survival to reputation) so the study of power has therefore gone beyond realism.

Constructivism argues that ideas and discourse matter and that norms, values and identities heavily influences political life. Surely international politics still offers numerous relatively unchangeable constraints to state behaviour such as the balance of military power or the global market, yet ideas and discourse matter since they construct the socially agreed facts that cannot be wished away by individuals and inform the common knowledge that sustains legitimacy and authority. As Ted Hopf (1998) claimed, identities play an important role in society, since 'they tell you and others who you are and they tell you who others are' (Hopf, 1998, p. 178).[11]

Contrasting Nehruvian ideals and Soft Power

To the theory and practice of both politics and diplomacy, centrality of power in its various manifestations is difficult to overlook. There is no one universally

accepted definition of power, as a result of which it's proper definition remains a matter of controversy. There is no denying the fact that nature of power has changed over the course of time, so much so that power is no longer judged by the barrel of the gun. Robert Jervis once observed that in international relations a desired image and reputation can often be 'of greater use than a significant increment of military or economic power'. Perhaps as a result of this change in the understanding of power, countries today, whether large and small, are keenly aware that reputation, image and nation branding can be critical strategic assets in world politics. The moot point is that there is a general agreement among scholars of how a country is perceived abroad being a crucial element in the symbolic domain of national power.

Joseph S. Nye, a Harvard Professor (and also an Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs during the Clinton Administration) extended E. H. Carr's notion of 'power over opinion' and developed the concept of 'soft power'. Nye is credited to have coined the term itself, which he defined in his book *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics* as a 'country's ability to get what it wants through appeal and attraction'. Although Nye first used the term in his book *Bound to Lead*: *The Changing Nature of American Power*, he came out with a detailed discussion on the definition and variables of soft power in his 2004 book. Nye is of the opinion that soft power 'rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others'. It is, he says, 'getting others to want the outcomes that you want'; it 'co-opts people rather than coerces them' (Nye, 2004, p.3).[12]According to Nye, soft power of a country comprises of three variables namely, culture, values and foreign policy.

If we turn our gaze back to the issue under consideration in the beginning, we find that in the initial years of India's independence, Nehru carefully crafted India's image abroad as one such power that believed in the appeal of its civilization heritage that was premised on non-violence and political values which were based on institutionalizing the rule of law and a foreign policy based on these two pillars. Nehru attempted to prevent India's Balkanization and he found the solution in different policies, which were characterized by diverse ideologies as he wanted

India to have a leadership role in world affairs without aligning to the power blocs led by the US and the Soviet Union. Sumit Ganguly (2010) wrote that the main objectives of Nehru's foreign policy were, '….preservation of national interest, achievement of world peace, disarmament, [and] independence for Afro-Asian nations' (Ganguly, 2010, p. 65).[13]For the pursuit of these foreign policy objectives, Nehru moved ultimately to the founding of the Non-Alignment Movement.

Nehru believed in internationalism and tried to maintain honesty and goodwill in matters of international affairs. He wanted a cordial and mutually beneficial relationship with China and the *Panchsheel* (five principles) was initiated between New Delhi and Peking on 29[th]April 1954 for this purpose.[14]In Nehru's words:

> India does not propose to join any camp or alliance. But we wish to cooperate with all in the quest for peace and security and human brotherhood…..Peaceful coexistence is not a new idea for us in India. It has been our way of life and is as old as our thought and culture…We welcome association and friendship with all and the flow of thought and ideas of all kinds, but we reserve the right to choose our own path. That is the essence of *Panchsheel*. (Constitutional Assembly Debates, 1948)[15]

Nehru was opposed to the basic American policies of mutual security arrangements and military alliances, which were designed to contain the Soviet communism as the United States interpreted that Soviet expansionism was threat to peace, security, international trade and the human freedom. America focused on this agenda and both Presidents Truman and Eisenhower advocated it in the early years of the Cold War.[16]Partly as a result of such policies of aggression, *Panchsheel* was carefully formulated with features such as mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference in domestic affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and finally peaceful co-existence.

Nehru's first trip to the United States took place two years after he assumed office as the Prime Minister, even though he had often been to Europe before

independence. The US had not figured large in Nehru's imagination. His *Glimpses of World History*, for example devotes far less space to U.S. than to China or Russia. Americans for their part had their own prejudices about India. They admired Gandhi and his non-violent struggle but their knowledge of the country itself was scant. Dean Acheson, the Secretary of State in 1949, wrote dismissively about Nehru and his visit to America in 1949. Acheson found Nehru, 'one of the most difficult men with whom I have ever had to deal'.[17]

A similar feeling was harboured by his successor John Foster Dulles. Dulles was 'the coldest of cold warriors whose foreign policy was dominated by his obsession with communism'. Dulles and Nehru disliked each other from the start. Dulles had claimed that 'the concept of neutrality is obsolete, immoral and short sighted' (Crocker, 1966, p. 114).[18]Those who professed it, were in effect, 'crypto-communists' (Guha, 2007, p. 151).[19]In making a succinct summary of the initial phase of India-US relations, Ramachandra Guha (2007), India's leading modern historian made an interesting observation. He wrote in his book *India After Gandhi:*

> India and the United States did seem to have much in common –the democratic way of life, a commitment to cultural pluralism and a nationalist origin myth that stressed struggle against the British oppressor. But on questions on international politics they resolutely differed. America thought India soft on communism; India thought America soft on colonialism. In the end, that which divided seemed to overwhelm that which united; in part because of the personal chemistry – or rather, lack thereof- between the key players on either side (Guha, 2007, p. 152).[20]

Contrasting this with Nehru's impressions of erstwhile Soviet Union was more friendly and cordial. Soviet economic system appealed to Nehru most. As a progressive intellectual of his time, he thought state ownership more just than private property, state planning more efficient than the market. *Glimpses of World History* contains an admiring account of the Soviet five-year plans. But Nehru was not attracted by the Soviet model of armed revolution or by one-party state. His training under Gandhi made him inclined towards non–violence and his schooling

in Western liberalism made him an enthusiastic champion for electoral democracy and a vehement supporter of free press. All these were positive influences that found its expression in the Constitution that independent India made for itself to guide the nascent country to establish the rule of law in the domain of national politics.

Conclusion

For Nehru, foreign policy was a means of making India's presence felt in the world. While commenting on the emergence of newly independent India in the global scene, Nehru wrote:

> …prestige of India has greatly increased…we have always avoided playing a flashy role in international affairs…Gradually; an appreciation has grown in other countries of our own sincerity of purpose even though there has been disagreement (Gundevia, 1984, pp.18-19).[21]

C. Rajagopalari (1950) wrote in this connection, '…a country without material, men or money –the three means of power- was now fast coming to be recognized as the biggest moral power in the civilized world…her word listened to with respect in the councils of the great'.[22]Politicians on the other side of the political divide also appreciated Nehru's contribution in building India's image abroad. Non-alignment was an application of the Gandhian principles to world politics. As a result of the belief in the potential of India's moral powers, India was called upon to play an important mediatory role in the conflicts and civil wars of the time. There in lay India's soft power. The attractiveness of India's culture, the appeal of the political values that the country stood for like democracy, anti-colonialism, socialism, secularism and the principles of non-interference in the domestic policies of other states, made India an acceptable stakeholder in the geo-political chessboard. This form of power that India exhibited was in sharp contrast to imperialistic, hegemonic game play that was prevalent when India gained her independence. And over the years, this has been our constitutional heritage in the domain of foreign policy.

What is interesting to note is that, long before scholars Joseph. S. Nye propounded his idea of soft power; India had long championed the values of Third World solidarity, anti-racialism, democracy and freedom. These are values that have formed the core of India's foreign policy. Gandhi's use of non-violence and *satyagraha* both in South Africa and later during India's independence movement exemplified the classic use of soft power historically. Sreeram Chaulia (2007) in his article 'India's Soft Power: Lessons from Nehru' mentioned in this context, 'Nehruvian peace initiatives of the 1950s stand out for their image-burnishing value'.[23] Even a realist like C. Raja Mohan (2003) pointed out in one of his articles, 'India could always count itself among the few nations with strong cards in the arena of soft power. Thanks to the spread of religion and culture from India to the neighbouring regions over the millennia, India has exercised a measure of soft power'.[24]

Reams have been written about the irrelevance of non-alignment in the contemporary global scenario. Non-alignment when understood to mean an independent foreign policy, can very well be said to hold meaning in the days of de-hyphenated relations and in the age of strategic partnerships. There is a growing awareness in the academic circles that in the past decade, India's foreign policy has tilted quite a lot towards the US thereby jeopardizing our age old warm relations with Russia. However, India's foreign policy haven't fully tip toed the hegemonic ambitions of the US, because India's foreign policy is not built upon the pillars of hegemonic power ambitions. Therein lay India's popularity and recognition as a moral power in the emerging power politics. And therein lay the fulfillment of the constitutional heritage that the makers of our Constitution envisioned for this country.[24]

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ECOLOGICAL CRISIS OF LABOUR PROCESS UNDER CAPITALISM : A CRITICAL INTROSPECTION

Rengupta. M

Abstract

Socially organized labour is the motor force of almost all the advancements that humanity has ever achieved. However social organization and appropriation of labour can have catastrophic impacts in the natural world. Technological revolutions and the intensification of labour process leads to the dispossession of masses from the means of production and increase in the material crisis of nature. Paper attempts to see labour process and ecological crisis from the vantage points of and Marxism. Crisis in the reproduction of the conditions of production may give way to the re-emergence of state of nature. Critical responses to capitalism's second contradiction are scattered and unorganized hence environmentalism itself enters into a theorization crisis. Normalization of mastery over nature is at the same time mastery over the humans by humans. Annihilation and marginalization of human life therefore is a necessary condition for survival. Question relating to crisis of accumulation and loci of social change are explored in the article.

Keywords: *Capital, Entropy. Labour, Property.*

Introduction

Socially organized human labour can create wonders in the natural world. It had brought us the Taj Mahal, Great Wall of China, Burj Khalifa and many more. It is impossible for a single human to construct a huge mansion of this kind; it was made possible by the appropriation of massive individual labour processes within a social system of production. The first and foremost concern of this paper is to investigate the increasing intensity of crisis of nature generated by human production endeavours aiming at exchange as values.

Organized labour process is an official process of buying the right to labour thereby right to livelihood of the individuals. What is seen in the capitalist production practice is the growth of private competition into massive artificial structures of manipulation, preservation and survival. The kind of impact that massive production systems have in nature is immense. It raises radical questions of internal relations of nature. Life and its preservation happen within a class hierarchical society.

Positive mastery over nature is the *telos* of the modern political system. Any 'virgin' land or natural formations are same like Eden and can be made private by the application of knowledge through labour expenditure. Crisis generated by social production in the 'balance of nature does not disturb the moral correctness of the common-wealth since it is an anthropocentric system in its purity and integrity.

Within the Marxist paradigm social organization of labour and mass production is a progressive process that liberates humans from the bondages of nature. He conceptualizes crisis as phenomenon limited to a human social organization. The increasing immiseration of the proletariat is the potential of social change. Social production system where the private individual process is bought at a massive scale leads to an economic and social crisis and once when it reaches its zenith there could be a radical system change.

Potential of social change in contemporary capitalism is not associated with the working class any more. Late capitalism is the epoch in history of the development of the capitalist mode of production in which the contradiction between the growth of the forces of production and the survival of the capitalist relations of

production assumes an explosive form. This contradiction leads to a spreading crisis of these relations of production (Mandel, 1972, p.564).

The paper attempts to conceptualize the potentials of radical system change in a post proletarian sphere. An ecological Marxist account of capitalism as a crisis-ridden system focuses on the way that the combined power of capitalist production relations and productive forces self-destruct by impairing or destroying rather than reproducing their own conditions (O'Connor, 1988, p.23). Crisis in the reproduction of the conditions of production is the contemporary crisis of capitalism.

Two hypotheses are proposed in the part where conceptualization of post-proletarian radical potentials appears in the paper. The first one is on the potentials of an increasing number of non-exchange value producing masses. The rate of congealing labour time in machinery experiences multiple revolutions with the advancement in science and technology in the late 20th and 21st centuries. Extreme potentials of carrying labour time. Popular Bamford excavators and hydraulic treks are the most pedestrian example. The amount of labour time these machines carry is immense. Intensification of labour reduces the size of the proletariat hence a larger part of the masses become unemployed. The working class shrinks in late capitalism. A huge part of the masses therefore enters into a non-proletarian or non-value producing identity.

The second hypothesis is based on the second law of thermodynamics. The transformation of matter from usable to non-usable form is part of larger universal process. Its intensity and catastrophic impacts are increased by socially organized labour. A unity of value and material crisis is suggested.

Methodology and the conceptual apparatus

Documented academic thought is the major source of the article. Fundamental modern political scientific positions on nature and human life are taken from the two treatises on government by John Locke. Moral correctness of labour expenditure and expansion of the frontiers of private is a major concern of Locke's book. Human production of the world is conscious process that organizes social life in hierarchical orders. The diverse capacities or intensities of human

action are brought to a level of labour process. Exchange is target of production and it cannot happen between same commodities. Natural diversity in the human production process is a necessary condition in conceptualizing the expansion of the private. The concept of dual character of labour has been modified to investigate capitalism's ecological crisis. Karl Marx's Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Vol. I is the original source from where the material, natural and immaterial/ value unities are taken.

Marx's concept of dual character of labour where labour process has been identified as a unity of abstract and concrete labour is modified into a unity of value production and material chaos. Works of David Harvey, Joel Kovel, Paul Bukkett and James O'Connor are used to develop the conceptual apparatus.

Modern Political Science of Labour

The "labour" of his body and the "work" of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property (Locke, 2003, p.116).

Right to property in its naked form is the right to exclude others from the fruits of labour process. An assertion like my body is my property is not logically upsetting (Becker, 1976, p. 653-664). How such exclusion would work? My attempt here is to see the situatedness of property within modern political systems. A multitude of autonomous bodies and their mutual exclusion and internalizations is the context of modern politics. Privacy is often expressed in an environment of diversity. The mutual exclusion and inclusion process of diverse privacies are governed by the common wealth.

Privacy and liberty are expressed once when congealed human labour is exchanged. The artificial human political system allows the natural process of labour to advance in a conditioned environment. Hence the state is a human work of art or formality that (de) certifies and preserves labour processes. The natural strangeness, autonomy of body and labour process leading to a conscious self centric exchange system forms the skeletal structure of social organization. In a

political context where personal affiliations to power considered unethical; official definitions of production relations cannot be love relations. Quantifiable values are exchanged following the clauses of the contract between private parties; is guaranteed by the commonwealth. Not an atom of love enters into the process of production and exchange as medium.

Non-emotional modern labour processes create crisis in the relations of nature. David Hervey in his book, 'Justice Nature and Geography of Difference' begins the chapter on the domination of nature and its discontents with two contrasting quotations form Aldo Leopold and Karl Marx. The former finds the potential of environmental degradation in the human consideration of land as commodity belonging to them. When we, according to Leopold, see land as a community to which we belong may use it with love and respect. The later in his book, Floor-plans of Political Economy (*Grundrisse*) writes labour in bourgeois societies should directly produce value i.e. money and similarly money should directly purchase labour. Money thereby directly and simultaneously becomes the real community and hence dissolves all other human communities (Harvey, 1996, p.120).

Marxist Science of Labour

Labour is the movement through which the entire living organisms produce their biological stability within nature. It is a natural process by which the living beings assemble reasonable environment for their existence. Hence labour of any type is a process of formalization of matter. The formalization of the nature could be a process of internalization, externalization and resistance. The strategy and reason of the labour is not an individual choice within a social framework. The autonomy and independence of labour diminishes with revolutions in production relations. The examination of the labour process in production was the major break that Marx brought into the theorization of the social relations.

The role of nature in labouring and production was observed by Marx as follows:

> Labour is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature. He confronts the materials of nature as a force of nature. He sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body, his arms, legs, head and hands, in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs. Through this movement he acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature. He develops the potentialities slumbering within nature, and subjects the play of its forces to his own sovereign power (Marx, 1982, p.283).

Labour is a cognizant process within the setting of a human society, this way it is distinct from other natural powers that cause alterations. All the living beings within the nature apply some kind of labour for survival. There are numerous living life forms that amass the matter that is accessible within the nature. What makes the human society unmistakable from other categories of living beings is the capacity construct up and produce. Generation within the human world is not something like a weaver fowl makes its settle, the winged creature makes the settle as a part of its (natural) quality subsequently the structure or the plan does not alter as a result of a thought prepare. Marx outlines within the same passage of the chapter in capital how the human labour contrasts from the labour of other creatures.

A spider conducts operations which resemble those of the weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realizes his own purpose in those materials. And this is a purpose he is conscious of, it determines the mode of his activity with the rigidity of a law, and he must subordinate his will to it. This subordination is no mere momentary act. Apart from the exertion of the working organs, a purposeful will is required for the entire duration of the work. This means close attention. The less he is attracted by the nature of the work and the way in which it has to be accomplished, and the less, therefore, he enjoys it as the free play of his own physical and mental powers, the closer his attention is forced to be (Marx, 1982, p.284).

What distinguishes production from natural evolution lies in the dimension of consciousness as shaped by language and social organization. Human beings work with a mental image of nature; we represent the section of nature before us – itself virtually always modified by previous labour – then act upon it to transform it according to an envisioned end. In every instance, some prearranged configuration of nature-as-transformed-by labour is imaginatively appropriated, then rendered according to a plan. Production is therefore inherently demoralizing and incorporates the future; that is why we call it production, to make with a view ahead (Kovel, 2007, p.234).

Labour applied by the Homo sapiens was of a different type in the animal world, human labour was powered with critical ability or it was/is a conscious activity. The conscious interaction with the nature in course of social evolution led to the emergence of deliberate production. It is the organized system of production that makes the humanity different. Engels in the 'Dialectics of Nature' observes that,

> The human life stands dependent and at the same time different from the animal life. Most of the animals can achieve to collect; but man produces, he prepares the means of life, in the widest sense of the words, which without him nature would not have produced. This makes imposed any unqualified transference of laws of the life of the animal societies to human society (Engels, 1983, p.80).

