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Editor
Amrita Pritam Gogoi

Department of Political Science

Dibrugarh University
Dibrugarh, Assam

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Dolly Phukon: Dr. Dolly Phukon is currently the Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University, Assam. Her areas of interest are Political Theory, Modern Indian Political Thought and Gender Studies. She has authored two books titled: Women, Democracy and the Media: An analysis of Current Trends in Assam (2014) and Gender and Contested Spaces of Democracy in North East India (2017).

Dr. Bipul Das: Associate Professor, Discipline of Political Science, Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University, Guwahati.

Dr. Borun Dey: Dr. Borun Dey is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Dibrugarh University, Assam. His teaching and research focuses on Indian Politics, Social Movements, Civil Society, Election Studies, Northeast Politics, and Peasant Studies.

Dr. Priyanka Sharma: Dr Priyanka Sharma is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Dibrugarh University, Assam. Her teaching and research focuses on Development Studies, Environment Politics, Gender Issues, Identity Politics, State and Society in Northeast India.

Dr. Linamee Das: Dr Linamee Das is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Dibrugarh University, Assam. Her teaching and research focuses on International Relations, International Organization, and Women in Informal Economy.

Dr. Phulmoni Das: Dr Phulmoni Das is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Government Model College Deithor, Karbi Anglong. Her Teaching and research focuses on Subaltern studies, tribal studies, public and personal administration.

Bijaya Sarmah : Bijaya Sarmah is a Doctoral candidate in the department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University. She holds an M.A. from the Department of Political Science Gauhati University. She taught the department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University as an Assistant Professor (in contract basis).

Indrakshi Phukan: Indrakshi Phukan a PhD student in the Department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh. She has completed her M. Phil on the topic titled, "State and Corporate Social Responsibility in India: A study on Tata Global Beverages Limited in Assam with special reference to Nahorani Tea Estate of Sonitpur District," from the Department of Political Science, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong. Her research interest includes border studies, Human security, Corporate Social Responsibility. Hasmin Ahmed: Hasmin Ahmed is currently a PhD Scholar and is a UGC Junior Research Fellow in the Department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University. She received her M.Phil. from the same department. Her research work focuses on electoral politics and new media, and digital activism.

Gitashree Sharma: Gitashree Sharma is a Ph D scholar at the department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh. Her area of interest includes paradiplomacy, foreign policy and studies in Northeast India.

Dr. Bhupendra Kumar: Dr. Bhupendra Kumar completed his M. Phil and PhD from the Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament (CIPOD), School of International Studies Jawaharlal Nehru Interests. Currently, he works as an Assistant Professor at the College for Vocational Studies (NCWEB) at the University Of Delhi. His research interests are foreign policy behaviour of India, diplomatic relations of Pakistan with India and the United States, Personality and diplomacy,China, Nuclear politics, and Climate Change politics.

Krishangi Saikia: PhD Research Scholar, Discipline of Political Science, Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University, Guwahati. She can be reached at krishangisaikia95@gmail.com, 7099208347.

Denajani Gogoi: Debajani Gogoi is presently working as an Assistant professor of Political Science, Damdama College. She is pursuing her research for PhD from Dibrugarh University. Her research focuses on gender studies, peace and conflict studies and studies in Northeast India.

Meghalee Chetia: Meghalee Chetia is a Ph D scholar at the Department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University. Her research interests include Child Rights and Governance, Violence and Trauma, issues in Human Rights.

Pinky Biswash: Pinky Biswash has completed her M.Phil from the Department of Political Science Dibrugarh University, Assam on *Identities, Ecologies and the Sexual Politics of Labour: A study among Non-Brothel Sex Workers*. She is currently working on her PhD thesis aiming to ethnographically unpack the implications of state-making processes and militarisation in the lives of sex workers in North-East India from the Department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University. Her research focuses on sexuality studies, gender studies, labour studies, militarisation and feminist research methodology. She is also working with Akam Foundation as Research Assistant, with Chandra Prabha Saikiani Feminist Library and Resource Centre, also an active part of Drishti: A Queer Collective and Dibrugarh Pride Committee.

Minakshi Dutta is Assistant Professor of Political Science, D.D.R College, Chabua, Assam. Her research interest includes identity politics, violence, and gender studies.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Journal of Politics is an annual publication of the Department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh. It gives me immense joy to present before you the Vol. XXII of the Journal. Over the years, the journal has been contributing significantly to academic debates and discussions concerning groups, identities and issues, with well-researched peer-reviewed contributions from scholars within and outside the region (Northeast India). This volume of Journal of Politics brings a range of articles on pertinent issues of gender and sexuality, environment, work and labour, conflict, violence, trauma and the politics of memory.

The first four essays in the volume highlight key concerns in gender injustice and inequality in the contemporary globalised world. By bringing in issues and concerns of multiple marginalisations of women in terms of work, inequalities resulting from developmental policies and agendas**,** environmental degradation, and the intensifying and shifting impacts of the transformed landscape in their everyday gendered experiences of caste, class and region with case studies from both of the local and global context these set of articles brings forth important discussions on gender studies. In particular, the essay by Dr. Dolly Phukon titled ***Changing Landscape and Gender Dynamics in the Northeast India: A Framework of Understanding discusses*** the spatial nature of changing gender dynamics in Northeast India. Interestingly the essay uses photographic representations too, to depict how the changing landscape has affected women's identities and sufferings. Highlighting the need to address the diversity of women's experiences accounting for the spatiality of these experiences, the article poignantly points out the marketability of sufferings, sustainability and traditionally. The article by Dr. Priyanka Sharma, ***Beyond the Binary: Intersecting Gender and Environment Justice analyses*** the linkages between gender and environmental justice. The article evaluates how in a patriarchal system women become more prone to the vulnerabilities of environmental degradation. It, at the same time, suggests measures for a more gendered response towards environmental justice. The essay by Dr.Linamee Das, ***Agency of Women Workers within the International Labour Organization-the tale of Home Work Convention (C177),*** by taking up the case of the Self-Employed Women's Association's(SEWA) advocacy within the International Labour Organisation (ILO) highlights women workers advocate for their rights and interest even after limited membership in trade unions. Divided into three sections, the article first shows women worker's predicament within the ILO and then moves on to the second section to analyse women's representation and agency in mainstream trade unions. The final section, emphasising the contribution of Ela Bhatt, founder of SEWA highlights the agency of SEWA. In doing so, it also analyses how traditional trade unions view this union of informal workers. The fourth essay by Dr. Phulmoni Das ***Women's Experiences in Informal Work: Intersection of Gender, Social Hierarchy and Work***evaluatesthe gendered experiences of women working in the informal sector and the degree of vulnerabilities faced by them in the unorganised sector. In doing so it highlights the experiences of women working as wage earners in a construction site.