For Marx there are three simple elements for the (human) labour process they are (1) purposeful activity, that is work itself, (2) the object on which that work is performed, and (3) the instruments of that work. Labour always has a purpose; it might be aimed at getting food or defeating something or destroying someone. Labour cannot be performed in vacuum; it must be performed on an object. The things the labour separates from the immediate environment are the objects of labour, Marx writes in volume one of Capital:

> The land (and this, economically speaking, includes water) in its original state in which it supplies man with necessaries or means of subsistence ready to hand is available without any effort on his part as the universal material for human labour. All those things which labour merely separates from immediate connection with their environment are objects of labour spontaneously provided by nature, such as fish caught and separated from their

> natural element, namely water, timber felled in virgin forests, and ores extracted from their veins (Marx, 1982, p.291).

Marx interprets labour as the subject and nature as its object of activity. Labouring transforms the nature and its internal relations and at the same time the mode of labouring changes according to the natural conditions, therefore the labour is a process of mutual transformation. Nature is understood through the labour process, the progress in the process brings out new knowledge regarding the configuration of the nature.

The evolution of the society is at the same time is an evolution in the methods of labouring. Production of use value under the social system is not an isolated labour like a hunter gatherer plucks and eats to satisfy his/her appetite. In a social production system previously produced use values- instruments like machineries, tools etc-are employed. A social production system is not a collection or set of independent labour, it is a larger process of production which undergoes frequent evolution. In 1933, Herbert Marcuse wrote an essay proposing that the material activity of human beings, or labour, has two consequences or results. He called them the "objective and subjective moments" of labour. But either "moments" or effects are also two-sided. The objective result of labour is, first, the object produced, the material product; more generally, the visible world of objects, in capitalism what Hegel called a "heap of commodities" and second, the material basis of a particular social order, or what Marx called the social relations of production. On the one side, labour produces objects and on the other these objects physically reproduce not only the producers but also the social order or class system (O'Connor, 1999, p.38).

The masses in the margins of social production

Capital by its very nature crosses the boundaries of the nation state and becomes a global formation. The independent non-exchange-oriented production systems were delegitimized by the official state along with capitalist development.

Appropriation and control over nature is necessary condition for the growth of capitalism.

Concrete labour process within and outside the frontiers of capitalist production are of diverse kinds. Differences in the modes of labouring give rise to different systems of knowledge. Capital by its very expansive nature appropriates and suppresses other production systems since it is a gigantic global formation.

The separation of the original producer from the natural conditions was at the same time to ensure the availability of labour force to the capitalist industry. The harnessing of workers' living and work conditions to an increasingly social production process evolving according to monetary criteria is and must be a process in which nature is likewise treated as a condition of monetary accumulation, both socially and materially. In this sense, the subsumption of labour under capital implies a parallel subsumption of nature under capital (Burkett, 1999, p.67). Elimination of the independent labour process thereby divorcing the masses from their means of production is a necessary condition for maintaining capitalist mastery of nature.

Social production under capitalism is far beyond the labour capital dialectic. Revolutionized technology holding huge quantities of labour time and its aggressive mode of operation both collapses the proletarian solidarity and the balance of nature. A larger part of the masses falls into the category of post-industrial neo-proletariat with little job security. This new class is sometimes categorized as neo-liberal working class and is not in fact a class in itself. They fill into the peripheries of social labour process (Gorz, 1982, p. 62). Radical potentials of system change have not been identified in these scattered masses.

The absence and presence of this vulnerable class in the production process are controlled through both official channels. The unchanging alien identities of migrant labourers or masses displaced by developmental projects or aboriginal populations are discovered through non-official channels. The kind of difference that the mainstream population feels and maintains with migrant labourers is not often exercised through the state apparatus. The cultural logic of contemporary capitalism operates through the dismantling of larger conceptual and political projects.

The entropy law and accumulation of capital

Material bodies of commodities are artificially preserved low entropy units. Production of commodities again demands a massive quantity of diverse low entropy material qualities. Usefulness of production and commodities centres on the specific order in which matter is arranged. The dependence of production on low entropy matter is unavoidable since there is no possible way to convert energy into matter or matter of whatever form into energy (Burkett, 2006, p.156).

The rate at which the capitalist production system increases the crisis of nature is soaring in comparison with pre-capitalist economic formations. Appropriation of natural space and dispossession of the scattered labouring class fill the material part of the production dialectic. This appropriation and dispossession process with reference to the fundamental laws of motion of capital must be limitless since what is produced is the use value of the unknown.

Any exchange, "eco-friendly" or non-eco-friendly, of value is the liberation of a particular quantity of energy that can never be brought back to a low entropy unit. Liberal positivist human responsibility suggestions are pretty popular in the contemporary environmental debates. Algor's documentary "Inconvenient truth" ends up with a few moral prescriptions for reducing the carbon foot print.

The Do-it-yourself model of environmentalism of the west is ridiculed and displaced by another documentary by Joel Kovel; titled *"A really inconvenient truth"*. The centrality of exchange oriented industrial production in ecological crisis has been presented with evidence in the documentary.

Conclusion

How the social contract has to modify itself in response to ecological crisis, a new phase of state of nature, is the political question of the context. Environmental policies of the modern states are attempts to control ecological

crisis. Questions relating to the tragedy of the commons and decline of the gene pools are middle class concerns. Social Darwinist philosophy of the neo-liberal state modifies social hierarchies and draws new margins.

Accumulation of marginalized communities and the production relational growth of chaos in the material world are two identifiable potentials of a radical system change. However eco socialist proposition considering the mobilization strategies seem to be utopian at the moment.

Estrangement that the masses confront in their everyday life and crisis in situating themselves with changing environment take the form of ecological movements. These movements against the continuing divorce of masses from their means of production can be the loci of social change. The historical conditioning of nature undergoes a review within the eco-socialist theorization. Ecological movements unlike the organized trade union movements are not organized. Functioning of ecological movements is not as organized and scientifically and managerially administered as capital accumulation process. Ecological movements often subscribe to traditional patriarchal moral values and positions. Therefore, finding the totality of ecological movement as progressive social force is difficult. Recommending a return to the cultural past has been cited a major solution to the problem. Environmental ethics is therefore complex discourse and thereby eco social list theorization enters a conceptualization crisis.

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THE CHINA FACTOR IN INDIA'S ACT EAST POLICY : IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NORTHEAST INDIA

Kaustav Padmapati

Abstract

With the changing dynamics of contemporary international relations, India's Foreign Policy has underwent a significant change since the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government came to power in May 2014. The renewed interest to the East and Southeast Asian Region was one of the prominent policies of Prime Minister Modi's administration. With the intention of reconnecting the vibrant economies of Southeast and East Asian countries, the renewed "Look East Policy" known as "Act East Policy" was launched in late 2014 as an integral part of India's ambition to become a regional power in Asia- Pacific region. However, the rise of China in Asia- Pacific with its two ambitious goals "the China Dream" and "One Belt One Road" policy stand as big hindrance on India's ambition.

According to few Indian Foreign Policy experts, the Act East Policy has been driven in part by India's strategy of external balancing against China, but has also been motivated by India's desire for a greater global role and its rise as a trading nation by using its Soft Power. India has started to pursue this policy of internal and external balancing in the

'East' as an attempt to protect its core interests which clash with China's ambition. Being a gateway to the Southeast Asia, the Northeastern region of India, which shares a disputed border with China, also assumes significance in this Policy. With this background, this paper will assess and critically explore "the China factor" in the successful implementation of the "Act East Policy," the challenges ahead and its implications on India's Northeast.

***Key Words :** South-East Asia, ASEAN, Act East Policy, China, Northeast India.*

Introduction

In the backdrop of economic liberalization and the changes brought about by globalization, India decided to renew its foreign policy initiative by connecting with the vibrant economies of the Southeast Asian region. The sudden end of the Cold War and significant political and economic developments at the various parts of the world during early 1990's, brought radical changes in the international environment, which resulted in the emergence of a new economic international order and opened up enormous opportunities. These changes also created opportunities for an increasing integration of economies and societies and unlocked new opportunities and challenges to both developed and developing countries. Responding to these changes brought by the Globalisation, India embraced economic liberalization and renewed its foreign relations. With the new changes brought by the economic liberalization coupled with India's fast economic growth, convinced the Indian leadership to connect the South East Asian nations.

If we look back at our past, India always maintained important economic as well as cultural ties with the countries of the Southeast Asian region. There are numerous examples of India's influence on religion, art, culture, language and civilization of the Southeast Asian region. There was a flourishing trade between

India and the various countries of Southeast Asia. So the decision to reconnect with the Southeast Asian region, an immensely resourceful and flourishing region, was conscious and calculative as the time was appropriate.

In order to maintain a warm and friendly relations with the countries of the Southeast Asian region, the Look East Policy was launched in 1991 during the tenure of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, although the term 'Look East Policy' was mentioned for the first time in the Annual Report (1995-1996) of the Ministry of External Affairs in 1996, Government of India. Under this policy, India decided to build stronger economic, political and strategic ties with the countries of Southeast Asian region. It marked a strategic shift in India's foreign policy as the Southeast Asian region become more prominent compared to other regions. The policy started with the goal to enhance economic ties with ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian nations) countries and eventually making strategic, political, and institutional linkages.

The Look East Policy:

India – ASEAN relations achieved a new dynamism as India became sectoral dialogue partner with ASEAN in 1992 and full dialogue partner in 1995. The Look-East Policy portrayed a strategic shift in India's vision of the world and India's position in the rapidly developing global economy. India also popularized the concept of "extended neighbourhood" as coined by former Prime Minister. K. Gujaral. In its second phase, the "Look East Policy" became more comprehensive and inclusive which embraced Northeast Asia, apart from Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan and South Korea.

In the first phase of the policy, the Indian Government specifically put emphasis on political, diplomatic and people's to people ties, improved connectivity and enhanced trade with the ASEAN countries. On the other hand, the second phase of the policy put more emphasis on strengthening of economic relations, defence and security ties with the countries of Southeast Asian region, Japan,

South Korea, and China. The "Look East Policy" took a turn towards strategic relations in the second phase of its development. India also begun to establish arrangements for regular access to ports in Southeast Asia and defence contacts have widened to include Japan, South Korea and China. India also expanded air and land links to East and Southeast Asia, which created physical connectivity with the region and closer political ties.

Over the two decades of its development, India developed strategic partnership not only with the ASEAN countries but also with the other important countries of Pacific - Australia, Japan and South Korea. The phase of "Enhanced Look East Policy" that started after 2012, India focused on regional integration, connectivity, trade liberalization, economic development and growth of states of Northeast India. The policy also gave attention to developing geographical proximity of regions, sub-regional cooperation and stress on free trade agreements.

However, despite so much attention given to the Southeast Asian region, the "Look East Policy" resulted in mixed outcomes. On positive side, since the launch of the policy, India developed comprehensive ties with ASEAN and strong strategic relations with the member states. In the economic front, the Look East Policy offered enormous opportunities to develop business and economic relations between India and ASEAN members, which lay down numerous institutional mechanisms to improve business and trade. But many important areas were ignored, perhaps due to the half-hearted commitment of the policy makers. Northeast region of India – the gateway to the Southeast Asia, could not much explore the opportunities made by the policy. Indian business circle remained hesitant to explore more economic opportunities available in the Southeast Asia region due to the internal challenges faced by the ASEAN. Another important reason for its mixed results of the policy was the dominance of China-born communities in many Southeast Asian countries, which encouraged these nations to engage more actively with China (Rao, 2012, p. 92). The Indian interests were sidelined due to the dominance of China and the China-born communities in the region.

From "Look East" to "Act East:"

The "Look Policy" received a new zest and refreshing outlook under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi, who came to power in May 2014. The policy was renamed as "Act East" that signified a more pro-active and action packed policy towards the region. New emphasis was given on improving security, connectivity and regional integration with not only Southeast Asian nation but also the Asia- Pacific region. The new administration under PM Modi gave priority to the Act East Policy as India was able to sense the change in the position of world economic power from the 'west' to the 'east' as complemented by the evolving geo-politics and trends in the Asia- Pacific region. The main aims of the upgraded "Act East Policy" is to revive political ties, forge regional security cooperation and develop economic linkages by increasing integration with Southeast Asia (Kalita, 2018, p. 268).On 8th September 2014, India and the 10-member countries of ASEAN signed the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in services and investments. In order to make the policy more action-oriented, India established a separate Mission to ASEAN and the East Asia Summit in April 2015 with a dedicated ambassador to manage relations at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta.

By 2015, according to few international foreign policy experts, India's image as an important player at global affairs has improved. PM's Modi's administration also decided to be more active in reaching out to new countries and new continents for India's extended foreign policy. So, it was decided to pursue a greater role in East and Southeast Asia in line with its growing economic and strategic interests. The upgraded "Act East" policy focused on three pillars of regional integration – culture, commerce and connectivity. The Indian policy makers have identified "connectivity" as the most crucial pillar essential for the implementation of the policy in the Northeastern region of India. Special focus was given on to connectivity through transport, technology and cultural ties.

In 2017, India and ASEAN celebrated the 25 years of relations, fifteen years of summit-level relations and five years of strategic partnership between

India and ASEAN. Leaders of all ten ASEAN member states graced the celebration of India's republic day parade on 26th January 2018 as chief guests and reaffirmed the strong strategic bonding of India and ASEAN relationship. It proved more active and action oriented approach for the Act East Policy by India.

The China Factor:

Although India's relations with ASEAN and few countries of Asia- Pacific Region have improved with the launch of "Act East Policy," there is no smooth sailing with regard to China. The rise of aggressive China has always been a cause of concern for the Indian policy makers. China's expansive economy has drawn India's South Asian neighbours and ASEAN countries into its economic orbit. In addition, China's trade with Myanmar has increased tremendously than with India since 2015. In last few years, China also increased its political and military influences in Myanmar. All these developments made India nervous.

An in-depth analysis of the "Act East" reveals the dual goals of the policy: to increase India's position as a regional power by initiating increased cooperation in the region and act as a counterbalance to the increasing strategic influence of China.

In the recent years, there has been a renewed emphasis on Asia-Pacific region in India's foreign policy. The Asia- Pacific region is today viewed as one of the most prominent region due to its fastest economic growth and to its unparalleled dynamism in political, security, economic and demographic terms. India realized that engaging with our Asian neighbourhood through ASEAN can bridge the gap and improve connectivity to a wider Asia- Pacific Region (Kalita, 2018, p. 269). Therefore, the new revived "Act East Policy" decided to strengthen its engagement in the Asia- Pacific region. India intensified its engagement with the countries of the Asia- Pacific through number of means ranging from high-level visits to joint military exercises.

India intends to play a greater strategic role in the Indo- Pacific and does not satisfied of being identified as a mere regional power in South Asia. We can

witness a changing strategic equation in the Asia- Pacific region due to the rising China. According to few foreign policy experts, India's increased engagement with the Asia – Pacific region is driven by the impact of China's rise on both its bilateral relationship and the emergence of the broader evolving security dynamics of the Indo- Pacific.

Another important reason for India to pursue a more active Asia- Pacific policy is its perception about China's rise and growing assertiveness. The border dispute, especially incidents of transgression, remains a key irritant in India-China relations. Some other issues including China-Pakistan axis, Tibet issue, and trade imbalances, have also fueled the mistrust between the two Asian giants. The episode of Doklam Standoff[1] coupled with China's presence in the region has given rise to the perception of "strategic encirclement" within the Indian strategic community. India's strategy on building economic and security relations with key partners in East and Southeast Asia could be seen to be part of an external balancing strategy in response to these concerns. However, India's strategic engagement with its Asia-Pacific partners reflects both its competition with China, and its ambitions for a greater global role.

Assessment of China Factor:

With a GDP over $13.47 trillion, China is the world's second largest economy along with imports and exports of $4.16 trillion. China is virtually dominating the Southeast Asian region. China has already created biggest free trade area in the region removing all tariffs barriers. India and China have long standing border dispute as the border is not clearly demarcated. There is no mutually agreed Line of Control. So border remains one of the important irritant in India and China relations.

China has also made its presence felt at Indian Ocean. In recent years, China's presence in the Indian Ocean has increased significantly, made easier by its relationships with Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and others. China has a

legitimate interest in protecting its trading and energy lifelines as 70 % of its oil supply and almost 80 % of its total trade being shipped through the Indian Ocean region (Rajendram, 2014).China's expanding presence in the Indian Ocean and assertiveness in maritime territorial disputes in East Asia has reinforced India's desire to enhance its engagement with its Asia-Pacific partners.

South China Sea: Beijing's territorial claims in the oil and gas-rich areas of South China Sea, a crucial international maritime trade route, have generated considerable tension in the Southeast Asian region. India has publically expressed its worries about China's activities in the South China Sea.

India's response to the South China issue in the past few years has been at the center of its transformation from a Look East to an Act East policy. India had seen South China Sea as its areas of maritime interest.

The dispute between India and China over the South China Sea has been building for almost seven years. In October 2011, India signed an agreement with Vietnam to expand and promote oil exploration in the South China Sea. China got furious and issued a demarche to India in November 2011, underlining that Beijing's permission should be sought for exploration in Blocks 127 and 128 (Rajendram, 2014). China already requested "outside the region" to stay away from the area. Without China's permission, exploration activities in the two blocks by India's state-owned oil company ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) would be considered illegal. However, ignoring China's warning, India accepted Vietnam's invitation to explore South China Sea. Although, India clarified that the exploration projects in the region were completely commercial, China claimed that India's activities in the region violates its sovereignty.

Geographically, India is not a South China Sea littoral state. However, Indian policy makers put forward sound reasons for it to expand its presence in the waters. First, Indian interests are linked to freedom of navigation. More than 40 percent of India's trade travels through South China Sea. So, India desires uninterrupted passage of ships for trade in the region. The route is also beneficial

for economic developments as India cannot afford to ignore developments in the Asia- Pacific region. Secure sea lanes in the South China Sea are crucial as it is the gateway to the Pacific. India's increasing forays into the South China made it an influential player in the Asia-Pacific. The focus on the South China Sea has been critical to be a regional security provider in the Indo-Pacific region.

As for the South China Sea disputes, New Delhi demands restraint from all parties to the disputes in the South China Sea. It also requests all parties to abide by the Declaration on the Conduct on South China Sea and the guidelines on the implementation, and to conclude the Code of Conduct to keep peace and stability in the region. More importantly, India hopes China not to move unilaterally in ways that are provocative.

China Dream and Belt and Road Initiative: Chinese Strategy to Counter Act East Policy?