The second set of articles, five to eight, brings into board discussions on the Indian state and issues and debates in state-making processes — the role of corporate funding in electoral processes, border and human security, para diplomacy, leadership and the like. The article by Hasmin Ahmed and Dr. Borun Dey titled ***Political Funding and the Electorate: An Analysis of the Indian Political Context*** given the growing involvement of business groups in the electoral politics of India analyses the corporate funding to the political parties and has also focused on the impact of this growing involvement of the corporate on the electorate. The following contribution titled ***Paradiplomatic Involvement of Indian States: Special Reference to the State of Assam***by Geetashree Sharma discusses the significance, key issues and factors that involve paradiplomacy in India and particularly in the state of Assam. The next article by Indrakshi Phukon titled ***Border from Human Security Perspective: A Conceptual Understanding highlights*** issues and concerns in border studies and human security studies drawing important connections between the two. The article argues for the need to address human security issues particularly in militarised and securitised border zones. The essay by Dr. Bhupendra Kumar, titled ***Personality and Negotiations: A Study of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Parvez Musharrafand Agra Talks,*** on the other hand, discusses the imposing role of personality on negotiation and diplomacy theoretically as well as by taking cases one each from India (Atal Bihari Vajpayee) and Pakistan (Pervez Musharraf). The essay analyses their impact on the diplomatic process involving peace and conflict by examining the Agra talks in 2001.

The third set of articles, from nine to thirteen, engages with issues of marginality, exploitation, and violence by marginalised and vulnerable groups like women workers in tea gardens, women in militarised societies, child survivors of

sexual abuse, sex workers, survivors of communal violence and the like. The co-authored article by Krishangi Saikia and Dr. Bipul Das titled ***From the Margins: Effectiveness of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 in the Tea Gardens of Assam brings*** forth issues and challenges in the implementation of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951.

Drawing upon fieldwork conducted in Jorhat, Assam, the article draws attention to the gendered nature of inequalities among tea plantation workers of Assam. The article by Debajani Gogoi titled ***Mothers in the Conflict Situations of Assam: Understanding the Gendered Transformation of Roles and Identities explores*** how mothers experience the risks of conflict conditions and how gender roles, relations and identities are changed in times of conflict and its aftermath. In the context of Assam, the article arguing for agency within the motherhood experiences, analyses how mothers' activism for instance as household heads, as peace negotiators and the like, during conflict or in post-conflict situations, establish their independent identities. The following essay by Meghalee Chetia titled ***Child Sexual Abuse: Power, Silence and Trauma***analyses the role of power-structured norms and institutions in inflicting trauma and hindering processes of healing in cases of child sexual abuse survivors. By bringing in important themes of trauma and silence the article highlights the role of patriarchy and patriarchal values in silencing pain and trauma in such cases. The article by Pinky Biswash, ***Politics of Sexual Labour and Sex Work***addresses politics associated with sexual labour and sex work in identifying how stigma as a fundamental mechanism along with other mechanisms of patriarchy helps maintain the exploitation of women's reproductive labour. The article by Minakshi Dutta titled The Nellie Massacre of 1983: An Understanding of its Contesting Narratives analyses the contesting narratives of the Nellie Massacre of 1983. Based on extensive fieldwork in Nellie, thepaper analyses these narratives against empirical facts. In doing so the author uses Paul R Brass' theory of Institutionalised Riot System (IRS).

The journal concludes with a review article by Bijaya Sarmah. Ms. Sarmah through her discussion of the book *Iyat Ekhan Aaronyo Asil (There Was a Forest Here)* important issues on the environment, environmental policies, conservation, eviction and their implications on the land, its people and its ecology. She poignantly questions the existing hierarchies between and within different forms of life.

Amrita Pritam Gogoi
Editor
Vol. XXII, 2022

CHANGING LANDSCAPE AND GENDER DYNAMICS IN THE NORTH EAST INDIA: A FRAMEWORK OF UNDERSTANDING

Dr. Dolly Phukon

Abstract

The gender dynamics includes everyday interaction between gender and the social structure embedded with the socio-cultural ideas and the hierarchies of power which defines the gender relationships. Likewise, the spatial dimensions of landscape influence the people, their culture, their history which in turn mould the gender cultural identity. The influence of landscape on gender dynamics could be found in various cultural narratives of the spatial landscape in writings, poems, folklores etc. Northeast India represents diverse ethnographies due to the diverse landscape. However, the term Northeast itself in this sense becomes contested due to its homogeneous connotation trying to put together the diverse communities, language, histories etc into one due to administrative convenience or to designate the region as 'other.' Despite differences among different regions, tribes, linguistic groups there have been certain uniformities amongst the North Easterner like common memories of insurgencies and counter insurgency problems, problem of illegal immigration, resource alienation, feeling of racial apartheid in the minds of the mainstream etc. which has helped the formation of a political identity as a North Easterner. The North Eastern States are dominated by diverse ethno-linguistic groups. Mostly the ethnic tribals of the region who are the natives are closely bonded with its ecological landscapes reflected in their cultural as well as in their existential condition of living. They are depended on their immediate nature for food, fishing, gathering fuel wood/ food and on the forest resources for building shelter.

Within this framework, this paper intends to see the diverse discourses on understanding the formation of gender identity, gendered sufferings impacted by the changing landscapes. How changes in landscape impact gender identities differently intersecting with class, caste, tribes etc influencing their ontological understanding of self and others will be critically looked into. Further, how with developmental imposed changes in the landscape have infused the marketability of sufferings, sustainability and traditionality will also be an important part of this write up.

CHANGING LANDSCAPE AND GENDER DYNAMICS IN THE NORTH EAST INDIA: A FRAMEWORK OF UNDERSTANDING

The gender dynamics includes everyday interaction between gender and the social structure embedded with the socio-cultural ideas and the hierarchies of power which defines the gender relationships. Likewise, the spatial dimensions of landscape influence the people, their culture, their history which in turn mould the gender cultural identity. The influence of landscape on gender dynamics could be found in various cultural narratives of the spatial landscape in writings, poems, folklores etc. Northeast India represents diverse ethnographies due to the diverse landscape. However, the term Northeast itself in this sense becomes contested due to its homogeneous connotation trying to put together the diverse communities, language, histories etc into one due to administrative convenience or to designate the region as 'other.' Despite differences among different regions, tribes, linguistic groups there has been certain uniformities amongst the North Easterner like common memories of insurgencies and counter insurgency problems, problem of illegal immigration, resource alienation, feeling of racial apartheid in the minds of the mainstream etc. which has helped the formation of a political identity as a North Easterner. The North Eastern States are dominated by diverse ethno-linguistic groups. Mostly the ethnic tribals of the region who are the natives are closely bonded with its ecological landscape as reflected in their cultural as well as in their existential condition of living. They are depended on their immediate nature for food, fishing, gathering fuel wood/ food and on the forest resources for building shelter.

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landscape have infused the marketability of sufferings, sustainability and traditionality will also be an important part of this write up.

Approaches to the Study of Gender and Landscape

Landscape studies is diverse covering the physical geography concerning the non-human entities like soil, landforms, air etc along with the human activities which formulate changes in the landscape, for example: patterns of land use, social ordering of land, economic patterns and so on. Further landscape studies also deal with the painterly description of landscape as beautiful, dark, and many more. American geographer, D W Meining (1979) in his article, "The Beholding Eye: Ten versions of the same Scene" analyses ten different version of defining a landscape. *Landscape as nature*, where the viewer in his mind is tempted to restore nature to her pristine condition, wanted to reclothe the hills with the primeval forest, clear off the settlements, heal the wounds and mend the natural fabric – to imagine what the area is really like by removing man from the imagination. *Nature as Habitat*, where landscape as a portion of the Earth is the home of Man and how man domesticated nature. In the way of domestication, men too adapt nature or landscape which reflects in diet and dress, emblems and rituals, in his everyday work and play. Third is *Landscape as artifact* where Meining argues that Man here becomes the creator and tame nature. For example, today weather is not important for man as he prefers to stay indoors in a controlled weather condition. Fourthly, Landscape is also viewed *as a system* which is related to scientific exploration of how the different natural systems work. Fifthly landscape is seen *as a problem*, dealing with issues like pollution, flood, congestion, slums etc. Landscape as wealth, reducing everything to wealth and extract wealth from the immediate landscape. *Landscape as an ideology*, where it is visualised as a symbol of the values, the governing ideas, the underlying philosophies of a culture. The other versions of defining landscape are *as Place*, Landscape *as history* and landscape *as aesthetics*. However, Meining has categorically concluded that there are exhaustive perspectives which one can add to defining a landscape. A gendered analysis of landscape was not highlighted in his ten versions of defining a landscape. How women conceptualize a landscape, where women are positioned in a landscape and how they have been accommodated to the landscape and how changes in the landscape have been differently faced by women has not been elaborately dealt with. Apart from these ten variants, studies on cultural landscape provides a wider area of study inclusive of the spatial or

geographical physical landscape and the myths, oral histories, stories of human civilisation.

However, in this paper, landscape has been understood in the context of meaningful socially constructed places involving human experiences, memories, history, sense of insider/other with special reference to women's experiences etc. Here acknowledgement is made that while talking about experiences, women/men doesn't belong to a homogenous category but are differentiated on diverse variants on the basis of class, race, caste, ethnicity, sexuality, location and many more. Despite the importance of the study of landscape and its impact on human civilisation, the gendered affects or how changes in landscape affects women have not been represented adequately. There are different feminist approaches which dealt with women's location in the landscape/home/space etc. The liberal feminist took the ardent task of documenting women's voices/experience/participation in history, geography and other disciplines which remained undocumented. History has been absent on land use pattern of women, allocation of resources, accounts of women travellers, ownership pattern, decision making process in resource management, which the liberal feminists wanted to document and demand rights and legal framework for the grievance redressal.

The Radical and Socialist feminists analyse the interaction and affects of Capitalism and Patriarchy both on women and landscape. They then to address the question why women face constraints in accessing their public space and how society focuses more on women's responsibility towards nurturing their children and as prime care giver in the families. They further identify that women's ability to bear children has positioned them closer to nature and landscape.

Eco feminists argued that women are closer to the nature than man due to the biological reproductive characteristics which made women the child bearer and nurturer. But on the other hand, man is regarded as having dominance over both nature and women universally creating dualism on the basis of body and mind. Sherry Orther (1974) in her essay, "Is female to male as Nature is to culture?" explains that women are universally considered as a secondary sex due to the perception that human culture which is "man-made" is superior to nature. As women's body is symbolically identifiable with nature, even after pro-creation, she is connected to her child caring and rearing whereas man being relatively free assigns much time in conquering nature and cultural creation. She assigns women's task to be the mediating

role where she transforms the animal like creature (baby) into cultural being through the process of socialization. However, her argument has been criticized as ethnocentric and generalized where both culture and nature are social constructs like man and women.

In another line of thought, Nancy Chodorow gives an alternative view distinguishing women and men on the basis of psychological understanding of self. According to her, man's sense of self is disconnected to 'other' and operates on the basis of an ethic of rights or justice whereas women's sense of self is interconnected and operates on the basis of an ethic of responsibilities or care. Thus, here disconnected self is the root cause of ecological crisis and all forms of oppression.

In a more contextual understanding of women's relationship with nature regarding to the Third World Women, thinkers like Gita Sen, Vandana Shiva tried to link the hierarchies operating between first world and third world, expert (man with western Science) and non-expert (women with traditional knowledge) etc. These hierarchies' robes women from their epistemology over their land, forest, water resources and replaces with the monoculture of dominance, capitalism and violence on landscape (Shiva 1993).

Carolyn Sachs on the other hand emphasized on women's standpoints rather than trying to focus on homogenized essentialized relationship between women and ecological landscape and tried to understand how the changing global economy affects rural women, land ownership, cropping system etc. She tried to understand how the rural women's connection to the nature has been changing due to the changes of global and national economic penetrations, commercialisation of agriculture, destruction of forests, shrinking of Common Property Resources impacting the livelihood condition of the rural women. She reviewed diverse theorisations of women's symbolic relationship with nature specifically land within the metaphor of earth as mother and nurturer, symbolic relationship of nature embodied with feminine principle of creativity, productivity, diversity and connectedness. She further relates the extraction of natural resources from rural areas for the needs of an increasingly urbanised population leading to a dichotomous relationship of commodification of labour of poor rural people as beneficiaries of the capitalist development, replacement of traditional cropping pattern with genetically engineered seeds etc (Sachs 2018).