After coming to power in 2012, Chinese President Xi Jinping made a significant shift within Chinese politics under an ambitious and catchy label: the China Dream. The ambitious "China Dream" is achieving the Chinese nation's bright future, equivalent to the greatest dream of Chinese nation since early modern times. In addition, China's twin initiatives, the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, are covered by the conceptual umbrella of the "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This ambitious project of China has geo-political as well as geo-economic implications for India and the world. The BRI is not only about putting in place physical infrastructure, its objectives include: enhancing policy coordination across the Asian continent; trade liberalization; financial integration; connectivity including people to people links.

The China Dream, a political slogan and a long-term pledge at the core of the political initiative of Xi Jinping, promises the modernization of China by the middle of the 21st century and is aimed at giving back the prominent international

role that China lost after the First Opium War (Fasulo, 2016, p. 14). Presented as Chinese renaissance or rejuvenation, the vision of the China Dream was to turn the China in the world back to central stage both at the regional and world level. The China Dream is achieving the Chinese nation's bright prospects, which is the greatest dream of Chinese nation since early modern times. The spread of the China Dream is closely linked to the development of the soft power (Su at al, 2017). At 12th Collective learning of CPC politburo, President Xi Jinping pointed out that improving the soft power of China is of great significance to achieving the Chinese nation's bright prospects and the "two hundred-year" plans (Fasulo, 2016, p. 16).

There are both economic and political aspects of the China Dream. The long-term perspectives were planned to allow Xi Jinping to resist sudden economic setbacks with the promise of future national prosperity. Once achieved, this goal would make China great again, ending a two century journey that took the Middle Kingdom from prosperity and honour to a semi-colonial condition and poverty and back (Fasulo, 2016, p. 18). In addition, in line with Chinese tradition and with more recent Communist slogans as well, the China Dream aims also at reaching an intermediate stage called xiaokang shehui (moderately well-off society). This intermediate stage, to be achieved by the end of the decade, poses a narrow limit that will constrain Xi Jinping's political agenda over the next five years through five years plan.

China's vigorous economic growth fuelled its strategic aspirations to replace the United States as the foremost world power in the 21st Century. With all these changes, the China Dream is also intended as a way to reshape the global balance of power, advancing a counterweight to the international liberal order. Promoting the New Development Bank (BRICS Bank) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) are both elements of this strategy. Most importantly, the China Dream laid the ground work for the for the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, which aims at connecting existing and old global routes to and from various Chinese provinces.

The primary aim of the "BRI" is to increase China's influence in the region in addition to revive its currently slowing economy. Most importantly, BRI plans to connect China with Europe and Africa by a network of road, rail and sea. The BRI is the centerpiece of President Xi's foreign policy as well as the domestic economic agenda. Domestically, the project seeks to improve internal economic integration and spur a more regionally balanced growth. On the foreign policy front, it intends to find an outlet or new markets for China's excess production capacity and ease the entry of Chinese goods into regional markets. Both the initiatives expected to feature prominently in China's 13th Five Year Plan, which is running from 2016 to 2020 and guide national investment strategy.

There is no doubt that "BRI" is a China's new approach to influence the global economy and it has geopolitical implications. The project also aims to promote greater financial integration and use of the Renminbi by foreign countries. The long term goal of the project is to emergence of China as a prosperous and stable world power and a significant counterweight to the US-led Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), from which China is currently excluded (Hilman, 2015). The project is really ambitious because the initiative concerns 65 countries and 4.4 billion people. Truly global in scope, the project aims to promote the three important regions -Middle East and North Africa, Europe and East Asia.

Similarly, the Maritime Silk Road is a network of planned ports and other coastal infrastructure projects spread from South and South-east Asia to East Africa and the northern Mediterranean. China has an extensive maritime connection with the Pacific Ocean and related seas. Beijing asserted its need to boost ties with port cities in Asia through the MSR that starts in the Fujian Province and links all the littoral countries of the region. On 3 October 2013, President Xi Jinping, during his speech at the Indonesian Parliament, proposed this initiative. It is a complementary initiative that seeks to foster cooperation in South-east Asia, Oceania and North Africa through the South China Sea, the South Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)—which naturally translates to closer proximity

to India. In addition, China's initiative for the MSR is aimed at port development in South-east Asia, around the Indian Ocean and in the eastern Mediterranean region. China has established a $40 billion fund for the same covering port and related infrastructure.

Beijing is also investing a lot on its neighbourhood policy with a heightened focus on improving diplomacy with neighbouring countries and to create cross-border links by enmeshing a network of infrastructure from Europe to South-east Asia. It aims to bring back the economic prosperity of the ancient Silk Route. On 24–25 October 2013, at a work-forum on 'periphery diplomacy' held by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Beijing, Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed the need that China is committed to forging amicable and mutually beneficial relations with its neighbours, such that they will benefit from Chinese development and China will benefit from a prosperous neighbourhood. In this way, he conceptually linked the notion of the 'China dream' to regional development and the World. These statements by the Chinese President Xi Jinping marked the official birth of China's 'Silk Road strategy'. China is also showing continuous interest in its southern neighbourhood, especially the Association of South-east Asian Nations region. On the tenth anniversary of the ASEAN-China strategic partnership, emphasis was placed on joint infrastructure projects, the enhancement of security cooperation and the idea of the MSR through strengthened 'maritime economy, environment, technical and scientific cooperation'. In addition to this, closer people to people ties with neighbouring states will allow China to control potential threats that may come from the region.

The Silk Route Economic Belt boasts a 3-billion population and a market that is unparalleled both in scale and potential, said President Xi, urging relevant parties to facilitate trade and investment and remove barriers (Tatar, 2013). President Xi had also emphasized that the goal of the Silk Road economic initiative is to revive ancient ties of friendship in the contemporary globalized world. The Belt include regional loops and branches which extend the reach of the emerging

transportation networks but also serve to tie the Road to the Belt at critical points. Hence the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is significant precisely because the port of Gwadar is one of the points where the Road and the Belt intersect.

The rise of China's economy is unprecedented and BRI is one of the extraordinary economic cum political strategies to keep the economy vibrant. As the world's largest trading nation, China is responsible for approximately 10 percent of the global trade in goods. Most of these goods are transported by ship and consequently China is a major destination and starting point of international shipping routes. Seven out of the ten busiest container ports in the world are located in China, with the port of Shanghai being the world's largest. There is no doubt that Chinese ambitions in the international maritime domain go beyond shipping. Increasingly, Chinese firms are active in the construction and management of ports throughout the world. China's initiative for the MSR is aimed at port development in South-east Asia, around the Indian Ocean and in the eastern Mediterranean region.

The BRI initiative will eventually connect ASEAN, South Asia, West Asia, North Africa, Europe and other major economic market chains. This is to work out the strategy of expansion facing the South China Sea, Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean in cooperation with the economic belt as well as to develop a long-term goal of integrating economy and trade into Asia, Europe and Africa. BRI can be seen as a political initiative to push China to the next level of growth. It can also emerge as a big step in uniting Asia, enhancing trade, inducing growth, employment and development in the region.

Challenges:

However, implementing this ambitious project is likely to pose serious risks and challenges for China and its neighbours. There are also direct implications of the project on security. Another risk is that many countries are concerned about the geopolitical impact of the project. According to Beijing, the entire project has

important foreign policy implications for a number of key regional players including Japan, India and Russia. At a time when China's assertive stance in the South and East China Seas is provoking anxiety among its neighbours, including Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines and Singapore, the Silk Route initiative has aroused significant geopolitical apprehension.

The increasing presence, role and interest of China in the waters of Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia is becoming a source of discomfort for, respectively, the United States, India and Russia, which have long dominated these regions. Although China and India shared ancient trade links dating back to 2000 years, India still needs to decide whether it wants to join President Xi Jinping's initiative.

ASEAN and China are seeking to double their trade value, setting a target of $1 trillion by the end of 2020. The BRI initiative will play a key role in this goal; further bringing together two of the world's most dynamic economic regions by strengthening economic linkages among the 10 members of Asean, as well as between Asean member countries and China.

For the second time India has turned down the official invite from China to attend the BRI forum scheduled to take place in April 2019. China's BRI undermines India's sovereignty in the form of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which passes through the disputed Gilgit- Balistan region.

So, India is still not clear whether BRI could be beneficial for India to join the initiative. However, there is the fear that BRI is not just about China expanding its horizon, spreading prosperity along the way, but a larger design India needs to worry about. Currently, India has neither the resources nor the political and economic weight to put in place competitive and alternative connectivity networks on a global scale. India is waiting for more details to unfold about the grand Chinese strategy. As the project already involve a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as well as the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor, security concerns related to Pakistan is worrying India. The New Delhi is worried that the project could be

used for military mobilisation in region. In addition, Chinese investment in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan for the construction of roads and ports in these countries neighbouring India has been considered as China's encirclement policy. Further, there are concerns in India about being part of a "hegemonic project" that would ensure China-led development in the Indian Ocean region (Shreya, 2015).

India's Act East Policy has the potential to counter to China's own ambitious BRI in ASEAN region. India's road transport minister already announced that India has proposed a $1 billion line of credit to promote land, sea and air connectivity projects with the ASEAN bloc. Some projects, like the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway, are already in progress. It will take far more than a $1 billion credit line for India to fully counter China's influence in Southeast Asia. But with ties between Japan and India growing, the ASEAN-India summit might be a sign that an anti-China bloc in Southeast Asia is emerging.

Concerns over growing Chinese influence are driving India, Japan, the United States and Australia to revive their quadrilateral dialogue, which had been in a limbo for a decade. For India, this calculation is also based on self-interest and India's ambition. It includes a strategy of imposing secondary costs on China on the maritime front in tandem with the United States in response to China's foray into South Asia, a development India perceives as alarming. As India seeks to expand its economic presence in Southeast Asia and beyond, the difficulties of securing greater market access and the slow pace of its infrastructure development will limit its push for greater trade relations as it addresses regional and internal security challenges in South Asia. However, the rise of China will push India into asserting its own naval presence in the region alongside the United States.

Implications Northeast India:

The strategic and geographical location of "Northeast" region of India makes it one of the most important focus areas of Act East Policy. There is no doubt that that without significantly developing all the states in the Northeast,

achieving the vision of the Act East policy from all dimensions remains to be a biggest challenge. Situated between China, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar and with an international border stretching up to 4, 500 km, Northeast India could act a bridge between India and Southeast Asia by the criterion of Geography. In the new phase of the Policy the region is identified as the 'strategic catalyst' or 'game changer' in accomplishing the vision of PM Modi's administration.

India has recognised the strategic significance of its northeast with regard to its "Look East/Act policy. Myanmar alone regarded as the prime gateway for the North East to South East Asia share a 1643 kms of land boundary with the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland. Pranab Mukherjee (2007), India's former External President, at a seminar on Look East Policy held in Shillong on 6th June 2007 considered that North East India is poised to benefit from India's growing relations with South East Asia as the process of globalization through "cross border market" access that can uplift people from poverty, economic backwardness and bring in prosperity and inculcate entrepreneurial freedoms and skills.

Northeastern Region provides a unique platform in terms of growth opportunities it offers by inter-locking the region with the neighbouring countries in the South and South East Asia. The Northeast region has a rich source of energy, oil, natural gas, coal, and limestone and other minerals and a perennial water system in the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries, the region has all the potential and capabilities to develop into India's economic powerhouse. It is also rich in horticultural products, plantation crops, vegetables, spices, rare herbs, and medicinal plants. In addition, the highly diverse region offers unlimited tourism opportunities, rare flora and fauna, natural scenic beauty, unique performing arts, and varied cuisine and handicrafts. On 2nd July, 2008, the Prime Minister Modi released the *North Eastern Region Vision 2020*, a document which identifies various challenges as well as the strategies required to bring about peace and prosperity in the North Eastern Region by 2020(Sanghamitra, 2018, p. 269).

In early 2018, the Modi government has also tried to reach out to its immediate neighborhood through its "Neighborhood First" policy. In the light of these developments, the launch of a direct flight route between Guwahati, in the Indian state of Assam, and Singapore by the Bhutanese Airline, Druk Air, marks a big step forward in Northeast India's growing connectivity with ASEAN countries. This push toward increasing connectivity with northeast India is also in keeping with India's "Act East" policy.

The Act East policy is expected to usher in a new era of development for the Northeast through a network of pipelines, road, rail and air connectivity, communication and trade. There is vast scope for cooperation between India and East and Southeast Asia, and India's northeast can benefit enormously from formalized regional and sub-regional institutional arrangements if infrastructure of the region is improved and its resources geared up to meet the demands of the globalized world (Haokip, 2015, p. 199) .

However, for any meaningful activity to take place in the region, several challenges need to be overcome due to which the region has been embroiled in difficult circumstances for the past several decades. Starting from various forms of insurgent activities to the problems of illegal migration and drug trafficking, which are all transnational in nature, the Indian Government needs to forge cooperation with the neighbouring countries. There is a need to implement the policy very smartly as the cooperation with the neighbouring countries should not be limited to tackling the insurgency problems only, which would instead alienate various ethnic groups of the region further. Positive relations between transborder communities can be facilitated through certain mechanisms which would ensure the participation of these communities in border trade and inter-country trade-in which the border region should not act merely as a transit corridor but as a source of local manufacture and enhancing people-to-people ties.

In addition, the Northeast region could benefit immensely from water sharing. The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation and Kunming Initiative have been

undertaken by India and China respectively to reach out to ASEAN. The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation was launched by India on November 10, 2000, at Vientiane, Laos, to boost cooperation in tourism, culture and education. The signatories were India, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. These countries agreed to undertake joint transportation projects, including the trans-Asian highway. This initiative is India's most significant venture in the region. The best part about the Mekong initiative is that it has the potential for direct flights between Guwahati-Ho Chi Minh City-Imphal-Hanoi.

"The China Factor" poses challenge even implementing various projects in the Northeast region of India. China recently stated that it is opposed to any foreign investments including that from Japan in the 'disputed areas' in India's North East region and is against any third party's involvement in resolving its border disputes with India. Japanese President Shinzo Abe expressed interest to invest in the Northeast region during his visit to India.

Another area of concern is Arunachal Pradesh. In early 2019, customs officials in China have destroyed 30,000 world maps printed in the country for not mentioning Arunachal Pradesh and Taiwan as part of its territory, according to a media report. China claims that the north-eastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh as part of South Tibet. The country also routinely objects to Indian leaders visiting Arunachal Pradesh to highlight its stand. China's strategy in Arunachal Pradesh has also been accompanied by road building activities and other infrastructure projects.

According to some media sources, China has been supporting rebel outfits in the Northeast region. While India is yet to fully realise the potentials of the region through the creation of infrastructure and jobs, China has for decades aided insurgency in the region, through support to rebel groups as well as the supply of arms and ammunition. A report published in the *Hindustan Times* in 2015 stated that Chinese intelligence played "an active role" in assisting nine northeast Indian insurgent groups to form a united front. The illicit flow of Chinese arms to India,

including to Maoists, was confirmed by Home Secretary G.K. Pillai in 2010 (Sriparna, 2018).

With increasing economic might in China, realization of China Dream and implementation of BRI, we can witness a more aggressive expansionist military policy, wherein examples range from the South China Sea to Northeast India. In last few years, China kept the Northeastern border in a state of an active and prolonged dispute over tactics ranging from training to rebel outfits to arms supply. Due to strategic and geopolitical reasons, the dispute in the eastern sector now has become a "core national interest" of China (Sriparna, 2018).

What are the options?

Role of Japan: Connectivity is one of the biggest concerns in the Northeast India. Here the potential of Japan, another Asian giant, could be realized. The current Indian administration has set an ambitious budget at $2777 million aiming to build better road connectivity for about 1,200 km in the region and transforming it into a manufacturing hub. The funding of the project is set to be done by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), a Japanese state-owned development agency, via Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan to India. The National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) is the local Indian partner delegated with the responsibility of working with JICA in the region. Two main road projects include: a. the widening and improvement of Aizawl-Tuipang NH54 route (380 Kilometers) in Mizoram that will connect India to Myanmar; b. the same for the Tura-Dalu section (48 Kilometers) of NH-51 in Meghalaya.

Better connectivity within and between India's northeastern states is crucial to ensure border security and maintaining peace and stability, especially given how the region has suffered from chronic insurgency for decades. In addition, it is essential for economic development as better connectivity via improved road and rail links will give a boost to indigenous production as it will help produce from the

northeastern states find ready markets in the country itself; and, it will also provide for access to compete for imports. It will also increase access to the larger Indian and export markets.

Japan could play an active role in investing in socio-economic development projects in Northeast India. Japan has promised to invest $35 billion in India over the next five years. JICA has undertaken similar projects in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Ghana, Morocco and Tanzania. Building roads, railways, seaports and airports helps create quicker routes for trade and transport of raw materials to the resource-poor Japan. We must acknowledge that the Northeast connectivity project will give the region as well as India's 'Act East Policy' a major boost.

Secondly, for the success of the Act East Policy, greater participation of the local people in trade, production, particularly raising agricultural productivity and distribution activities should be given importance. Trade alone is not sufficient to transform the region and put it on a sustained development path. Growth in trading activities will only benefit those people who possibly are from outside the region and who are economically more powerful and able to exploit the resources of the region.

For a greater success, better cooperation with China would be a part of India's Act East policy too. Good relations and smooth cooperation between India and China are even more relevant.

Conclusion:

The dynamics of India-ASEAN relations are enormously complex. India does not enjoy robust relations with all ASEAN countries alike. Its priorities are guided by the country's strategic interests, bilateral understandings and idiosyncrasies. As a result, India's success in interacting with the ASEAN region is mixed.

There is no doubt India is weaker in comparison to a China that offers a wide range of economic incentives and cheap goods – but often dubious – loans to ASEAN countries. Despite completing two decades of Look/ Act East Policy, several obstacles stand between India and its goals, including protectionist barriers in Southeast Asian states to trade in the services sector, domestic fiscal constraints

impeding progress on infrastructure projects and the limited size of the Indian trade sector. There is an urgent need that India along with active cooperation of the ASEAN members must create economic inroads improving connectivity and infrastructure.

In the context of Act East Policy, we could witness that India's policy trajectory toward China is changing. India, it seems, has started to pursue a policy of internal and external balancing in the 'East' in an attempt to protect its core interests which clash with China. The Act East policy, thus, appears to be India's use of soft power in pursuit of more strategic goals to be achieved in ASEAN region. Act East Policy could be seen as an attempt to balance the power in the Asia- Pacific region.