The postmodern feminist discourses on understanding landscape have been more inclusive in the sense that they tried to understand gender and

landscape as socially and culturally constructed categories rather than "inherent", which ecofeminists argued. The postmodern feminist's analysis helps to accommodate the heterogeneity of gender and of landscape in understanding its interface with each other.

From the above discussion, it could be understood that, landscape change is the outcome of diverse forms of changes, like economic change, demographic change, changes in livelihood options, and technological change.

Nationalism and Gendered Landscape

As discussed earlier, landscape and its inhabitants are closely knitted and influence each other. Due to constant human activities, the landscape changes and on the other side, the interaction between landscape and its population leads to the formation of identity, imagination, culture and vision of the future order of the society, community and so on. Cultural representation of land is central to the nation building process or for the creation of imaginary of a nation. Colonial regime has always tried to attempt to write their history into the landscape. For ex: Fanon's analysis of segregated landscape symbolizing the colonizers spatial landscape with fortified or barricaded buildings, full of lighting, clean and in abundance with resources whereas the colonized spatial landscape expresses dark, gloomy and poverty ridden picture without modern amnesties like electricity, schools and so on. Nationalisms are gendered and is intertwined with masculinity. The culture of nationalism can be seen to portray masculinity with using the terms honour, patriotism, cowardice, bravery, duty etc are intrinsically linked to nation and to manliness. The personification of national landscape and the conceptualization of nation are gendered if we see in the contexts of the linguistic expression used such as fertile land which is a symbolic signifier of nurturing wife/mother, warrior protector of the land as signifier of man as protector, the fatherland/motherland discourses on nationalism theory etc. According to Cynthia Enloe (2000), nationalist ideologies tend to stem "from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope." She argues how women are consigned to negligible, often symbolic, roles in nationalist movements and conflicts, as icons of nationhood/traditionality which needed to be protected and men as the real actor who are defending their freedom, their honour, their homeland and their women. Nira-Yuval Davis and Floya Anthias (1992), analysed women' question during the nation-building process as biological reproducers of the members of national collectivities, as reproducers of the boundaries of national groups (through restrictions on sexual or marital relations), as an

active transmitters and producers of the national culture, as symbolic signifiers of national difference and active participants in national struggle.

In the context of India, the nationalist discourse has passed through many phases from reformative, revivalist to transformative where the relegated position of women could be seen. During the whole discourse of Nationalism, women were inclusive only as reproducers of Aryan lineages, heroic mothers and wife and sometimes as celibate warriors only to return to the private sphere once India becomes free. Moreover, restrictions on women's education, imparting education only to make women a perfect wife and daughter, uplift norms of chastity, opposition to widow remarriage and raising the age of consent at the time of marriage etc were seen to be the issues which intersected gender question with the nationalist visions under the aegis of Revivalists. Further the debates on Brahmacharya to make a healthy and fit body, maintain healthy diet, sexual norms were given prominence to glorify the Aryan theory of race. In this whole discourse the question of the minority class or the Sudra community in general and their women in particular were being totally kept excluded. This was how women were positioned or located in the context of national imagination. This intertwining of masculinity and nationalism has been reflected in women's access to resources (economic, political, cultural) as a citizen in India.

Likewise in Assam and other states of northeast too, this masculinist nationalist sentiment was seen. Although the women of Assam had participated in both the Indian independence movement and in the Assam Movement in the post-Independence period, this was not out of concern for women's issues or a feminist agenda. In all movements for assertion of identities, women and their bodies were basically regarded as objects of honour and as performers of the traditions of the community. Women's common perspectives were thereby fragmented along ethnic intersections. The participation of women in subnational and ethnic assertions exposed them to public patriarchy, but the organizational capability of women as peacemakers or political actors remained under the banner of the political party. Nevertheless, participation in student unions and other organizations certainly boosted the women of Assam to defy certain patriarchal stereotypes.

However, women's location in a landscape of her nation depends on diverse power relations based on caste, class, region and many more. Within this context, Mahasweta Devi's Short Story -Douloti is Bountiful (Devi, 1995 and Yook, 2018) speaks about how changes in the ecological landscape have

put the family of Douloti into diverse hardships due to their location in caste landscape, gendered landscape and their spatial positioning. Douloti, the protagonist of the story is located in a spatial structure where, deforestation accelerated by the colonial expansionist projects and after independence, the national development projects based on the logic of economic growth led to the lending of ecological landscape of the rural and forest areas to the contractors, traders, miners, and migrant labourers. The Adivasis situated in these localities were seen as cheap labour resource and their landscape extractive economy for capital accumulation. Hereby the Adivasis forcefully accommodated into the capitalist structures as bonded labourers devaluing their tribal virtues, languages, and identities further dehumanizing them.

Douloti belongs to the Adivasi community who lived in a forest area and followed the customary rights in land, trees, forests as a clan-based land tenure system practiced by their community in a frictional village called Seora in Bihar. Douloti's community was once self-sufficient but with the coming of the colonial regime got displaced and dispossessed from their forest lands/ homes due to the large-scale deforestation done by the British Empire for transforming their so called "Waste Lands" into revenue Lands. Later on, after independence, the approach of the Government of India with the land conversion policies has robbed off Douloti's community rights over forest lands finally the irreparable loss of their indigeneity. Thus, Seora which was once a tribal dominated land with community-based property rights is now owned by a person named Munabar Singh Chandela, a Rajput, with the help of his son who happened to be a government officer. This show how there has been a relationship between the land-owning class and the bureaucrats in India. Munabar with the help of cheap labour exploits the landscape to build fortunes. Ganori, Douloti's father, one such cheap labour falls under debt trap and ends up as a bonded labourer. When Chandela's Ox was killed by a tiger, he ordered Ganori working in his field during that time to pull the cart in place of the Ox. As his body was equated with animals, he was whipped by Chandela until he became crippled and worthless as a commodity (labour). This situation shows how ontologically these tribals were regarded as abject once and his debt was transferred to the shoulder of Douloti entrapping her in bonded prostitution. Paramananda Mazumdar, a human trafficker who owns a whore house in Madhupura, an urban landscape infused with commercial hubs. The nexus between two capitalist patriarchs was that, on one hand Chandela exploits the ecological landscape and the cheap labour to create bonded slaves, which were sold at a very cheap price to

Mazumdar to create another business out of women's flesh and blood to satisfy his customers' sexual appetites with virgin girls. Devi, in her story tried also to show the class-based differences between women, where Munabar Chandela's wife fails to understand the plight of women like Douloti and are infused as a profitable stake holder of the capitalist and classist society. On the other hand, the character Rampiyari, who was a debt-prostitute but later on relieved from the trap as one of her customer lover paid off her debt, herself enters the profession as a manager in Paramananda's whore house hereby excluded herself from the feeling of pain of Douloti and other likes when she received a upper hand as a manager.