China's aggressive rise concerns many states in Asia- Pacific region. In fact, few ASEAN countries may prefer India playing a more counter-balancing role in the Southeast Asian region. The states in China's neighbourhood can be said to be seeking to expand their strategic space by reaching out to other regional and global powers. In this case, smaller states in the region, such as Vietnam and the Philippines, look to India to act as a vital actor to counter increasing Chinese hegemony. Thus, the Act East policy can also be considered as a way of soft balancing the power in the east. To engage Southeast Asian countries through soft power, the northeast region of India has a bigger role to play for its grand accomplishment.

Endnote :

[1] The China India border standoff or Doklam standoff refers to the military border standoff between the Indian Armed Forces and the People's Liberation Army of China in 2017 over Chinese construction of a road in Doklam near a trijunction border area, known as Donglang.

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STATUS OF PESTICIDES PRODUCTION, CONSUMPTION AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES IN INDIA

Akriti Ashesh
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Abstract

Pesticideproduction and consumption have boosted the Indian agricultural sector. Pesticide consumption has been reflected in aggravated food production (from 252.02 million tonnes in 2015 to 296.65 million tonnes in 2020). The increase in application with lack of knowledge, training, and attitude towards protection of the environment, and one'sself leads to decline in the number of farmers working on the agricultural fields.Farmer'scluelessness about the harmful impacts of pesticides had led to their slow death. The governmental policies such as The Insecticide Act, 1968, The Insecticides Rules, 1971; and The Pesticides Management Bill, 2020 are there to support pesticide management and enhance the current situation but the bridge between farmer's and governmental policies are standing on weak pillars. There is a need to enhance the strength of these pillars and make the policy effectively reach the unskilled laborers and agricultural workers. This paper presents the impact of pesticides on farmer's lifestyles and policies of a government that would help to improve the situation.

Keywords: Pesticide, Farmer's suicide, Governmental Policy.

Introduction

A country grows or declines continuously in terms of population, technology, economy, management, and food requirements. These changes are not static and highly dependent upon human behavior. According to the 2011 census report, India's population is 1,210,854,977 (One billion twenty-one crores eight lakhs fifty-four thousand and nine hundred seventy-seven). A huge section of this number resides in rural areas (Census of India, 2011). All the economical and technological growth will be of no use if it cannot provide for its citizens. India ranked 101 in Global Hunger Index 2020 out of 116 countries. In such cases, the most valuable sector, i.e., agriculture and farmers,experience a lot of pressure to increase the production capacity. The agricultural sector has certainly enhanced the economical status of India amongst the world's other countries and is perceived to do so in the future also, stated in the report of the Economic Survey of India (Indian Agricultural and Allied Industries Report, 2021). Over the past few years, the production of food grains has been increasing invariably. Even in the situation of a pandemic, agriculture is the only sector that grew in India. The key factor that governs agricultural production is farmers who are most underrated character in this country. The next generation of farmers are not ready to walk in their parent's footstep, neither their parents want them to do so because in the house of a farmer monthly expenditure is more than revenue (The India Forum, 2019). Thus, the agriculture sector hits the skid. Not only income, but technical know-how is also a major problem because of which present farmers are dying and agriculture sector is moving towards the bottom. Lack of technical know-how induces incorrect application of pesticide (Stallons, 2006), pesticide exposure (London et al. 2005; Parron et al. 1996; Freire & Koifman, 2013)), improper crop management, indebtedness, and crash crops (Merriott, 2016). In the majority of cases, oral consumption of pesticides (Raddi & Anikethana, 2014), lack of governmental policies for regulation of pesticides, and negligence of existing legislature, and policies also draw our attention towards the deteriorated lifestyle of farmers (Ojo, 2016). This article aims to analyze the impact of pesticides application in farmer's life and to explore the related governmentpolicies that could improve the existing situation.

Pesticides, their production and consumption

Pesticides are applied on crops for their protection from crop-destroying pests, weeds, fungus, rodents, insects, etc. (Yadav &Dutta, 2019). These pesticides are classified into various types depending upon the target organismssuch as insecticides (Gupta, et al. 2019), fungicides (Gupta, 2018), herbicides (Powels& Yu, 2010), and rodenticides (Murphy, 2018; Jacob & Buckle, 2018), etc. Amongst these, insecticides account for the largest consumption (51%) followed by fungicides and bactericides (33%). Herbicides account for only 16% of consumption (Nayak & Solanki, 2021). Pesticide consumption in India is reported to be 0.6 kg/hawhich is much lower when compared with the world's average consumption that is 3kg/ha (According to chemical nature, pesticides are classified into organochlorines, organophosphates, carbamates, pyrethroids, phenylamides, etc. (Jayaraj, et al. 2016). Among the Indian states, Andhra Pradesh ranked 1 in pesticide consumption with the consumption amount of 6500 tonnes (Devi, et al. 2017).Pesticides, fertilizers, and other agrochemicals have played crucial roles in increasing the crop yield of major food that is consumed on daily basis. However, the effects soon became detrimental.Pesticides production in India has been given in figure 1.Yadav and Dutta (2019) reported that out of 275 registered pesticides in India, 255 are poisonous and more than 115 are extremely hazardous.
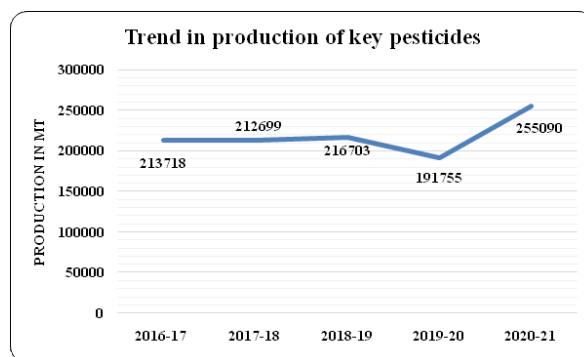

Figure 1. Production of key pesticides for the financial year 2016-17 to 2020-21 (Source. http://ppqs.gov.in/statistical-database)

Bonvoisin et al. (2020) described that until 2019, India registered 318 pesticides out of which 204 pesticides are reported under various hazardous categories of WHO. Nayak and Solanki (2021) reported that 293 pesticides are registered in India. 104 pesticides which are banned in other countries are still being used or produced in India. Fungicides account for more than 80 % of oncogenic risk (Gupta, 2018).

Impacts of pesticide application on farmers

Agricultural farmers could expose to pesticides via dermal contact, oral ingestion, and nasal inhalation and can further lead to both acute and chronic effects. Most of the time, insecticides are acutely toxic whereas herbicides show chronic effects. Exposure to pesticides can cause psychiatric disorders such as depression and anxiety which can be linked to suicidal actions (Freire & Koifman, 2013). The constituents of pesticides have the capability to disrupt the reproductive system of target organisms (Ojo, 2016). They have the tendency to inhibit acetylcholinesterase (Figure.2) and disrupt the endocrine system. The target pests have now developed resistance to these pesticides. As a result of which, agricultural workers are forced to use them in more quantity which affects the health of farmers and their pockets. One of the most important factors that playa key role in exposure to pesticides is personal protective equipment (PPE). Governmental policies made it mandatory for farmers to wear PPE kits such as masks, gloves, and overcoats while working with pesticides. However, farmers working intropical conditions where the temperature in the summer rises over 50?C find it difficult to wear such kits.
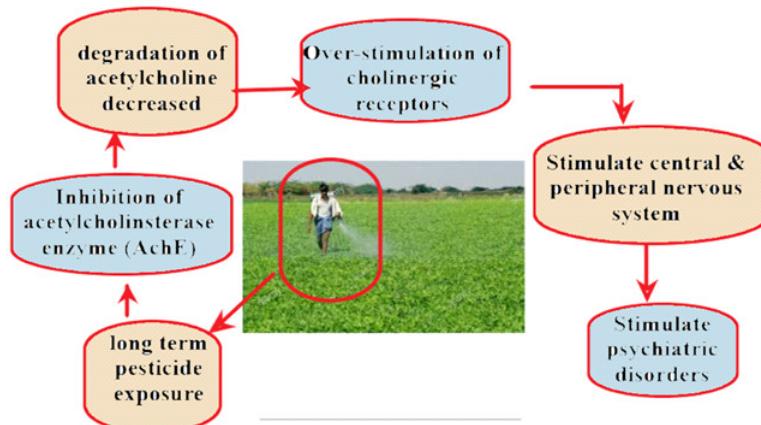
Figure 2. Schematic representation of how pesticides induce emotional disorders in agricultural workers.

Direct and Indirect Impacts

The pesticides affect the livelihood of agricultural workers in two ways-directly and indirectly. Direct effects are health impacts that are caused because of direct exposure to pesticides. Indirect effects are more complex to understand. It becomes so deadly, that farmers are forced to give their lives in frustration and disappointment. High-interest loan that supports pesticide application and crop management which further destroy a farmer's house. Ojo (2016) mentioned some unnecessary applications of pesticides, for instance, dumping of used pesticides in rivers, spraying of banned pesticides, and blending two different classes of pesticides (insecticides and fungicides). These applications lead to environmental and health impacts. Paucity in storage and inaccurate protective measures also lead to health and environmental hazards (Sucheta & Dutta, 2019). Disposal of used pesticide containers is another major problem that needs the attention of policymakers.

Pesticide and farmer's suicide

Pesticides are also consumed intentionally as a most effective way for conducting suicide which is common among farmers. In India, equivalent to 16000

farmers are reported to die each year due to suicide (Merriott, 2017) (figure. 3). Availability of such dangerous compounds in the local market should attract the attention of leaders and policymakers. 90.3% of pesticides suicides were reported from Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and West Bengal (Bonvoisin, et al. 2020). Most of these states are agrarian states. Pesticide poisoning is most prevalent in agricultural laborers and unskilled workers particularly in male age group of 21-30 years (Raddi & Anikethana, 2014).
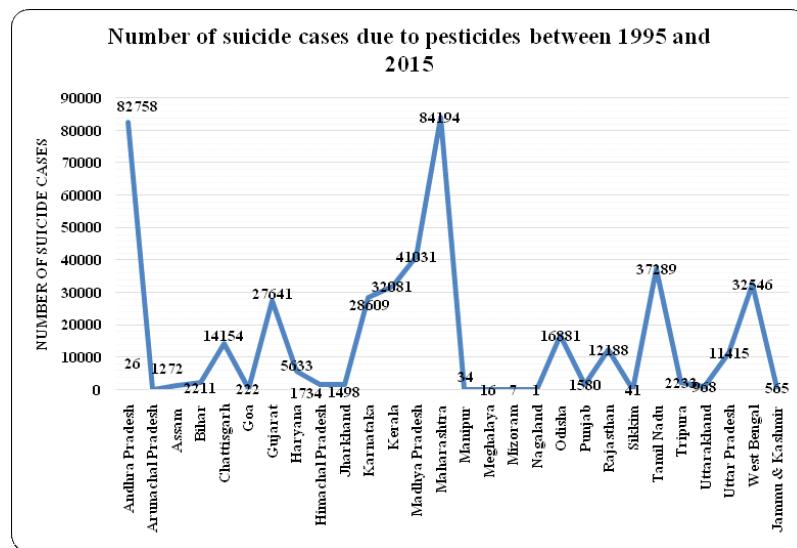
Figure 3. Distribution of suicide cases in different states between 1995 to 2015. (Source. Bonvoisin, et al. 2020).

Governmental Policies

The government of India has promulgated several policies for the safe handling of pesticides in agricultural and other sectors. All the policies that the government formed are included in the Insecticides Act, 1968; the Insecticides Rules, 1971, and The Pesticide Management Bill, 2020. These rules and acts are briefly mentioned below.

The Insecticides Act, 1968

The Insecticides Act, 1968 came into force on 1st March 1971. This act is promulgated to regulate the import, manufacture, sale, transport, distribution, and use of insecticides. This rule also envisaged preventing human beings and animals from safe handling of pesticides. Central Insecticides Board was constituted under this act whose main function is to make the central and state government aware of the risks associated with pesticides. CIB also has to protect the vulnerable population affected by pesticide use. A Registration Committee was formulated under this act whose role is to scrutinize the insecticides and register them accordingly (The Insecticide Act, 1968).

The Insecticides Rules, 1971

The insecticide rules, 1971 came into force on 30th October 1971. This rule envisages the various functions of the board, registration committee, and laboratory. It established some major rules under this section, for instance,therule for mixing coloring matter with insecticides, precautions against pesticide poisoning, determining efficiency and toxic levels of insecticides, segregation of expired and non-expired pesticides, manufacture of pesticides, and license duration, etc. It also contains rules for insecticides analysts and insecticide inspectors. The rule of 1971 has provisions for protective equipment, clothing, and other facilities for manufacturers. Rules for disposal of used packages, surplus materials, and washings of insecticides were also mentioned in this document (The Insecticide Rules, 1971).

The Pesticide Management Bill, 2020

This bill was made to regulate, manufacture, transport, storage, use, and disposal of pesticides for their safe and effective management and protection of the environment and human beings. The Pesticides Management Act, 2020 was formulated under this bill. This act constituted the Central Pesticides Board whose function is same as the Central Insecticides Board. The Registration Committee was constituted for registration of pesticides. A Central Pesticides Laboratory

was established under this act for analytical monitoring of pesticides (The Pesticide Management Bill, 2020).

Concluding Remarks

The detrimental impact of pesticides in the human being is not at all surprising as their prime nature is to kill unwanted living organisms. It affects mostly those who directly apply them to crops. The consumption of these pesticides is still increasing. However, the production trend is stable in the past few years. The policies pertaining to xenobiotic compounds can be considered rather slack and bent more towards the profit of manufacturers than the health of receivers. The present situation is evolving and trying to improve the slack in existing policies in terms of scientific legislation. Maharashtra state reported the highest number of farmers' suicide due to pesticides; therefore, our prime need is to start speculating the condition from the peak location. After Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh is worst affected. While boosting the policies, one needs to understand that both the sides of see-saw need to exert equal effort in terms to reach a balanced point. Thence, people working in the agricultural fields ought to improve their behavior towards managing pesticides and sustaining the economy. As a researcher, our work should be to make aware them of every possible situation that could lead to adverse impacts and to make their work easier than by finding possible ways to treat their problems.

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INDIA-MYANMAR STRATEGIC CO-OPERATION THROUGH NORTH EAST: BILATERALISM TO SUB-REGIONALISM

Ankita Bharadwaj

Abstract

North East India shares a long land border with its neighbour Myanmar. Due to its locational advantage, North East region has been of very strategic importance to strengthening of bilateral ties and extending its ties with the South East Asian countries. But so far, the journey from Look East Policy to Act East Policy has mostly been on bilateral talks and a bilateral approach. People-to-people ties have no doubt been on a theoretical level understood, but without a sub-regional approach it is less likely to be achieved. This article will try to give some sub-regional perspectives to various sectors that can be focused for strengthening the relations between the two nations. The article is written using various secondary references and ideas which the author had in mind after various field visits to many places along the India-Myanmar border.

Introduction:

India needs to re-think about the thrust of her relationship with her immediate neighbour Myanmar, in the aftermath of Covid pandemic as well as the

recent coup that took place in Myanmar. In fact, the recent developments also present an apt context to re-visit the earlier forms of cross-border co-operation engagements and its nature. The regional trade figures and economic co-operation among the Southeast Asian countries still remains very low despite of several arrangements like South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic C-operation (BIMSTEC), Mekong Ganga Cooperation etc. Several analysts have pointed out that one reason of the low turnovers may be that most of these initiatives have adopted a bilateral/ multilateral approach, wherein the perspective from the bordering regions has largely been ignored. Now, India's federal structure provides very much space to the states to engage themselves in various cross border co-operation activities. This is very much a boost for regional engagement for a geographically huge and culturally diverse country like India. Also sub-regional level of engagement would help in faster and efficient co-operation process between the countries of South Asia. Thus, this paper through its various examples and arguments, would try to identify and promote various potential co-operation areas across bordering regions of India and Myanmar, which can be further examined in order to enhance regional co-operation.

Although there are several examples of various initiatives and projections about the various means and ways about sub-regional initiatives for trade in South Asia, but none in particular has received enriching research contribution. It is a well known fact India, especially North East share a very unique relationship with its South East Asian counterparts, especially with Myanmar. North East India is one such region that shares its cultural legacy and historical ties on various levels with Myanmar, which cannot be seen overlapping with the rest of India. Given its age old history and cultural linkages and shared ethnicity, this region characterises a familiar landscape throughout. Also due to geographical and cultural advantages, the border between these two countries have remained porous which can be utilised for a more strong economic partnership between the two.

However the most important to any bilateral or sub-regional arrangement between the two countries are the tribal communities and people residing along the border and the bordering region, who are the actual stakeholders and are very fundamental to any smooth functioning of any interactions between the two countries. Talked about the unique relation between the two countries, it is rather wise to look for a sub-regional approach of co-operation, which not only will give India a chance to strengthen its relation with Myanmar but also give a boost to the Act East Policy and its objective to strengthen India's relations with South East Asian countries.

Prospects for sub-regionalism:

Northeast India shares a large part of its border (1643 kms) with Myanmar, spreading over four north eastern states–Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. This geographical proximity provides opportunity for the economically isolated North East states of India to link to economic opportunities and markets in the east, building on their strong historical socio-cultural and economic linkages with Myanmar. Cross border trade, in such a situation seems a good opportunity given the strategic importance and also to explore the untapped potential which is yet to be harnessed in this region. As per the ministry of Commerce, Government of India, border trade is different from trade through air, land or sea ports. Border trade is 'over land trade' by way of 'exchange of commodities' from a bilaterally agreed list by people living along both sides of the international border (De,C., & Khan, 2010). For permitting locally produced commodities, to be traded as per prevailing customary practices on both sides of the India-Myanmar border, an agreement on border trade between both the countries was signed on 21st January, 2021 and was operationalised on 12th April, 2021.