Latia, Douloti's first customer devours her for three years until got bored after she was showcased before him in a beautiful sari with make-up. Later on, she was taken up by a contractor named Singh and she kept on selling her body mercilessly until her body became unconsumable but failed to come out of the trap. Douloti, Reoti and another sexual slave Somni had children from Latia, who became the beggars on the streets and later Somni after getting discarded from the whore house too joins then as a beggar. Their story of bonded slavery made the narrator compare the body of the slaves with the agricultural field where the boss Paramananda ploughs as they were reaping the fate of their parents working in the digging and cutting works and fell into the debt trap. There were other characters like Father Bomfuller, and two journalist who comes to meet Gonori to document the bonded labourers to change the exploitative system, through government legislation and enforcement. But the reports too were silenced inside a file.

At the end of the story Douloti's body tormented by venereal disease, dies walking to hospital, reclines down on the bare earth where a local schoolmaster had drawn the map of India in order to teach his students nationalism in preparation for Independence Day. The next morning the view of Douloti's body intersected by gender, class, caste, etccontradicts in the minds of the teacher and the school children questioning the issue of national identity in the postcolonial nation and the presence of the female subaltern provoking the contested understanding of citizenship and the universal concept of rights bounded by the national territory symbolized by the Map.

This friction of Mahasweta Devi, based on true facts shows how changes in landscape due to penetration of Capitalist induced development model, robs of the indigeneity of the locals, robs off their embodiment of self and how differently affects women with an intersection of race, region, patriarchy, and class and so on.

Assam and its Changing Landscape

As discussed in the introductory portion of the paper, the population of the Northeast and Assam consists of ethnic Tribes. These tribes were presented in the Indian society as located in a geographical isolated landscape, practicing simple technology with slow and simple conditions of living symbolised by a general backwardness to the practice of animism, tribal language, physical features, etc (Xaxa, 2008). The word 'Tribe' according to Xaxa is both a colonial construct as well as found to be documented in Sanskritic and Hindu texts. The colonial describes those people who were heterogeneous in physical and linguistic traits, demographic size, ecological conditions of living, regions inhabited, and levels of assimilation into a dominant culture as tribes for clubbing the heterogeneity into meaningful categories for both classificatory purposes and administrative convenience. Even in the Sanskritic and Hindu religious texts and traditions since the sixteenth century has referred those communities living under primitive and barbarous conditions as Tribes (Xaxa, 2008: 2-3). Thus, the tribes are identified as those who live in simple or primitive conditions, primarily dependent on nature for their survival and livelihood having a symbiotic relationship with nature (Xaxa, 2008: 102).Assam being the gateway of the Northeast has its own diversities in demographic landscape, spatial landscape, cultural and linguistic landscape and many more. The state consists of diverse ethnic communities mainly belonging to the tribes and non-caste based ethnic groups. As a result of the assimilation between the Mongolian and Aryan ethnicities, the region developed its own uniqueness. However, keeping in view the diversities and to integrate these communities into the modern democratic institution many measures starting political reservation for tribes under article 330 and 332 of the Indian constitution was made. Heterogeneity among the tribal community led to the development of the politics of exceptionalism or preferential considerations were made, for ex: the provision of sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution, establishment of autonomous district councils allowing them to manage their civil affairs according to their customary laws.

However, erosion of land and its resources occurred during the colonial regime due to the transformation of land forms to revenue land for which people were brought into colonial Assam specially the Muslim community were brought to work in the lands of the lower Assam, Adivasi people across different parts of colonial India were brought to work in the tea-estate which not only changed the ecological landscape but also the demographic composition of Assam. The landscape further changed due to the introduction of the line system in the tea estates which kept the tea tribes

aloof from mixing with the natives of colonial Assam. Thus, another line of political entrapment of communities were seen in the context of Bengali Muslims which led to the feeling of insecurity leading to the development of Assamese nationalism. Later on, with better communication facilities or as a spill out effect, the issue of illegal immigration has increased to a great extent, further threatening the landscape and its people.

Within this context, the affects of the changing landscape on gender have been left unresolved or unencountered. The eviction and forest land encroachment stories of Assam, the stories of natural disaster, rehabilitation, eviction of Laika Dodhiya, Assam, the experiences of Baghjan Oil Tragedy have shown clearly the class and gendered dimension of suffering. These women were suffering due to their location in the landscape as homeless, landless, penniless robbed off their memories with their landscape threatening their embodiment of self. Women due to the societal indoctrination are relegated to the private space and they tend to create new memories and narratives of belongingness, friendship, livelihood within the limits of their private sphere, i.e., within the societal web of the immediate neighbourhood. On the other hand, man is privileged to move beyond their localities to work outside in the public space. Thus, any change in the location or place due to eviction/displacement due to natural calamities or conflict leads to a loss of her identity. But the large-scale deforestation and land conversion for accelerating projects in the name of national development and economic growth has put immense effect on the women folk. There has been an increase in the cropland area with the introduction of "farm mechanization, electrification, and introduction of high yielding crop varieties" which have alienated the tribes from their forests, deprived of their rights and privileges within their original landscape.

Photo: Discovery Channel covering the Baghjan make-shift camp

Photo: Discovery Channel covering the Baghjan make-shift camp

Cultural-tourism, gender stereotypes and Marketability

Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her famous essay Under the Western Eyes has criticised the western/ mainstream feminists for stereotyping women in the third world as victimized, uneducated, domesticated, unknown about her own subjugation, retrained mobility due to family and tradition etc. Third world women were thought to be universally victimized and seen their emancipation in the hands of the Western mainstream feminist. Likewise, within the categories of women, the women of northeast are essentialized as backward, primitive, savage, traditional etc. The location of the native women of the Northeast has been marketized under the neo-liberal market economy in a very dichotomous way. For example: A women who in one hand is visualized as primitive is on the other hand becomes the symbol of cultural - tourism requiring to act in a pristine pure traditional or exotic way of backwardness.