Accordingly, two Land Custom Stations were notified for this purpose-Moreh (Manipur) in India and Tamu in Myanmar; and Zokhawthar (Mizoram) and Rhi in Myanmar. As of today, the Nampong Land Custom Station, Pangsau Pass (Arunachal Pradesh) is being notified by the customs but is not functional. In

2008, the Indo-Myanmar Joint Trade Committee agreed to set up another LCS in Avankhu (Nagaland) corresponding to Somara in Myanmar has been bilaterally agreed but hasn't been notified yet. Though there are two functional transit points, but owing to the long delay in the implementation of transport connectivity projects and pre-requisite infrastructure, border trade primarily took place only across Moreh-Tamu route. There was a substantial increase in border trade from 2012-13 till 2014-15, when it rose from 12.96 US$ million to 24.3 US$ million. This was majorly due to expansion of trade items that could be traded. But the next couple of years showed decline in the trend- 2015-16 (20.6 US$), 2016-17 (17.83 US$), 2017-18(0.02 US$) (Taneja, Naing, Joshi, Singh, Bimal, Garg, Roy & Sharma, 2019). Many scholars have pointed out various factors for this decline. Such as-high transaction costs, poor connectivity, lack of quality infrastructure at border crossing points, limited financing instruments and rampant extortion of informal/ side payments, etc. (Taneja & Wadhwa, 2018)

Though at bilateral level many initiatives have been taken and high level talks guarantee the success of Act East policy, but given the present scenario, sub regional approach for economic interactions seems a necessity. India's aim of having border engagement by including institutional and capacity building, people to people ties can be successful with a more sub-regional approach. On August 8th, 2018 India and Myanmar officially opened land route in a historic ceremony at the bridge over Mrinal River (Lokchao) near Moreh which allows people living on both sides of the border to pass 16 kms on each side. This opening was meant to enhance border activities, tourism, cultural exchange and people-to-people social-economic interactions. Just after 11 days of this opening, R K Shivachandra, convenor of Act East Policy Committee, Government of Manipur in association with Indo-Myanmar Fraternal Alliance invited delegates from Myanmar for the Citizens Dialogue on the prospects of Manipur and Sagaing region. In it discussions took place about the more cooperation in the fields of educations, trade, commerce, industry, investment and research works (Times of India, 2018). The two regions in both the countries tries to find out ways and means for development by

collaborations and help each other hand in hand in all sectors of human development, skilling, information and knowledge sharing. Sagaing is very rich in mineral resources and agricultural produces while Manipur need such primary products for its industries. Also Manipur can be of help in sharing education and health facilities given the underdevelopment of Sagaing region. Also it was suggested that a Sagaing-Manipur Development Committee should be formed to ease the problems and help the two neighbours grow (ibid).

'Informalisation' of economic transactions across the open border between India and Myanmar is another important aspect that has attracted attention to the scholars. The formalisation of trade was done in 2015, by removing the system of barter trade which adversely affected border trade, especially due to increased documentation and custom duties on imports from Myanmar. Studies by Taneja and Wadhwa (2018) and Naing and Nyein (2018) have identified several barriers to trade faced by exporters and importers in both countries. The Land Custom Station at Moreh and Zokhawthar didn't have basic facilities such as warehousing, cold storage for perishables, laboratories for testing etc; due to which many exporters and importers have taken alternate routes for the trade in small quantities, thus making the formal trade negligible. Here, only if the local populations would have given more channelized instructions and infrastructural facilities, it would have been that both the regions along the border would have benefitted. Also one can suggest that the cross border mechanism which has got enormous potential for sub-regional level co-operation must be expanded to setting up more transit points which provide similar environment and potential. Looking at the positive impact of border 'haats' between India and Bangladesh in enhancing sub-regional cooperation; similar establishment of border 'haats' to enhance more people-to-people ties and livelihoods of tribal communities and other marginalised populations along the border should be facilitated.

Religious Tourism:

This is another area of cooperation which deserves a sub-regional perspective. It has a wide and larger goal of developing a regional network on the tourism economy. The role of religious centres for both Indians and Myanmarese, especially Buddhists have been responsible for re-thinking the whole untapped tourism potential of North Eastern and to further develop the social and cultural bonds between the people of both the countries.

The Golden pagoda or 'Kongmu-Kham' as known in Tai Khamti language was built in the year 2010 with the vision and sole initiative of Deputy Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Chowna Mein to promote spiritual tourism. As per the official reports in 2019 there was an annual turnover of more than one lakh tourists in the year 2017-2018, including both domestic and international tourists in Golden pagoda (Arunachal24, 2019). The international tourists mostly comprises of Thailand and Myanmar, which is mainly due to shared cultural and religious similarities amongst the people of this region.

Another tourist attraction of cultural significance is Rih Dil Lake in Myanmar. The lake is very sacred for Chins and Mizos, as written by Mizo historian B Lalthangliana in the book History and Culture of Mizo. The lake is associated with death and afterlife. In the pre-Christian Mizo belief system, the soul departed from its body and headed straight to Rih Dil, where it wandered with other souls for a few lonely days before returning to the deceased's village and home. There, relatives would keep a place at the table for the wandering spirit and offer it a plate of food every time they sat for dinner. After three months of this vagabond afterlife, the soul would once again depart for Rih Dil and from there wander towards a mythical mountain called Hring Lang Tlang. After reaching the peak, the soul would pluck a mythical flower, Hawilo Par and would long for past no more. It would then drink the pure and clear waters of a nearby spring; called Lungloh Tui or the water of forgetfulness and the water would quench it of all

desire to gaze back. Only then would the soul proceed towards the land of the dead (Halliday, 2014).

The region not only has potential of religious tourism due to its shared beliefs and culture, but also eco-tourism, wildlife tourism, adventure tourism, heritage tourism, agriculture tourism, leisure tourism, international border tourism etc. Also given the porous and accessibility to international boundaries, tourism has so much potential to bring development to the region (WTTC, 2014). The North Eastern states should have a common platform regarding the ease of connectivity for tourists in this whole region. Cuisines, handlooms and indigenous crafts are other sectors which needs a sub-regional effort to be included in the shared bilateral agenda between India and Myanmar.

Though the Indian government and the concerned state government of North East India has begun to consider the various dimension of tourism, a concrete initiative in this direction is yet to take off. The North Eastern region receives a fewer tourists than many other parts of India. One major reason of this is because of the 'Protected Areas' regime that covers the entire states of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland; while the state of Sikkim is partially in protect area and partly in Restricted Area. Lack of connectivity and infrastructure and tedious process of obtaining permits leads to less tourists in the region. Promotion of tourist circuits at the regional level entails on improvement in visa procedures and relaxations. It has been found that improvement in visa procedures leads to significant increase in tourist inflows. (WTTC, 2004) In August 2018, a weeklong ceremony was held in Moreh-Tamu border where a large number of people including delegates assembled on Myanmar and Indian side of the Bridge of friendship. It was declared by the Chief Minister of Manipur Biren Singh that the opening of land route was historic. Indian citizens can now travel to Myanmar by road on production of passport and visa. In addition to this, R K Shivachandra Singha, the convenor of Act East Policy Committee, Government of Manipur said that the government would soon open a special visa counter in Imphal, so that

people would not have to travel to Kolkata/New Delhi for the visa (Thomas, 2020). Another area, where sub-regional initiative is most required is in health sector. Improved land and sir connectivity would attract patients from Myanmar to speciality hospitals in Mizoram, Manipur and Assam (The Hindu, 2011).

According to Khriezo Yhome, a senior research fellow in Observer Research Foundation, it is important that both the centre and the state ensure early completion of projects. The idea of co-operation between India and Myanmar should begin at the borders is not new. However, the renewed focus towards translating the ideas into reality in recent years needs to be sustained with periodic assessments of cross border projects. And this requires the cooperation of people at all levels- across borders, at state level, inter-state level, state and centre as well as bilateral level between India and Myanmar. India-Myanmar relations of late have been facing challenges due to the coup and pandemic. Though India was seen helping Myanmar with all necessary healthcare equipments, but on economic partnership, the relations must develop with a more regional co-operative framework. After the coup, it was also seen that in spite of sealing the border of the North Eastern states to 'check illegal influx from Myanmar to India', Mizoram in particular has been seen to accept a lot of people fleeing the violence as their brothers. With the rise of Chinese hegemony, India should take the locational advantage of North East and the shift from bilateralism to sub-regionalism.

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THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC STATE AND POLICE IN INDIA

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Abstract

The Indian Police in its contemporary form is a product of the Indian Police Act of 1861 and this is based on a ruler supportive type of policing which treats people as subjects and not citizens who possess rights. As such the Indian police has traditionally been opposed to any kind of citizen participation or community consultation in their mode of functioning. The 1861 Police Act has managed to formalize the concept of a ruler-supportive force by clothing the act in a formal and legal framework, laying the governance structure for Indian police post-independence.

The biggest lacunae in the policing practice in India lacking the fundamentals of democratic order is because of the Police Act V of 1861 which is still applicable and the organizational structural, culture, ethos and even most of the rules and regulations continue unchanged. The analysis of the police in India during the colonial period and post-colonial period till now will shows the adverse impact of inheriting a colonial-repressive character of a system of administration that seems to haunt the police services till date.

Key words: *Police Act of 1861, Democratic Policing, Liberal Democratic State, Police in India, Post-colonial policing.*

Introduction

The problem with the Indian police is that it continues to be a prisoner of mid-nineteenth century enactments, colonial concepts, antiquated legal systems and mind-sets. It remains totally subservient to the state, which, in our version of democracy, actually implies virtual subordination to the ruling party. The Indian police Act of 1861and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872, both still in force in their original form in independent India continue their colonial legacy to post-colonial times by colonial construct and use of police as just a coercive arm of the state and is not very different in terms of their implication of power relations and the misuse of violence on the people.

Despite independence and the establishment of a democratic government the Indians still choose to continue with British made machinery without fundamental changes. The police and the justice system remains fundamentally the same as designed in 1861. In this context this research paper seeks to highlight the continuities of the practice of policing since the colonial period. The paper addresses the questions such as how do the police practices of the State affects the nature of the democratic processes? The contradictory and paradoxical nature of the police in democratic societies, especially in India is that it has evolved since the colonial period into a liberal democratic state. The paper explains the Police Act of 1861 and why it came into being. The research paper seeks to explore the changes in the policing practice since the colonial times in India and the impact of these policing practices in the democratic nature of society in the modern times.

The paper places the police Act of 1861 in the context of the concept of democratic policing. The paper describes the police in India during the colonial period and the post-colonial period. Given that the police play a crucial in sustaining a democratic character of state and society, the paper discusses the evolution of the two distinct types of policing practices and the continuation of adopting a particular style of policing practice from colonial to post-colonial period. The paper also discusses the compulsions –political and administrative that led to continuing the Police Act of 1861 in practice. The paper also highlights the impediments in implementing democratic policing in India.

Police in India during the Colonial period

The role and functioning of the police in the Indian subcontinent remained rigidly static and ruler-supportive since the colonial period. "The British colonial power inherited an oppressive, venal and feudalistic but ruler supportive police from their imperial predecessors and tried laboriously to preserve its traditional anti-citizen character". (Dhillon, 2005, p. 32)

The British were faced with this formidable challenge of administering this vast country with its diverse population. The British Indian government finally reorganized the sub continental police to provide for a uniform system through British India under a new legislation- the Indian Police Act 1861. The British efforts to streamline the police administration led to the Police Act V of 1861. This Act still regulates the Indian police of the twenty-first century. The character of the Police Act of 1861 was guided by the economic, political and administrative compulsions during the colonial period. The Indian police system designed in 1860s stood in sharp contrast to the British Bobby (the police system in Britain) which was celebrated as the greatest symbol of democratic policing throughout the world.

The motivation and primary justification for the colonial police in India was the need for trade and keeping India as the immediate profitable colony for British imperial interests. The reason for having a ruler-appointed type of police system in India introduced by the British, the "emphasis was on order maintenance on keeping trade routes safe so that exploitation of the resources could continue unhindered" (Verma, 2014, p. 4). Arnold (1986) argues that colonial police system needed to establish a relationship of control, coercion and surveillance over a subject population and has developed necessary structural and organizational features useful to a regime of surplus extraction. A bureaucratic ideology was developed to justify the imperial civilizing mission (Subramanian, 2008, p. 59).

The colonial administrative machinery was constructed by the British rulers in a very planned and meticulous manner. The legal backbone of the system was the Police Act of 1861. The organisational structure and hierarchy of the police force has been stipulated by the Police Act of 1861. This meant that the police will

be organized at level of the states or provinces. According to the framework of the colonial administration the primary function of police was that of order maintenance, crime control and surveillance, and that there was no necessity for the involvement of the community in policing in any way. Any event or incident considered a prelude to political resistance or any form of political resistance itself was considered to be a serious crime and offence against the state prioritized in the IPC.

Verma argues,

> …the arrangement on the basis of provinces also had the advantage of an economy of scale, pooling of resources, and ability for the police force to move from one part of the state to another, to meet any emergent situation challenging the authority of the government. This multiplied the capacity of police especially in an age when there were no means of long distance communication for the ordinary people. But above all it offered the administration a geographical unit which provided a high degree of efficiency for surveillance and control and an ideal framework for a panopticon society. It assisted the rulers in the important function of monitoring the colonized people and reacting swiftly in the event of dissent and opposition (Verma, 2014, p. 5).

The police system designed by the British served their imperial interests and helped them to maintain their Raj for almost ninety years. Inspite of economic exploitation, stagnation and widespread famine and brutal subjugation of the people, the efforts of the Indians to challenge the colonial rule could not challenge the British hegemony over India. . It was not until Mahatma Gandhi devised a unique form of resistance to the British structure that the British began to feel threatened by the Indian resistance. Gandhi introduced the principles of Ahimsa, Satyagraha and Swadeshi to develop an unusual form of resistance to challenge the colonial power in India. This was also done through his writing such as the Hind Swaraj where he reinforced the indigenous culture and spiritual values of the Indian civilization. He inculcated pride in the indigenous knowledge and culture through the use of simple 'charkha' used to weave cloth that became a formidable

instrument of resistance. Gandhi's methods did make the British political system in India impotent through his non-cooperation, non-violence and renunciation. Nevertheless, the British did create a system that allowed them to govern India combining consent and immense power of coercion and control, which enabled them to rule till 1947.

Continuation of the Police Organization from Colonial to Post-Colonial Period- 1947

The question that needs more reflection and deliberation in this context is that what were the administrative or other compulsions during that period that made an independent Indian government continue with the old repressive system of colonial administration. It has been rightly pointed out by Arvind Verma that "in view of the close collaboration of the administrative organizations and governmental machinery with the British, and the obvious repressive character of the police department in particular, the decision of the new political order to continue with the services of the old structure was most unfortunate". (Verma, 2014, p. 7)

The character of the post-colonial India was similar if not the same as the police in India during the colonial period. Post-colonial Indian police was reorganized in the aftermath of the 1857 revolt, in the Irish Constabulary model. This model comprised of a centralized paramilitary organization, headed by an Inspector General, who was directly subordinate to the Chief- Secretary. The Irish police structure was adopted as it was considered ideal for a restless and violent country in the hands of the colonial power. The most crucial feature of this centralized organization was the availability of an armed force under civilian direction (Subramanian, 2008). Therefore the twin principles of police organization pioneered by Charles Napier in the 1840s in the Sind Province were: the Constabulary must be separated from the military; and while assisting the Collectors in maintaining law and order, the Constabulary must be under its own officers. The details of the police organization were: the Constabulary must be separated from the military; and while assisting the Collectors in maintaining law and order, the Constabulary must be under its own officers. The details of police organization post independence was described between 1858 and 1920s through the route of route of two police

commissions (1860s and 1902), a series of enactment such as the various provisional police acts in addition to the Central Code of Civil Procedure 1859, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860, the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), 1861, and the Police Act of 1861- all of which are still in force (Subramanian, 2008, p. 58-61).

The organizational principle which emerged and which remains in force was that the majority of the Constabulary is unarmed with an armed section maintained in reserve in each district. The trend towards centralization of intelligence was strengthened during the closing years of the colonial rule. The key role of the Central government in policing, the centralization of intelligence and the role of Central police organizations (CPOs) in law and order management have all persisted since the colonial times (Subramanian, 2008, p.61).

The State's reliance on the police was raised to a level of unprecedented importance under the colonial rule. Police coercion has become an important part of the state's police by the mid 1930s. The distinctive characteristic of the post-colonial Indian police is the belief in the value of periodic exhibition of force; the interplay of police and military responsibilities, the equation of force with authority and opposition with crime; the absence of public accountability, the reliance on supervisory and classificatory systems of manipulation and control. The increasing number of CPOs (Central Police Organizations) and the expansion of the political intelligence network were the only changes post 1947 (Arnold, 1986).

The idea of public service as a notion, of being answerable to the people was enshrined in the Constitution. However, tragically to a large extent this idea remained largely notional and the colonial beliefs in the suppressive capacity of the police did not lessen with independence.

The transfer of power in August 1947 resulted in changes that were significant both internally in terms of the take-over by Indian officers of the last British preserves, and externally the redirection of police activity in certain fields. However, the changes did not alter the intrinsic character of the police. The basic structure of the police remained unaltered; the gap between the rank and file and the departmental elite has not been reduced since 1947. The pay and conditions of

the constables remain as wretched as it was in the colonial past. The police unionization is discouraged and authority of the Indian Police Service relative to Indian Administrative Service (as heir to the old ICS) has continued to grow. The police reputation over the years has also been tainted with growing brutality, corruption and politicization.

The continuance and intensification of colonial policies in respect to the Indian police even after independence was adopted from the nature and functions of the colonial police. This has been pointed by a study by David H. Bayley:

> …Independence brought revolutionary changes in the political structure of government, it brought none of any consequence to the structure of police administration. The three structural characteristics distinguishing the contemporary police system- control by state governments, horizontal stratification, and functional specialization between armed and unarmed police- had been developed before independence. Independence required of the police only that they accommodate themselves to a new political context; it affected the manner in which they were held accountable and not the way they were organized to accomplish police purpose…What is particularly striking about contemporary police structure is its permanence. Its fundamental principles of organization have remained fixed for over a century. This suggests two questions; is the system still capable of coping effectively with the basic tasks of police responsibility, and is the system as compatible with a democratic political state as it was with a colonial one (Bayley, 1969, p. 51).

This has been Bayley's lucid analysis of the problems relating to Indian police. Nevertheless, there are certain structural features that militate against the citizen centric premise of policing especially in the Indian context. The 'colonial-repressive' character emerged when the decolonized society decided to retain the colonial system of inherited police organization (Subramanian, 2008, p. 59).

The political reasons for the origin of the Indian police are of great importance. During the colonial period, crime and politics were inseparable and

defiance to state authority was considered to a serious crime and a prelude to rebellion. In fact, political resistance would also be considered a crime or likely occasion for crime. It is in this context that the development of the Police Act of 1861 came into being.

Indian Police Act, 1861

The events of 1857 that originated the grossly mal-administered Bengal presidency made the British powers anxious to take radical steps to re-organize and modernize the entire administrative set-up in the country. The military commission and police commission were soon set up for the purpose. The new legislation in the form of new enactment was to re-organize and unify the various existing arrangements into one uniform system throughout British India.

This Act provided the creation of provincial police forces as separate government departments under inspectors general at the provincial level and district superintendents at the district level. There was a uniform unilateral arrangement when the inspector-general was to function under the superintendence of the provincial government; the district superintendent was required to work under the authority of the district magistrate.

The Police Act of 1861 as laid out in the Preamble was 'to reorganize the police and to make it more efficient instrument for the prevention and detection of crime'. The hidden agenda is what becomes the raison deter, for the police to protect and defend the ruler against all threats to their power and authority. The 1861 Police Act goes to great lengths to remove any doubt as to where the real allegiance of law-enforcement agencies lies not to the community but to the state.

The Act, in fact, scrupulously avoids any reference to the people and does so only in situations when their liability is to be questioned or held under suspicion by the police. Dhillon (2005) argues that the new police was in fact meant to be a steadfast ally and a dependable too to strengthen the pre-existing oppressive structure with bonds of slavery.

If we make an analysis of any independent and democratic nations which design the functional configuration of their bureaucracies to fit into popular agendas and the demands of their people. The needs and aspirations of the people that they

can claim as citizens would be fundamentally different in nature from those of colonial regimes. A democracy would never tolerate an oppressive, unresponsive and unaccountable police while the colonial regimes would go to any length to keep the police servile and subservient to their interests and hostile to the community. Tragically despite a country wide debate on the consequent need for reform in accordance with the recommendations of the National Police Commission (1977-81), no worthwhile change has occurred in the structure, organization and legal status of the Indian police. The continuation of the British rule as the only substantive back up for the police which remains virtually unaltered in the Indian Police Act of 1861.

Dhillon has affirmed that-

> …The dominant character of the organization, created under the Act, is of a socially-alienated, semi-military outfit, composed almost exclusively of a semi-literate, boorish, corrupt, ill-paid, ill-reputed and highly-paid elite command structure, itself subordinate to a civilian district magistrate at the district level and to a non-professional secretary at the state level (Dhillon, 2005, p. 45).

The 1861 has been an amalgam of both pre-colonial and colonial aspects of law enforcement, and also an embodiment of a manipulative use of law and state-power. It has been a combination of historical features and contemporary demands of post-colonialism that created a police which was intended to survive not only the constitutional changes of 1947 and 1950 but also all the subsequent formal and informal changes occurring in Indian society and polity for the next half a century. Post-colonial governance was no different from the colonial one in character but only in design. Although the compulsions of the post-colonial time were democratic the concepts followed a strict colonial lineage.

Politics and Internal Security issues Post-Independence

The distinction between colonial and post-colonial police organization needs to be understood in its political context. The Congress party has been one of the main victims of police coercion and surveillance since 1885 and this was replaced

by the Communists later in Independent India (Arnold, 1988). The Congress had fashioned its agitational strategy and identity partly in response to police brutality and its public unaccountability during the nationalist struggle in the colonial period. Both the Congress party and the Indian police had developed an increasingly all India outlook and organizational form as the nationalist movement advanced. The most important point was the mutual interest in the protection of property and the prevention of violent and revolutionary changes which has been used to explain the relatively untroubled transition from colonial police to post-colonial police in India (Subramanian, 2008, p.63).

The Congress gained ascendancy over the police department by Constitutional rather than revolutionary means. But the Congress failed to develop an alternative structure of its own which could have been formulated as the base for a new police structure in independent India. Finally the political and administrative compulsions towards the end of the British Raj saw the escalation of industrial insurrection. The integration of the Indian states needed an army to defend the frontiers especially secure the integration of Kashmir and Hyderabad which accentuated the need to rely on the police administrative compulsions in the subsequent period preventing any attempts at reform (Subramanian, 2008, p. 63).

It was argued by the then Home Minister of the new Indian government, Vallabhbhai Patel who played an important role in continuing with the British bureaucracy that the system would serve the interest of the new government as effectively as it did for the British government. Moreover, the administrative compulsions of the period prevented the Congress to make any attempts at reforming the police structure.

Verma argues:

> …Considering the bitter and protracted struggle against the British rule in which the police system was used ruthlessly, it seems naturally disturbing to see free India still choosing to continue this British made machinery without fundamental changes. The political class soon found the police to be useful instrument of power and not surprisingly, there has hardly occurred any significant change in police methods and attitudes in the organization inherited from the British (Arvind ,2014, p. 8).

Arnold (1986) argues that the Congress party and the Indian police developed an increasingly all India outlook and organizational form as the nationalist movement advanced. In the administrative and political arenas they both became agencies of external intervention in their localities. Both also had shared mutual interest in prevention of violent and revolutionary change. The most significant development was that the Congress had gained control over the police departments by constitutional means and not revolutionary means under which they adopted and endorsed the police system in India.

Verma (2014) alludes that the government of India after independence, has been facing the challenge of developing the country and uplifting the millions of impoverished people from penury. The task of building a new modern India within the democratic framework was a challenging task. The rising expectations and internal strife emanating from regional, ethnic and religious differences have resulted in a crisis of governance. The problems of continuing corruption, nepotism, bureaucratic red-tapeism and volatile politics of the country have deeply affected the ability of the police to function properly. These challenges have also led to the Indian government to direct the police towards a coercive nature of force rather than consent or service of the people. The role of police in modern India has become more of order maintenance rather than one of crime control and service functions. The police have been confined to maintaining law and order as their primary function rather than ensuring justice by prevention and detection of crime and service provision. The problem begins with any changes in the police strengthening it to be a strong arm of the government. The history of police in modern India is concentrated on combating serious disorder problems, terrorism and internal security issues.

The problems such as the alleged threat by the communist parties to overthrow the democratic government post-independence through a violent revolution was countered by the enactment of preventive detention law. The violent upsurge insurrections by the Maoist parties beginning from Naxalbari in 1967 and subsequently the various factions of Naxalites such as the People's War Group (PWG) in Andhra Pradesh, the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in Jharkhand

and Chhattisgarh are posing considerable challenge to the police. These factions are well armed and have attacked the police. The ethnic assertions and insurrection by Nagas and the Assamese group called ULFA also posed a serious threat to internal sovereignty. Coupled by these threats was the introduction of terrorism in Punjab by Khalistan groups, and in Jammu and Kashmir by Islamic insurgents supported by Pakistan which was one of the most serious challenges for the Indian police. These problems made the police in India adopt more coercive methods to garner state legitimacy.

The evolution of the two distinct police types describes the functioning of the police in India to understand the colonial repressive, ruler supportive character of the Indian police and the emergence of this type of policing practice.

Evolution of Police into Two Distinct Types

Dhillon (2005) elucidates the two distinct streams of evolution of early police systems. The distinction was in some societies, the responsibility for safeguarding the tribal norms and customs were assigned by a chief to a group of men who were accountable to them. While in the other case such tasks of safeguarding tribal norms were assumed by the community as a whole and entrusted to a few capable men who were replaced by the others in the community as well. Norm enforcement was the collective tribal or community function and a few members would perform such duties usually in exchange for remuneration. The two distinct types of police evolved from these models while one was a ruler appointed or gendarmerie and state-supportive police systems while the other type would evolve into a citizen friendly and popular agency of several Western democracies.

While some societies who were freedom loving, choose to be policed by an agency accountable to the community and largely free of state control. The authoritarian and feudalistic societies were more inclined with a ruler-supportive variety that would keep the people under strict state control (Reith, 1952).

The two types of police system were later known as Anglo-Saxon police system and the ruler appointed gendarmerie, generally associated with despotic

and totalitarian state systems. The Anglo-Saxon policing style is a force exercised indirectly by the people from below upwards and the other kind of ruler appointed gendarmerie signifies force exercised by authority from above downwards.

The two streams of police systems have periodically borrowed components from one another in their earlier stages of evolution during the period of the city-states. Both have yet managed to retain their respective conceptual and organizational characters.

The gendarmerie police system was vastly strengthened and later became over-centralized, almost tyrannical with the rise of fascism, communism and other forms of totalitarianism. Many post-colonial regimes are traditionally dependent on the police and the paramilitary forces choose the ruler appointed police system for their survival in power.

A number of authors have explored the history and role of the Indian Police (Verma, 2005; Arnold, 1986, Baxi, 1982, Bayley, 1969; Griffiths, 1971, Gupta, 1974, 1979). Bayley's study was one of the earliest after Independence. He took a sympathetic stance towards the problems of the inherited colonial structure in facing the law and order challenges of a post-colonial, democratic society. His comparative typology of police forces (Bayley, 1982) consisting of 'authoritarian' 'oriental' and 'Anglo-Saxon' structures was faulted for underplaying the impact of the State on policing and on the various styles of policing in maintaining public order. The responses of States to disorder were broadly seen as three: criminalization, accommodation and suppression. It was stated that frequently States deployed all three styles in varying combinations in different situations so that it is impossible to characterize the relationship between policing and the State in a one-dimensional way. The way, that both liberal and authoritarian States use the strategy of suppression is that policing in all countries is politically partisan to an extent, and that portraying the police in liberal States as neutral arbiters in public order situations could be misleading.

State and the Police in India

In India we have various kinds of assumptions about what the state is and what kind of power it should and does exercise. Those assumptions are products

of India's political and social history. They intersect with institutions that 'act out' state power in practice, from law courts to laboratories, land registries to railways, schools or police stations, from surveys to boundary markings. Each of these was initiated and governed by a different set of processes.

The modern Indian state was the product of a freedom struggle. It adopted a written, liberal democratic Constitution but retained the colonial administrative, police and judicial structures without recasting them to meet the changed situation. The process was characterized as a 'passive revolution' (Chatterjee, 1999; Kaviraj, 1998). According to Baxi (1982), the 'colonial-repressive' character of the Indian police is quite distinct from the 'ruler supportive' character of police organizations everywhere.

The biggest lacunae in the policing practice in India lacking the fundamentals of democratic order is because of the Police Act V of 1861 which is still applicable and the organizational structural, culture, ethos and even most of the rules and regulations continue unchanged. The analysis of the police in India during the colonial period and post colonial period till now will shows the adverse impact of inheriting a colonial-repressive character of a system of administration that seems to haunt the police services till date.

The police in India are not insulated from government control and its coercive power can be manipulated adversely. Verma (2005) also reports an extremely high volume of judicial backlog in India, massive delays and periods of pre-trial detention that can last ten to fifteen years. Poverty and illiteracy in that country have created enormous systemic barriers to judicial relief for injustice.

The greatest challenge to realizing democratic methods in police functioning is its corrupt, partisan and heavy handed character. The police are typically subject to the control or patronage of individual politicians rather than to institutionalized forms of accountability. Verma (2005) explains police officers in India cannot be posted in their "home district" and must be transferred every three years to another post. This policy is a vestige of colonial efforts to keep tight controls over the loyalties of native personnel. This practice also prevents police officers from developing local links and effectively creates a situation where an officer has no

staske in the local community. It has also provided politicians with opportunities to interfere in police operations through threats of transfer to undesirable locations or promises of attractive postings. In India, due to massive social cleavages police power is sometimes usurped by local political bosses and vey direct political control has also enabled politicians in India to use the police for political intelligence gathering and to harass political opponents through arrests, threats and intimidation.

Concept of Democratic Policing

In democratic societies, the role of the police is strange, contradictory and paradoxical. The police are regarded to be the state's monopoly on the use of force, deploying physical violence to enforce laws, maintain public order and advance government policy. The inherent contradiction lies in the dramatic nature of this power while at the core, democracies are not societies based upon coercive imposition or the use of force but on the freely given consent of the governed.

The democratic dilemma of policing is that if a police force is too strong and effective in its functioning, it could easily stifle the robust civil society as well as the personal privacy that is central to a democracy. On the other hand, a police force that is too weak or ineffective would leave the people feeling threatened or vulnerable to crimes and ills of social disorder that it could impede democracy (Fichtelberg, 2013).

The role of the police is riddled with controversy and contradiction in advanced industrialized democratic states. The inherent tension is already present as the coercive capabilities of the police are the state's power to compel through force and its representative, consensual and liberal character, which is present in all democracies.

Goldstein argues that:

> ….the police, by the very nature of their function, are an anomaly in a free society… The specific form of their authority- to arrest, to search, to detain, and to use force- is awesome in the degree to which it can be disruptive of freedom, invasion of privacy, and sudden and direct in its impact upon the individual. And this awesome authority, of necessity, is delegated to individuals at the lowest level of the bureaucracy, to be exercised, in most instances, without prior review and control (Goldstein, 1977, p.1).

Gearty (2007) argues that the authority of the police to protect the freedom of the citizens contains the very potential for the abuse of such power. The proper role of police in a democracy is complicated by several other aspects of the police organization. Such aspects are prevalent "even in the most developed countries, the police are on the whole hierarchically organized, secretive in their de corps, jealous of external interference, and on many occasions contemptuous of legal and procedural constrains on the gathering of criminal evidence and treatment of suspects and criminals (Skolnick and Bayley, 1988, p. 49-51).

The role of the police in any democracy is bound to be contentious and imperfectly aligned with the broader procedures, practices and objectives of a democratic polity. The evolution of the two types of police shows how not all police are an anti-thesis to democratic form of government. Police historically have also evolved from a different nature of society and police as institution and the manner in which they function is highly contingent upon the nature of the State and society from which they evolve.

Politicization of the Police force- The Greatest Impediment to Democratic Policing in India

In post-independent India the Congress was faced by issues of industrial unrest, communal violence and the possibility of communal violence with also the possibilities of communal insurrection. The Union Home Minister urged the expansion of police armed force to respond to the crisis. The Army led police action in Hyderabad in September 1948 and the Telangana revolt showed the survival of the Congress could not be based on consent alone but police coercion as a necessary limit to determining limits to protest and dissent. The Congress party in office, on many instances post-independence has been as chary as the British had been in allowing police accountability to the public. The Congress ruled states even ten years after independence has used the police to open fire to contain industrial and political unrest on several occasions.

The reputation and perception of the Indian police with the common people of India, have not been people-friendly but instead corrupt, untrustworthy, cruel and ruler-supportive during the colonial rule. However, there was a hope that

things would change for the better after independence. The basic administrative structure post-independence remained unchanged and the ruling class did not make any inclination to change the use of unscrupulous means for holding power and patronage used for self-aggrandizement. The criminalization of the political processes and the declining influence of the Congress party as a pan-Indian umbrella organization, hastened the fragmentation of the polity and enfeeblement of parliamentary institutions. Most importantly the police has not been insulated from government control therefore "secret surveillance, infiltration, interceptions, inspired leaks and other questionable tactics are all freely employed by political parties to perpetuate their hold on power" (Dhillon, 2005, p. 73).

The problem plaguing institutions in India and especially the police institution is that the distinction between the interests of the state and that of the party in office has virtually disappeared and the instrumentalities of the state are freely employed to safeguard party interests. The misuse of state agencies was prevalent and acceptable as a colonial imperative pre-independence but its prevalence and persistence post-independence in India has violated the very basis of democracy. The Indian police failed to develop into a citizen friendly force since neither the criminal justice system nor the Indian Police Act of 1861 had undergone any changes and the police in India had no scope to develop different characteristics than their colonial predecessors. When party in power uses state resources, the police and intelligence departments to bolster their power it has an unsettling effect on the police as an institution that it could not evolve a new Modus Vivendi to cope with radical political change, which followed independence.

The Indian police have grown to be the most reviled government agency in India. The reason behind the failure of the police to incorporate methods of democratic policing and to adjust their functional and attitudinal framework to post-independence requirements is actually a legacy of the colonial system of law enforcement, perpetuated by the Indian Police Act of 1861.

The police in India today are not expected to uphold the rule of law but the rule of the party in power. The police in India as soon as they are absorbed into the system these days, they quickly learn that they are required to uphold the rule of the party in power. The politicization of the police force is when the politicians

blindly expect the senior police officials to blindly toe the line irrespective of any moral and ethical grounds. Politicians of all political parties use the police force to their political advantage and treat the bureaucracy and the police as their private fiefdoms that bow to their demands and wishes. The speculation on the apparent threat to transfer Director General of police following the Gurmeet Singh case at Panchkula Haryana is another recent example of the same phenomena of political influence impacting rule of law. Retrospectively, it would be a great travesty of justice if those who wield power would have shifted the blame from themselves onto the shoulders of the police chief. Politics involves a quest for power and as long as Gurmeet Singh was able to keep peace among its population to deliver votes to the Khattar party, the police must have been instructed by politicians to trust the Dera's leadership.

No state government till date has been willing to relinquish or loosen its grip over the control on the police. The two examples of politicization of the police force where thousand people were killed and massacred could have been prevented and the situation could have been averted if the police leadership was permitted to carry out its constitutional responsibility of upholding the rule of law. The massacre of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984 was politically engineered by the Congress leadership after the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The police officers who succumbed to unlawful wishes of political leaders in whose leadership these mass killings had occurred were later protected from prosecution by the leaders themselves.

Another example of political influence impacting the police work in India is in 2002 Gujarat after the Godhra tragedy where innocent Muslims were butchered in Ahmedabad and some other districts of the state. These two acts were political motivated and engineered by political parties for their own interests with the support of the police force which shows the political stranglehold over the police machinery. Therefore the greatest challenge to democratic methods in police functioning is its corrupt, partisan and heavy handed character.

Conclusion

The Indian Police in its contemporary form is a product of the Indian Police Act of 1861 and this is based on a ruler supportive type of policing which treats people as subjects and not citizens who possess rights. As such the Indian

police have traditionally been opposed to any kind of citizen participation or community consultation in their mode of functioning. The 1861 Police Act has managed to formalize the concept of a ruler-supportive force by clothing the act in a formal and legal framework, laying the governance structure for Indian police post-independence.

The police leadership in India is yet to become more decentralized or an accountable institution for citizens. Unfortunately the Police Act of 1861 has failed to satisfy any criteria for democratic policing in India. It is only by implementation of certain progressive reforms and models of police structure in India that can drastically alter and undermine the basic framework that has governed the Indian Police since the colonial times –The Indian Police Act of 1861. The Indian Police needs to evolve into a modern, accountable, responsive, citizen-friendly force which is not possible with application of the Indian Police Act of 1861.

The major consequence of this structure is the effect of police becomes synonyms as the agent of the state rather than a creature of the law. This disempowerment of the police comes through politicization which has led to unleashing brutal force on the community through disciplined and unquestioning body of subordinate officers. The paradox is reflected in the system where police as an institution is projected to be powerful and the strong arm of the state. Keeping in mind, the colonial continuation of a police organization and act has led to compromising the democratic ethos of a nation in many instances, therefore the police needs to insulate itself from government control as much as possible in India.