Photo by: Dr. Phulmoni Das

The Karbi women crossing a small stream through a bamboo bridge with baskets of wood collected from the in the nearby forests depicts the identity and ethnographic location of the community. But with the penetration of neo-liberal market economy, eco-tourism has become another method of green grabbing opportunity linking up the ecological affairs to the capitalist market dynamics. Ecotourism under their promises "to promote environmental consciousness for consumers and also among the locals promising them to help in generating income as an alternative mode for livelihood indirectly make their way into the protected areas (Wieckardt et al 2020). For example: The depletion of the forest cover due to the expansion of Palm Oil cultivation northeast India (Arunachal Pradesh, Rabha-Hasong Autonomous Council, Karbi Anglong etc. to meet the goals of the Indian government under its National Mission on Edible Oils- Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) has led to more negative encounters with elephants in northeast India. The Palm Oil cultivation requires more water and inter-cropping couldn't be done due to the depletion of ground water due to the palm trees. These initiatives have further relegated the small farmers from their landholdings as well has an impact on the bio-diversity of the region. Thus, the mono-cropping as technology intensive crops becomes gendered as palm oil cultivation was never known to the region.

The indigenous women have a very closely depended on forest produce for livelihood. Women vendors survive mostly by selling their local and forest produce. They sell fruits, flowers, leaves, tubers, roots, mushrooms; medicinal plants etc for survival and also collect firewood as a source of income. Any displacement from their landscape causes direct effect on their survival.

Indigenous Karbi women selling their local produce.

Photo By : Dr. Phulmoni Das

Photo By : Dr. Phulmoni Das

Women part-time construction workers after completion of the work goes for fishing in group depict the utility of leisure and subsistence livelihood strategy depending upon the river.

Women who were the harbinger of traditional knowledge and dependent on biodiversity are losing their identity and survival strategies. Further with the changing landscape, the culture and tradition would finally get alienated from the locals.

On the other hand, the transformation of Northeast Women with their mongoloid features being incorporated into the neo-liberal market facilitating jobs in spa-centers, as airhostess etc. This phenomenon shows how neo-liberal market has intruded into both images of women in the northeast as traditional and as a modern woman.

With these discussions to investigate diverse framework to situate gender in diverse landscape and its impact on her, her understanding of her own self as insider/outsider and so on the paper concluded that landscape studies historically have focused mainly on male responses, contribution and the landscapes occupied by them without understanding the location of women's stand point, women's relationship with nature and environment. In order to access a balanced impact of changing landscape on human, a more inclusive framework of understanding is needed to address the heterogenous narratives of entities cutting across gender, class, sexualities and so on.

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BEYOND THE BINARY INTERSECTING GENDER AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Dr. Priyanka Sharma

In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on the convergence between gender and environment, particularly in the aftermath of the large-scale inequalities and injustices posited by the development process at various levels of the society, economy, polity as well as the environment. It has become increasingly clear that one of the grave challenges in front of humankind today are that of the 'triple planetary crisis' of climate change, nature loss and pollution affecting lives and livelihoods of different stakeholders. What becomes a reason of preponderance is that the gravity of such risks varies with the socio-economic, political and cultural situations in which a person or a community is situated. Although both men and women are affected by such risks and threats depending on the nature of their vulnerability and resilience, it has been widely accepted that women and children are at a greater risk of environmental degradation within the patriarchal system thereby increasing their vulnerabilities. Environmental issues are now reframed as issues of global justice and as such new alliances and associations are being sought to address such crisis in its entirety. This paper is an attempt to look into the linkages between gender and environmental justice and suggest measures for a more gendered response towards environmental justice.

Towards and understanding of environmental justice

Extending notions of justice and fairness to the environment is a recent phenomenon that emerged primarily with the global environmental negotiations starting from the 1970s and 1980s. Growing awareness on environmental degradation and realisation of the fact that the dominant discourse on development with a linear projection of economic growth induced progress is unsustainable as well as the disproportionate impacts of such progress amongst different communities led to global commitments for regulation of use of resources and their distribution. Over the course of time, new inter-disciplinary fields of study like environmental politics, environmental economics, international environmental law etc gained preeminence dealing almost with the same question - How to secure the environment and save

the planet from the existential crisis of climate change , pollution and other forms of environmental degradation. While efforts were being made for combating pollution and protection of the environment, issues like that of people of color and low-income communities being exposed disproportionately to pollution and associated health risks and obstacles to economic prosperity were given little significance. Growing awareness of such racial environmental health disparities and mounting resistance by the affected people brought public attention to extending notions of justice to the environment. The term 'Environmental racism' was coined in the year 1982 by Benjamin Chavis, the then head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) at a protest held in the black town of Afton, North Carolina that emerged out of the criticisms made on the dumping of contaminated soil in the county having the highest concentration of blacks with a high poverty rate. Dumping of toxic wastes in community specific areas, particularly people of color and the poor was termed as no less than 'attempted genocide' (Parks and Roberts, 2006: 329). This gave birth to a political movement in America. Since then the term was expanded and broadened to Environmental Justice to include the unequal exposures of race, class, gender and ethnicity to environmental degradation. The concept of Environmental Justice thus grew out of community action and can be described as the intersection between environmental laws and regulations and civil rights laws and regulations, "simultaneously advancing environmental and public health and civil rights through a combined lens, focusing on socio-economic status along with race" (Ruhl and Ostar, 2016: 42-47). The United States environmental justice movement influenced the imagination of people worldwide having similar experiences and gradually environmental justice became a rallying point and a strategic part of the struggle for a clean and healthy environment. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defined Environmental Justice as the "fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies" (Ruhl and Ostar, 2016: 44). It sought that no one should be exposed to a disproportionate share of negative environmental impacts arising out of government or industrial policies and highlights the importance of public participation in environmental decision-making. Environmental Justice thus is concerned with the distribution of the benefits and burdens of environmental consequences equitably while striving to ensure environmental rule of law and full participation of all stakeholders.

The UNDP approach to Environmental justice

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its Guidance Note (2022) *Promoting Environmental Justice: Securing our right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment* presents a detailed analysis of how to achieve environmental justice. It mentions that for the enjoyment of human rights and a right to dignified life, a healthy environment is essential. The right to a healthy and clean environment has been recognised internationally and nationally through various agreements and policies and is generally understood to include a set of procedural rights (access to information and participation on matters related to the environment etc.) and a set of substantive rights (clean air, water, healthy climate, non toxic environment etc). But the emerging global trends viz. over -exploitation of natural resources, pollution, increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters etc threaten to "reverse decades of development and exacerbate poverty" (Guidance Note, 2022: 4). The report calls attention towards the 'triple planetary crises of climate change, nature loss, and pollution' which is directly and indirectly impacting human rights globally, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable and marginalised sections of the society. It has shifted focus to the post Covid-19 period which has aggravated such inequalities exposing deep injustices and unfulfilled security and human rights. The UNDP's environmental justice strategy conceptualises environmental justice as:

- "promotion of justice and accountability in environmental matters;
- focus on the respect, protection and fulfillment of environmental rights; and
- promotion of the environmental rule of law." (Guidance Note, 2022: 6)

It seeks to achieve and promote environmental justice through a three-pronged approach:

- "Establishing enabling legal frameworks at national and international levels
- Strengthening people-centred and effective institutions
- Increasing access to justice and legal empowerment in environmental and climate change matters" (Guidance Notre, 2022: 7).