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POOR AND ELECTRICITY POLICY : AN ASSESSMENT IN ASSAM

Bikash Chandra Dash

Abstract

This paper assesses the electricity policy provisions of Assam for the benefit of the poorer sections of state. The assessment has been done on the basis of the indicators like pump sets energized for agricultural consumers, rate of electrification among the different categories of consumers, sale of electricity to agricultural consumers, average tariff imposed and collected from the agricultural consumers, connections provided to BPL consumers, number of households and villages electrified in Assam, expenditure incurred by poor due to power cut, electricity subsidy realized by poor. The study finds that though there is declared 100% village electrification in the state,providing better household electrification needs more focus. Similarly the households belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) and agricultural farmers have not been much benefited from the reforms which need urgent attention of the policy makers.

Key Words: *electricity, power sector, Reforms, Subsidy, poor, agriculture consumers, tariff, policy*

Introduction:

Assam is a state where majority of population lives in rural areas. Total percentage of urban and rural population of Assam is 14.1 and 85.9 living in 214 towns and 25372 villages respectively (Economic Survey Assam, 2020-21). The geographical area of Assam is 78438 sq km out of which 98.4 percent is rural. As per the answer of Union Rural Development Ministry, the Total number of BPL in Assam was 101.27 lakh comprising 32% of the total population of the state in the year 2017 (Telegraph 11 April, 2017). Per capita income in the state of Assam is Rs. 72289 in case of India it is Rs. 111782. The share of agriculture in State Gross Domestic Product (SGDP) is only 16.21 in the year 2018-19 though Assam is predominantly an agrarian state agriculture being the backbone of state's economy. Agricultural growth rate in the state of Assam is meager 2.35% at constant prices Per capita loan outstanding in the state is Rs 20171 in the year 2020 which is 16.87% growth from previous year. Literacy rate in Assam is 72.19 and annual dropout rate in the state at primary and upper primary level is 4.3% and 3.4% respectively in the year 2019-20 (Economic Survey Assam, 2020-21).

Thus socio-economic status in the state of Assam indicated by the above data is not encouraging. Poverty is an issue in the state of Assam. Poor population depends on many government services for their survival. The Union government and the state governments implement several services/programs including Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Surakshya Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana etc. Similarly Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is operational to alleviate poverty by providing minimum employment guarantee., In power sector which is vital for development and crucial for industry, agriculture, domestic households including poor government is implementing Rajib Gandhi Gramin Vudyutikarana Yojana (RGGVY), Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) for village and household electrification and Jeevan Dhara (free electricity to BPL families) benefit poor. There has been a policy change in the form of reforms (Electricity Act,2003) including unbundling, privatization, introduction of independent regulation, user group participation etc in power sector of the country since last two decades including Assam power sector with a view to improve the financial viability of the sector and to provide better services to the consumers. Therefore,

how do these reforms have benefited the poorer sections of the society is an important question for assessment. In this paper an assessment has been done in the context of Assam power sector policy reforms to ascertain the accessibility of electricity service to poor especially agricultural and BPL consumers in the state.

Electricity is an essential requirement for all sections of society. Millions of household are not having access to electricity. According to a World Bank data in the year 2019 there were 759 million people without access to electricity Out of those having no access to electricity, 95% belong to the countries of Asia and Africa and majority of them live in villages. In India around 90 million people do not have access to electricity connection (Business insider India, 23 January, 2020).

Per capita consumption in the country is 800 kwa which is the lowest in the world. In Assam the per capita power consumption is the lowest in the country. Why such a basic service like electricity is not available for the millions of people in the country? What goes wrong in making electricity service available to poor living in rural areas? Jeeban Dhara connections (free connections to BPL families), quality service provided to the rural consumers, the duration and frequency of power cut, voltage status of the electricity supplied in rural areas, grievances redressed by the officials in the area.

Methodology of the Study

The study is empirical in nature. The study is based on mainly on secondary sources like Reports published by Government of Assam, Planning Commission, Ministry of Power, Government of Assam and Government of India, Assam Electricity Regulatory Commission (AERC), Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC), Central Electricity Authority (CEA) Report submitted to Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR, New Delhi), Assam Power Distribution Company ltd. (APDCL), Assam, Assam Development Reports, Economic Survey Assam, Economic Survey of Assam etc. The data has been taken for up to 2019-20 in most of the cases. Indicators like pump sets energized for agricultural consumers, rate of electrification among the different categories of consumers, sale of electricity to agricultural consumers, average tariff imposed and collected from the agricultural consumers, connections provided to BPL consumers, number of households and villages electrified in Assam have been taken to assess the power policy of Assam to understand how effective have

these policies been to take care of the poor consumers of Assam especially the farmers and BPL households.

Data and Results

Pump-sets of agricultural consumers energized in Assam

Table-1. Year-wise statement of Pump-sets of agricultural consumers Energized in Assam

Year	Calculated Potential of Pump-sets	Pump-sets Energised
1997-98	254000	3637
1998-99	254000	3637
1999-00	254000	3637
2000-01	254000	3637
2001-02	254000	3637
2002-03	254000	3637
2003-04	254000	3637
2004-05	254000	3637
2005-06	254000	3637
2006-07	254000	3637
2007-08	254000	3637
2008-09	254000	3637
2009-10	254000	3637
2010-11	254000	3637
2011-12	254000	3637
2012-13	254000	3637
2013-14	254000	3637
2014-15	254000	3675
2015-16	254000	3675
2016-17	254000	3575
2017-18	254000	3575
2018-19	254000	3575
2019-20	254000	3575

Source : www.indiainfrastat.com

It is surprising that whatever data available on total number of potential pump sets and pump sets energized in Assam, the figure has been same throughout. There has not been any increase since 1997-98 till 2019-20. This indicates that there has not been any addition of potential pump sets and pump sets energized. Even the percentage of the pump sets energized to the total number of the potential pump sets existing i.e. 254000 is quite low which 1.4% is. Thus from the above data given in the table it is clear that there has been neither further addition in the number of potential pump sets of the farmers nor there has been any improvement in the increasing the number of the pump set enrgization of farmers. Though Assam is predominantly an agrarian state needing more and more attention for the improvement of irrigation of agricultural land of the farmers by providing them better facility in the form of pump set enrgization and other such benefits, the existing data gives a gloomy picture. It appears that there has been no attention in this connection. It may be noted the contribution of agricultural product to GSDP is declining as per the data mentioned above needing more focus on this aspect. Apart from this, another unhealthy revelation of the data points out that the farmers are losing huge subsidy as there has not been further addition or increase of agricultural consumers resulting in the loss of subsidy. Generally agricultural consumers are charged less electricity tariff for the electricity units used through cross subsidy to help them being the poorer section of the society. As no addition of pump sets are being done which has remained stagnant since decades there has been loss for the agriculture farmers and agricultural consumers as a whole in the state.

Rate of Electrification across consumer categories in Assam

In this section an effort has been made to see whether the electricity connections provided to different categories of consumers are increasing equally or only a specific category of consumer is getting benefits of better accessibility in the sector.

Connections Given to different Categories of Consumers and the calculation of the growth rate helps in assessing to what extent the sector is taking

care of the interest of economically backward sections consumers in the state. Following table shows the statistics on connections provided and their respective growth rate.

Table No. 2 Year wise growth/decline of electricity connections for **Different Consumer Categories in Assam**

Year	Domestic	Jeeban Dhara	Commercial	Industrial	Agricultural
1999-00	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2000-01	29%	0%	9%	25%	-1%
2001-02	5%	0%	5%	6%	5%
2002-03	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2003-04	13%	0%	5%	-2%	-14%
2004-05	-1%	0%	-8%	-10%	-4%
2005-06	0%	23%	13%	6%	-37%
2006-07	8%	-66%	0%	1%	-16%
2007-08	27%	1%	13%	25%	70%
2008-09	-5%	257%	4%	9%	36%
2009-10	6%	66%	4%	2%	77%
2010-11	9%	55%	5%	3%	48%
2011-12	6%	10%	4%	4%	38%
2012-13	6%	33%	4%	4%	38%
2013-14	5%	33%	4%	5%	36%
2014-15	14%	33%	4%	5%	38%
2015-16	84%	1.32%	9.7%	11.14%	6,30%
2016-17	6.41	16.65	18%	18.22%	58%
2017-18	5.8%	25.71%	5.2%	.69%	24%
2018-19	29%	0%	7.24%	4.41%	4.7%
2019-20	3.5%	1%	1.74%	3.26%	2.67%

Source: Calculated by the author from the secondary data taken from Economic Survey, Assam (various years) and AERC Tariff orders

From the table given above it can be seen the rate of growth of different categories of consumers in Assam. In the year 2000-01, the growth rate of domestic category consumer was 29% which was quite impressive. However in the next

year it fall down to 5% and further reduced to 0% as the data shows the same number as it was in previous year. Further it increased to 13%. In the next year, the figure was in minus 1%. In the year 2007-08, the figure was 27%. Again it declined to minus 5%. From the year 2009-10, the rate of growth was steadily increasing and in the year it was 14%. The rate of growth for this category was not having much difference as compared between pre and post reform period.

In case of Jeeban Dhara consumers, it can be seen that during pre reform period, there was no Jeeban Dhara consumers. However, during the post reform period, the growth rate of this category was very impressive. In other words, the APDCL took efforts to provide connections to BPL consumers in a better way than the public sector run ASEB.

The commercial consumers grew steadily after reform programme. In case of industrial consumers, the rate of growth was similar with commercial except negative growth for certain years before pre reform period.

The most impressive rate of growth can be seen in case of agricultural consumers though its percentage declined from the year 2017-18 to 2019-20. In the same years, Jeevandhara consumers' addition was not impressive.

Figure 1: Share of Agriculture to total sale of power in Assam during pre reform period (in %)
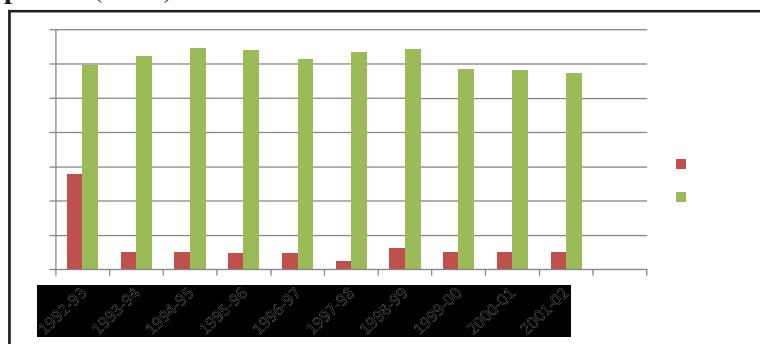

Source: Annual Report (2001-02), Working on State Electricity Boards and Electricity Departments, Planning Commission, Power and Energy Division, Government of India, May 2002. (Data for year 2000-01 and year 2001-02 was provisional)

The above figure shows that the share of agriculture to total sale of power during the pre reform period. In the initial phase, i.e. 1992-93 the sale of power was at peak, i.e. 14 % in case of Assam. However, a constant decline has been observed; it reaching an all time low of 1.35 % in 1997-98 finally halting at 2.56 % in 2001-02. If compared to the quantity of sale of electricity to agricultural consumer in Assam with that of the all India level, the percentage of all India has always remained at a very higher level which refers to the fact that agriculture sector has been neglected by the government in terms of sale of electricity the agriculture consumers. Assam being predominantly an agrarian state requires special care by government in general and Power Ministry of the state in particular.

Following table shows the share of agriculture consumers to the total sale in the state.

Figure-2. Percentage of share of sale of electricity to Agriculture Consumers to total Sale in Assam in post reform period
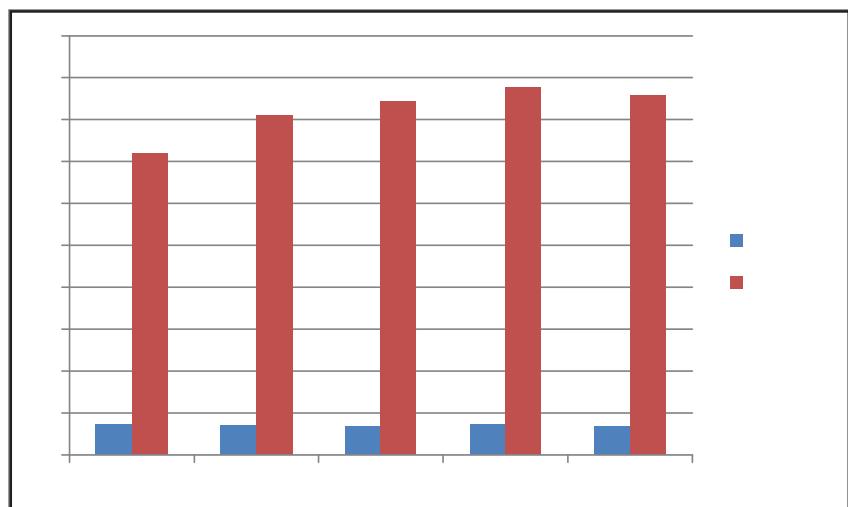
Annual Report (2001-02), Working on State Electricity Boards and Electricity Departments, Planning Commission, Power and Energy Division, Government of India, May 2002   and www.indiainfrastat.com

The figure 2 shows the share of agriculture in the total sale of power in Assam during the post reform period. The numbers are consistently low after the reform. Thus, in the recent years the share of sale of electricity to the total sale has also remained very less

Even after the reforms the share of sale of electricity to agriculture consumers has not increased which is visible in the above figure. It has remained below even 1% throughout whereas the figure is around 8% at all India level.

Tariff Structure for Agricultural Consumers in Assam

In the following table comparative data on tariff for agricultural consumers of Assam and all India level has been given.

Table 3 Average Tariff for Agricultural Consumers in Assam and India (Paise/Kwh)

Year	Assam	All India
1994-95	88.00	19.40
1995-96	158.90	19.00
1996-95	181.44	21.20
1997-98	476.70	20.22
1998-99	191.55	21.01
1999-00	227.62	22.61
2000-01	272.41	35.38
2001-02	287.15	41.54

Annual Report (2001-02), Working on State Electricity Boards and Electricity Departments, Planning Commission, Power and Energy Division, Government of India, May 2002

The table above shows the average tariff for agriculture. The table shows that the average tariff for agriculture in Assam is quite high in comparison to all India. Moreover, over the years an increasing trend has been observed. As the figures suggest, the average tariff in 1994-95 was 88 which increased to 287.15 by 2001-02.

Thus the interest of agricultural consumers is grossly compromised in Assam which is the indicative of the defective policy pursued by the government of Assam. Majority of farmers who do not get subsidy because of lack of electrification are the losers and secondly those who are connected to the grid pay bills of electricity at a very higher rate compared to their counterpart at all India level which has serious implications for the policy making in the state.

Table-4. Average Tariff on Agriculture Consumer in Assam and India after reform

Year	Assam	India
2002-03	88.00	19.40
2003-04	158.90	19.00
2004-05	181.44	21.20
2005-06	476.70	20.22
2006-07	191.55	21.01
2007-08	227.62	22.61
2008-09	272.41	35.38
2009-10	287.15	41.54
2010-11	88.00	19.40
2011-12	158.90	19.00
2012-13	181.44	21.20
2013-14	476.70	20.22
2014-15	191.55	21.01
2015-16	227.62	22.61
2016-17	272.41	35.38
2017-18	287.15	41.54
2018-19	272.41	35.38
2019-20	287.15	41.54

Source: Compiled from the tariff orders of AERC and ASEB and APDCL documents

The above table indicates the high tariff imposed from agricultural consumers compared to their all India counterpart. Higher tariff means higher cost involved in the production and supply of electricity units in the state. This is indicative of the negligence of the interest of the agricultural consumers.

Village Electrification

As per the government's 2006 rural electrification policy, a village is deemed 'electrified' if basic infrastructure such as distribution transformer and distribution lines has been set up in the inhabited locality, including a 'Dalit basti'. Moreover, at least 10 per cent of the households of such a village should have access to electricity through the basic infrastructure established. Nowhere does the definition talks about actual electricity connection or its supply to the household.

Consequently, as per the data provided to the Centre by the states, out of total 17.19 crore rural households living in 29 states of the country, 35.73 per cent (6.14 crore) are without any access to electricity. The country's villages are 'electrified'; their 6.14 crore households are yet to get access to electricity.

In the year 1947, only 1500 villages were electrified in India. In year 1991, 48112 villages were electrified. In 2004 the number came down to 47498 due to de-electrification. In Assam, there are 25372 inhibited villages as per the Census 2011. The progress of electrification can be seen from the table below.

Table-5. Year wise village electrification in Assam

Year	Number	Percentage
2003-04	19139	76%
2004-05	19306	76.84%
2005-06	18168	72.31%
2006-07	14516	57.77%
2007-08	14516	57.77%
2008-09	15066	59.96%
2009-10	15747	62.67%
2010-11	19729	78.52%
2011-12	22294	84.46%
2012-13	22520	85.31%
2013-14	22586	85.57%
2014-15	23503	89.04%
2015-16	23987	94%
2016-17	24412	96%
2017-18	24721	97%
2018-19	25299	99%
2019-20	25372	100%

Source: different Statistical Handbook of Assam, www.indiastat.com retrieved on 10.11.2021 and data collected from APDCL office, Guwahati

Rest can be filled from https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/energy/access-to-electricity- improves-across-states-urban-rural-divide-remains-nfhs-5-74890

The table above shows the year wise village electrification in Assam. The table shows that the number of electrifications done in villages of Assam has

increased over the years. Initially, in 2003-04 the number was 19139 (76%) which declined to 14516 57.77% in 2006-07 and 2007-08.

Since then an increasing trend has been observed. As the figures suggest, by 2014-15 it has increased to 23503 (89.04%). Absolute coverage has been accomplished by the 2019-20. However, the claim of 100% coverage does not refer that all the households are connected to power grid. By installing a pole in a village without supply of electricity does not make a village electrified. A study[1] finds dismal household electrification in a village declared electrified in the selected villages of the study area in Assam (Dash 2016).

Challenges of Electrification in Assam

Connections provided to Jeeban Dhara Category Consumers

Table 6 BPL Connection Target vs. Achievement of RGGVY

Year	Target	Achievement
2011-12	660312	368959
2012-13	513996	232060
2013-14	343307	101260
2014-15	334521	116542
2015-16	356798	239871
2016-17	321456	214567
2017-18	402341	213456
2018-19	423321	209871
2019-20	435353	243210

www.indiastat.com for the year 2011-12 to 2013-14 and for the remaining years the data has been collected from the APDCL office, Bijlee Bhwan, Guwahati.

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[1]A Report titled 'Governance of Power Sector : A Study on Policy and Performance of Assam Power Sector Submitted to ICSSR, New Delhi by Dr. Bikash Chandra Dash, Dept. of Political Sceince, Assam University Diphu Campus.

The table above shows the BPL Connection Target vs. Achievement of Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyutikaran Yojana. As of year 2011-12 the total connection target was 660312 however, only about half of the targeted number could be achieved, i.e. 368959. The trend continues in the next period of 2012-13 where the target was 513996 and the achievement was only 232060. The performance is the worst in 2013-14 where the target was less in number in comparison to earlier periods, i.e. 343307, however the achievement was only 101260. The data on target and achievement indicates a wide gap of BPL connections in the state.

Household Electrification and connections for BPL population

In the year 2001, seventeen percent households were electrified in Assam. In the year 2011, 28% households were electrified in the state of Assam. As on 30.04.2016, total number of rural households in Assam was 53.74 lakhs out of which the total number of electrified villages is 18.39 lakhs and number of un-electrified village is 35.35 lakhs. Similarly, out of total 19, 33,959 BPL households, connections were given to 12, 10,198 households which is 63% achieved under DDUGJY.

Percentage of rural BPL population to rural population is 39.9%

Figure. 3 Sale of Electricity to Jeeban Dhara and All other Consumers in Assam (in MU)
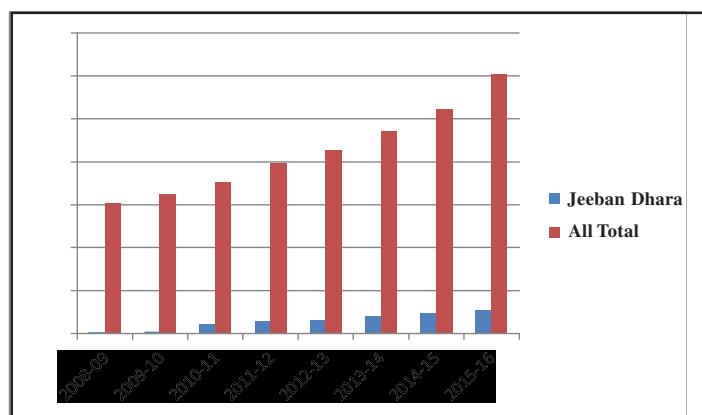
Above figure shows that in recent years there is meager increase of sale of electricity to the Jeevan dhara consumers though their number has increased over the years.

Table 7 Subsidy for Agriculture Consumers (Rs. crore)

Year	Assam	All India
1992-93	6	7335
1993-94	9	8966
1994-95	11	10941
1995-96	9	13606
1996-97	7	15586
1997-98	0	19021
1998-99	14	22473
1999-00	10	24650
2000-01	14	26950
2001-02	1	30462

Source : Annual Report (2001-02), Working on State Electricity Boards and Electricity Departments, Planning Commission, Power and Energy Division, Government of India, May 2002.

The table above shows the subsidy for the consumers of the agriculture sector, received from the state government. The period 1998-99 and 2000-01 is the highest in terms of the subsidy, i.e. Rs. 14 crores. However, the table reveals that during the period of 1997-98 no such subsidy was being by the Assam state government.

Table No. 8 Income Category and Subsidy Realization

Table 6.24: Subsidy Distribution across the Income category2

Income Group (in Rs/Month)	Number of households	Total Units of Electricity Consumption	Average unit consumption
< 1500	312	12792	39.85
1501-3000	585	25155	43
3001-5000	320	15040	47
5001-7000	206	14008	68
7001-10000	159	17013	107
10001>	94	13818	147
Total	**1676**	**97826**	**58.37**

The average tariff in the state was Rs. 5.78 in 2014-15. Against this the cost of supply was Rs. 8.09 per unit during 2014-15. The difference between cost of supply & average tariff was about Rs. 2.27 per unit. Thus those consumers who consumed more units of electricity received more amount of subsidy. The total units of electricity consumed by 1676 households are 97824. The average units consumed by the 1676 households are for 58.37. However, if individual averages are taken into consideration, it can be seen that the households with more income are consuming more units of electricity on an average. This means the households with more income are recipients of more subsidies from the government which is reflected in the average tariff. Though there is a slab system in calculating tariff, on an average the figures are indicative of the poor targeting of subsidy.

Findings of the Chapter:

o   From the year 2000-01 till 2014-15 the growth rate of domestic category consumer was 29% which was quite impressive. Similarly the rate of

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[2]A Report titled 'Governance of Power Sector: A Study on Policy and Performance of Assam Power Sector submitted to ICSSR, New Delhi by Dr. Bikash Candra Dash, Dept of Political Science, Assam University Diphu Campus

growth of other category has been impressive especially the rate of connections given to the agricultural consumers is better than the other categories. However, the share of sale of electricity to agricultural consumers has been very less compared to the percentage of sale to the agricultural consumers at the all India level.

o   The average tariff for agricultural consumers in Assam is quite high in comparison to all India.

o   Village electrification has been increasing at a faster rate in Assam. However household electrification needs focus for including the majority population

o   Electricity Connection to BPL family has been dismal because the target and achievement has wide gap

o   There is a poor targeting of subsidy in the state as the more subsidy is going to the comparatively richer sections of households in Assam

o   Starting from the pre reform period to the post reform till the 2019-20 there is no progress of energization of pump-sets indicating huge subsidy loss for the agricultural consumers.

Conclusion

Rural electrification being one of the big challenges for the third world countries like India with a poor economic system and infrastructure requires thorough analysis of its problems in order to formulate effective policies in this regard. This study has dealt with the issue of equity and accessibility of electricity service to people by assessing the electrification coverage and its benefits to the farmers and consumers with low socio-economic status in the state. It has also taken the rate of electrification among the various consumer categories, subsidization of tariff rates for the farmers, the free electricity connections given to BPL families as per Jeeban Dhara scheme, The study reveals that a majority of

the consumers belong to Village/Rural areas and an absolute coverage in terms of village electrification in Assam is yet to be achieved. After reforms in the power sector in the recent years the share of sale of electricity to the total sale has also remained very less and the average tariff for agriculture in Assam is quite high in comparison to all India. Moreover, the subsidy received from the state government in general is quite low. The policies introduced by reforms in the form of unbundling, privatization etc have brought better results for the state in the distribution of electricity to the consumers. However, the more focus should be paid on poor consumers especially farmers and BPL households by enerziging adequate pump sets.

AFGHANISTAN IMBROGLIO-OPTIONS FOR NEW DELHI

Mallika Pegu

Abstract

The withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan and the resurgence of Taliban have had major implications for the Indian security establishment. The pursuit of 'look west' policy will depend on securing peace, security and connectivity in Afghanistan which are vital ingredients for India. With the Taliban regime back in power and China increasingly making its presence felt in Pakistan's backyard, alarm bells have surely been rung for India. Increasingly, Af-Pak region presents a major security challenge for India; New Delhi must have clear answers as to how to address these security concerns; furthermore, the delay in taking important decisions will hurt India's long term national interests. While it may not be an ideal solution, a 'late strategic entry' into the affairs of a Taliban dominated Afghanistan maybe the need of the hour.

Keywords: *Taliban, strategic, Af-Pak region, security, national interest.*

I. Introduction

The hurried exit of the US from the 'graveyard of empires' in August 2021 also marks the beginning of the second innings of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The rapid fall of Afghanistan to the hands of Taliban was completely unanticipated by the Biden administration. While it does mark the beginning of the end of 'American century',additionally, as events in Afghanistan unfolded, it has turned out to be a major foreign policy challenge for India. Engaging with the Taliban regime or the lack of it is a Pandora's Box for the current Modi administration. With the rapid ingress of China to the Af-Pak region, this paper identifies the key foreign policy concerns for India. Divided into two key sections it will first identify the strategic and security challenges for New Delhi ; second, it will seek to analyse the multiple 'paths' available for the Modi regime to engage with the Taliban Afghanistan.

II. India –Afghanistan political relations: an overview

While the relations between the people of India and Afghanistan can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilization, over a period several factors have strengthen the same as wellas tested the fragile social and political fabric between the two countries. Post-independence, relations between India and Afghanistan started on the front-foot. In January 1950, a five year 'Friendship Treaty' was signed between Prime Minister Nehru and then Ambassador to India Mohammad Najibullah (Ashraf, 2007, p.90). Being at the centre of the Cold War, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 'did not produce peace and stability, but rather broke the political balance both inside and outside Afghanistan'(Wang , 2017, p.113). In the 1980s, India sought to strengthen its political relations with pro-Soviet political regime in Afghanistan. Additionally, India had invested substantially to strengthen its relations with the USSR as it 'served as the crucial bulwark against Pakistan and as a counterweight to both China and the United States'(Horn,1983, p.224). It must be recalled that 'India abstained from the vote on a resolution calling for the immediate, unconditional, and total withdrawal of foreign troops in

Afghanistan' (Prasad, 1980, p.636). An autonomous Afghanistan was India's best route to maximizing its relational control (Chadda, 1997) over Pakistan. The denial of Pakistani hegemony and domination in Afghanistan directly corresponds with stability and security in India (Yadav & Barwa, 2011, p.117).

The end of the Cold War and the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan certainly did not augur well for the Indian establishment. India, which had supported the Najibullah Government in Kabul was caught on the wrong foot. The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 1996 marked the beginning of turbulent period between New Delhi and Kabul. Things further got complicated with the hijacking of IC-814 (Kandahar,1999) and the Taliban secured the release of three terrorists including MasoodAzhar who went on to form the Jaish-e –Mohammed, who were subsequently responsible for the 2001 attack of the Indian Parliament. The relations between India and Afghanistan reached its nadir during 1996-2001; it was seen as a 'diplomatic black hole' (Paliwal, 2015, p.9) as there was no Indian diplomatic presence in Kabul.

The course of India-Afghanistan relations have been additionally shaped by the United States and Pakistan. The events of 9/11 and the subsequent US intervention in Afghanistan and topple of the Taliban, renewed India's strategic interests in that region. In 2001, an Interim Government led by Hamid Karzai was formed and by 2003 'major combat' was declared 'over'. In 2005 , the US pledged its commitment to Afghanistan through a joint declaration which declared that the two countries were 'strategic partners' and both were committed to 'long-term security, democracy, and prosperity'. By 2010, the number of US troops in Afghanistan swelled to 150,000. According to Patnaik, the US presence in Afghanistan rather than being seen as a 'breach' in its strategic periphery, but was seen as an important step which enhanced India's security (Pattanaik, 2012, p.572). The success of 'Operation Geronimo' (May 2011) was a major fillip to the Obama administration. The US soon announced the gradual withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan as it shifted focus on rebuilding of Afghan economy and

infrastructure and capacity building of people and its institutions. However, India had been rather cautious in moving too deep into the affairs of Afghanistan. Part of the 'reluctance'(Destradi,2014) has been because of the US-Pakistan relations. As Praveen Swami puts it, the United States is 'subcontracting the task of keeping the peace in Afghanistan to the Inter-Services Intelligence' (Joshi, 2014, p.88). For New Delhi, while dealing with the Af-Pak region, the US and its allies and have failed to take India's national security into account. Washington's continued dependence on Pakistan's for its operations in Afghanistan after 9/11 has been a concern for India (Destradi, 2014, p112).

India, on its part has become more involved in rebuilding this war torn country through 'multipronged strategy' (Pant, 2010,p.134). Over the last two decades, New Delhi has played a key role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The India-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement (2011) which sought to strengthen political, security, trade and economic cooperation was based 'upon the principles of sovereignty, equality and territorial integrity of States, non-interference in their internal affairs, mutual respect and mutual benefit' also was committed to 'capacity development' of Afghan people (MEA, Govt, of India,2011). Built at an estimated cost of $90 million, the Afghan Parliament building was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015. As of 2019-20, bilateral trade has consistently moved in northwardly direction and was estimated to be over $1 billion. With over 400 infrastructure projects spread across all provinces in the country, India has invested more than $3 billion in Afghanistan. India has funded key projects like the 42 MW Salma Dam or the Afghan-India Friendship Dam project and the 218-km path The Zaranj-Delaram highway as well as the restoration and inauguration of the Star Palace in 2016. Besides, these projects, India have helped construct of power supply and telecom infrastructure (Das, India Today, 2021).

However inspite of all efforts by the Afghan and the US government, the Taliban could not be completely vanquished, rather it grew bolder with time as it

launched series of terror attacks in Kabul (2018). Soon the US and the Taliban were engaged in negotiations in Doha and the Trump administration also renewed its commitment for orderly withdrawal of American troops. The Biden Government announced the complete withdrawal of US soldiers from Afghanistan (April 2021). In a swift turn of events, facing little resistance, the Taliban fighters made rapid strides towards Kabul and took over the presidential palace (August15,2021). Importantly, while the US and its allies withdrawn its troops and officials from Afghanistan and adopted a wait and watch approach, countries such as China and Russia left their embassies open and officials to oversee the 'humanitarian needs'. Pakistan on its part has stepped up its diplomatic efforts to recognize the Taliban Government in Afghanistan; for India, it is a major concern. For China and Russia, the withdrawal of the US presents opportunities and challenges. Relations with the Taliban are strategically important for Beijing; not only is this region mineral rich, it has invested heavily in the CPEC corridor. Furthermore, the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in Xinjiang does not bode well for Beijing; hence, some degree of stranglehold over Afghanistan is required. While secretly gloating the weakening of the United States, Russia may lack the financial resources, but it is concerned about regional security and securing its borders in its 'backyard'- Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

For India, it is *deja vu* all over again. The withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and the return of the Taliban to Kabul has surely upset India's regional aspirations and has hurt India's 'look west' policy. India which had invested in capacity building of the Afghans, played key role in training and education of officials and drafting the Afghan Constitution, suddenly felt the ground shift; the Government of India was clearly not taking any risks and decided to pull out its official from Afghanistan. One of the key concerns New Delhi is that the Taliban's interim government in Afghanistan contains names of global terrorists like SirajuddinHaqqani and several others who had been earlier held at Guantanamo Bay prison. Furthermore, the relations between the Haqqani network and Pakistan based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) have been scrutinised by the Indian security

establishment. Clearly, the ability to distinguish the 'good' and the 'bad' Taliban as well as ISIS and Taliban is far from easy and this dimension has added a new challenge for policy makers of India.

III. Dealing with the Taliban: India's options

India's tense relationship with Pakistan has to a large extent shaped its policies towards Afghanistan. There is a lurking fear in New Delhi that the Taliban Government in Afghanistan will become an extension of the Pakistan security-military establishment. The issue of Afghanistan providing 'strategic depth' (Raghavan , The Hindu, 2001) to Pakistan has only got rekindled. Another key concern is that Afghanistan might become a training ground for terror groups who are controlled by people sitting in Islamabad. Additionally, Pakistan too does not want any kind of Indian involvement in Taliban controlled Afghanistan. In the past too 'Pakistan has played a major role in preventing India from becoming more active in Afghanistan'(Destradi, 2014, p.106). Though officials of eight countries took part in the Delhi Declaration on Afghanistan (Nov 2021, it clearly identified 'deep' concerns which largely overlaps those of the Indian Government- that 'Afghanistan's territory should not be used for sheltering, training, planning or financing any terrorist acts'. Again, the need for cooperation to tackle 'radicalization, extremism, separatism and drug trafficking in the region' and the stress on 'forming an open and truly inclusive government that represents the will of all the people of Afghanistan' has been reiterated from all the nations concerned. For the eight nations, including India, the immediate concern is 'humanitarian assistance' and the need for 'dialogue' and greater 'engagement' with Afghanistan (MEA, Government of India,2021).

Therefore the dilemma for New Delhi is whether or not to engage with the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Taliban have managed maintain its throttlehold over nearly all of Afghanistan and given the power vacuum in the region, with active support from Pakistan, China and Russia, they are here to stay. Essentially, it presents a herculean task for policy makers of India- How and when to engage

with the Taliban? It becomes a bigger problem given the fact that the Taliban have got active support from the Pakistani establishment and they in the past have engaged in terror acts across continents and are supporting the *jehadis*in Kashir. The Modi government will find it hard to justify to its domestic audience the need for dialogue with a party that has waged a war against *akhand* or united India.

As India adopts a wait and watch approach, there is a concern that any further delay to engage with the Taliban will create greater space for Pakistan and China in Afghanistan. India's engagement with Taliban's Afghanistan has to be through multilateral forums and global institutions. Furthermore, India's nature of engagement with Taliban has to be more 'humanitarian' in approach and security for the time being must be fleetingly touched upon. In India, it is estimated that there are over 40000 Afghans and are demanding refugee status. The present political dispensation has been rather hesitant when it comes to granting refugee status or citizenship to Muslims from neighbouring countries. Clearly, India has sent mixed signals to the Taliban government in Afghanistan. While trade and economic routes have been hampered, for New Delhi, as long as Pakistan continues to be the dominant player in Afghanistan, it is better to lie down and let the tide pass.

IV. Conclusion:

According to Joshi, three factors – 'security, ambition, and energy' – inform India's Afghan strategy and its judgment that it requires a coherent Af-Pak strategy (Joshi, 2010, p.20), the advent of the Taliban had only complicated the already precarious scenario. Many analysts concluded India's policy towards Afghanistan as rather "soft"(Wang,2017, p.118). There is a rather growing disconnect when it comes to relationship between the 'deep' Afghan state and the people of Afghanistan. While Pakistan will play a key role in influencing the foreign policy of Afghanistan, India has the 'potential' (Destradi, 2014,p.111) to do more in shaping of public opinion of the same. However, like the past, if New Delhi continues to marginalize itself by complaining from the 'sidelines'(Joshi, 2014,p.95), India will

cede more ground in Afghanistan to other powers like China. Perhaps, under the fluid political environment, the Taliban is yet to prove its legitimacy and hence the issue of international recognition continues to be sidelined; the Taliban will have to do more than just impose the Sharia law on women. Barring Pakistan, for the Taliban government to be accepted by other neighbouring countries, issues of 'inclusion and participation' of all sections of Afghan society is truly paramount. Unless it happens, the Taliban will continue to remain a 'militia' and its quest for its government for global recognition will be delayed.

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