Through such an approach, UNDP seeks to use the concept of environmental justice (including climate justice) as a guiding principle for promoting development within the planetary boundaries. The human rights-based approaches are given emphasis in the fulfillment of environmental rights with more importance being put on the institutions related to human rights so that they become accessible to all and are equipped to monitor and implement environmental laws. People are considered as the key players in the objective of ensuring environmental justice through greater participation, greater awareness of their rights, defending their rights and becoming active agents of policy change. Environmental justice is seen as the fair and equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens amongst different sections of the society regardless of their class, caste, gender or community identities. It entails the right of all individuals to effectively participate in the environmental decision- making process, including recognition of the traditional and indigenous knowledge systems and empowerment of the marginalised communities in creating sustainable solutions to pertinent challenges affecting the environment. The concept of Environmental Justice views protection of the environment and promotion of human development and human rights as inclusive and mutually reinforcing goals.

Gender and Environment: Intersecting struggle for justice

The United Nation's Fourth Conference on Women held in Beijing in the year 1995 had made issues of women's rights crucial in development planning. It underlined the importance of the greater need and recognition of integrating gender in policy making. With respect to the environment, understanding the gender dimensions of environmental justice is crucial for promotion of inclusive and equitable environmental law, policies and practices. Gender and environmental justice are two inter-related concepts that highlight the need to address the differential impacts of environmental degradation on different genders and to ensure the participation of all irrespective of their genders in the decision-making process on environment. Who controls resources and determines rights over resources and the definition of a healthy environment remains at the heart of the gender and environment debate. Gender is an important factor because it intersects with various social, economic and cultural factors that determine how individuals and communities interact with the environment. Gender socialisation have made prominent different gender roles and responsibilities for men and women in relation to the environment having a direct bearing on their access to resources, exposure

to risks and participation in the legal and political matters. For instance, women are more vulnerable to environmental hazards like pollution, toxic waste and climate change due to their socio-economic status in the family and in the society with other gender identities like LGBTIQ+ and women with special needs, refugee women and others facing additional risks and obstacles in accessing environmental justice. Women also have limited access to land and resources limiting their ability to adapt to environmental change and mitigate environmental risks. Due to the limited access or absence of access to information and educational facilities, women are also at a more disadvantageous position to have knowledge about environmental risk management furthering their limit to adapt to change. It has been generally observed that traditional, customary and religious laws and practices often limit women's access and claim to land and other assets despite them playing a crucial role in the management of these assets. Rocheleau et al (1996) while looking into the gendered dimensions of environmental rights and responsibilities maintain that women's multiple roles as 'producers, reproducers and consumers' have required them to develop and maintain 'integrative' abilities to deal with the household, community and landscape which often brings them in conflict with the specialised branches of science leading to a separation of 'knowing and doing', of 'formal and informal knowledge' (Rocheleau et al. 1996: 8). While formal science relies heavily on fragmentation, specialisation, division of knowledge; feminists have argued for a more holistic and integrative approach to environmental issue. This is because the social positioning of men and women have often led to the gendered dimension of environmental rights of control and access of resources as well as responsibilities to procure and manage resources for the household and community. Apart from that, there is also the 'gender division of power to preserve, protect, change, construct, rehabilitate and restore environments and regulate the actions of others' (Rocheleau et al. 1996: 8).

There has been close intersections between climate change, livelihoods and violence against women with women and children being at more risks due to natural disasters. Following disasters, it is more likely that women and children will be subject to domestic violence and sexual abuse with risks of trafficking increasing manifold along with other health hazards. As per the United Nations Development Programme, women and children are 14 times more likely to bear the brunt of natural disasters than men. Girls are more likely to miss schools as they are needed back home to collect water and firewood and look after the care giving activities. They also become

vulnerable to other forms of malpractices such as domestic violence, child marriage, rape, sexual assault etc. and also become victim to male dominated institutions in the event of defending their rights. In the year 2020, around 331 environmental defenders were killed, including 44 women, 69 percent of whom were defending land rights, the rights of Indigenous peoples and environmental rights.[1] In 1991, during the cyclone disasters in Bangladesh, of the 140,000 people who died, 90% were women. [2] More than 70 % of the people who died in the 2004 Asian tsunami were women. Hurricane Katrina, which struck New Orleans, USA in 2005, predominantly affected African American women, one of the poorest and most marginalized community. After the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimated that 2 million women and girls of reproductive age had been affected by the crisis, including approximately 126,000 pregnant women.[3] Around 6.4 million people who are in need of humanitarian assistance following the floods and landslides in Pakistan in 2022, more than 1.6 million are women of childbearing age. UNFPA estimates that almost 650,000 pregnant women in the flood-affected areas require maternal health services to ensure a safe pregnancy and childbirth.[4] These statistical data corroborates the view of women being more affected by environmental risks and also being more vulnerable.

Women also represent a high percentage of poor communities being highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood, as well as for food security, particularly in rural areas. In the Near East, women contribute up to 50 per cent of the agricultural workforce. Women are mainly engaged in subsistence farming, particularly horticulture, poultry and raising small livestock for home consumption.[5] But their share in ownership of land and other assets does not account for the efforts they put in managing their households. Usually women do not have land rights,

[1] https://www.undp.org/blog/gender-equality-cornerstone-environmental-and-climate-justice accessed on 05.03.2023

[2] https://www.unisdr.org/files/48152_disasterandgenderstatistics.pdf accessed on 05.03.2023

[3] https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/humanitarian-action/facts-and-figures accessed on 06.03.2023

[4] https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/women-and-girls-bearing-brunt-pakistan-monsoon-floods accessed on 06.03.2023

[5] https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/womenin-shadow-climate-change accessed on 06.03.2023

have less political voice and lesser mobility due to cultural restrictions. Women's labour and resources often become invisible to the technocratic lens of the development planners. The gendered division of labour, rights and responsibilities have also changed over time with men being mostly drawn to 'cash crop production, local wage labour and the urban work force' while women are being increasingly made to be 'responsible for the use and maintenance of the rural landscapes and look after subsistence and commercial production along with much of the community and environmental 'maintenance' work' (Rocheleau, 1995: 9). Despite seemingly being responsible for the production of the subsistence economy and maintenance of the ecosystems, women are often obstructed by the restricted rights to use and access resources due to cultural barriers. All such existing vulnerabilities expose more challenges to women and reflect the crucial intersections between environment, gender and livelihood strategies.

GENDER - INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES: A PRAGMATIC APPROACH

Environmental policies, mostly, do not offer a gender-responsive governance involving women as agents of change. The focus of the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) on *"achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes*" shares three key points on how gender equality is the key for climate justice:

- An enabling and gender sensitive legal framework is a prerequisite for women to enjoy their right to a healthy environment
- People-centered institutions are key to deliver gendered responses on climate justice
- Access to justice is a cornerstone in equipping women to uphold and enforce their rights[6]

Women's expertise and knowledge on resource use (developed over long periods of them being close to nature as a result of their socialisation

[6] https://www.undp.org/blog/gender-equality-cornerstone-environmental-and-climate-justice accessed on 05.03.2023

process which posits women as the care-givers) can have multiple ramifications on formulation of environmental policies to adapt to changing environmental realities. Addressing gender-specific impacts of environmental degradation and climate change in areas of food security, water, agriculture, biodiversity, human rights, peace and security in mitigation and adaptation policies requires immediate attention. Some key points can be summarised as follows:

a) **Gender-analysis**: Gender analysis is crucial in understanding the different ways in which women and men are impacted by environmental policies. It is important to identify how gender intersects with environmental policies affecting different groups of people. Gender analysis of financial mechanisms is also needed to ensure gender sensitive investments in programmes relating to adaptation and mitigation, technology transfer and capacity building in lines with the goals of Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

b) **Greater participation**: Women are often under-represented in the decision-making processes related to environmental policies. It is essential to involve women at all levels of decision-making, from community consultations to national policy discussions. Consultation and participation of women must be ensured and role of community and women groups must be strengthened.

c) **Capacity-building**: Providing training and education for women can help build their capacity to engage in decision-making processes and to contribute to sustainable development. This could include training on sustainable agriculture practices, renewable energy, climate adaptation strategies and skill development programmes which will ensure their full participation in environmental policies.

d) **Evaluation of policy impact**: Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation of environmental policies is critical to understanding whether policies are having the intended impact on women and men. This process should be designed to ensure that woman's experiences and perspectives are wholly captured.

Through such pragmatic actions, governments should ensure greater participation and capacity building of women stakeholders in their national policies and action plans and make use of their knowledge and expertise,

including indigenous and traditional practices. Regarding indigenous knowledge systems, Gabriele Dietrich (1999: 94) argues that women's intimate knowledge of forestry, agriculture, water conservation, seeds, herbal medicine needs to be mobilised and used as against the monopoly of government planning, industrial vested interests and multinational corporations. Such skills can be easily devalued and destroyed by the onslaught of technological innovations leading to greater impoverishments and destruction of cultural identities. How to co-opt such skills in development policies is an urgent task. Women specially in rural areas and in the Third world countries are dependent on nature for the sustenance of themselves and their families and hence destruction of nature comes to be realised as destruction of women's means to sustenance itself which is described aptly as destruction of women's sources of 'staying alive' by Vandana Shiva. Shiva projects modern science and the resulting development process as 'reductionist' and 'masculinist' having the propensity to reduce diversity embedded in nature into homogenous properties. Such reductionism has been the cause of erosion of recognition of women's intimate knowledge about nature and also has been at the heart of the ecological crisis engulfing the world. In a response against the reductionist paradigm of the modern development process with its emphasis on mastery over nature, Shiva calls for a voice of the 'other' or the 'feminine principle' in which nature is viewed as 'Prakriti', an expression of Shakti symbolising the cosmic principle of creation of life through the Purusha-Prakriti (duality in unity) principle (Shiva 1988).

The relationship between environment and gender is complex and multifaceted. There is increasing recognition of the fact that there is disproportionate impact of environmental risks on different genders and women as a category is more vulnerable to climate change and other forms of environmental degradation. Feminists have also argued that mainstream environmental policies have excluded women's experiences and perspectives and hence there is a need for a more intersectional approach to recognize the ways in which gender, race and other social identities intersect with the environment.

Conclusion

The convergence of the categories of environment, gender and development emerged within the context of rapid restructuring of economic, ecological, social and political policies both at the global and local levels. The concept of Environmental justice enables viewing the relationship between individuals

and the environment as a living relationship and in conjunction with the process of creation of life on earth which needs a holistic interpretation through an intersection of different parameters. It calls for an integrated approach to respond to the environmental and humanitarian crises through stemming up accessibility and rule of law, strengthening institutions and the governance system thereby contributing to policy change. In the context of environmental crisis, women are found to be more vulnerable than men as they constitute majority of the world's poor and are also more dependent on natural resources for their survival and also face socio-cultural and political barriers in their coping capabilities. But at the same time, women can also be active agents of change rather than being a passive vulnerable group through their intimate knowledge and expertise of natural resources. Therefore, it is imperative to identify the intersections and linkages between the two and correspond to gender-responsive strategies in relation to mitigation and adaptation strategies within the framework of SDGs.

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AGENCY OF WOMEN WORKERS WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION-THE TALE OF HOME WORK CONVENTION (C177)

Dr. Linamee Das

Abstract

The International Labour Organization (ILO) offers an intriguing case to assess women workers' agency within the Organization. The unique tripartite decision-making structure of the Organization enables workers, who are represented by trade unions, to participate in the process of decision-making. However, women already discriminated against in the world of work, have lesser representation in trade unions. It is more so in developing countries where many women work in the informal economy. But there are some unions in Global South, which unionise women in informal/ unorganized economy. Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), founded by Ela Bhatt (1933-2022) in 1972 is one such union. SEWA was instrumental in the adoption of *the Home Work Convention (C177)* in 1996, a convention that stands relevant even after more than twenty-five years; and more so in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Agency, informal economy, trade unions, SEWA.

As a standard-setting organization, ILO adopts Conventions relating to the rights of workers by consulting the tripartite constituents, i.e., representatives from the government, employersand workers of eachmember state. Workers, who are represented by trade unions in the tripartite structure have their fair share of influence in the decision-making process of the Organization. However, this tripartism of the ILO does not represent the informal or unorganized economy, where most women workers have to work. In light of that, the agency of women workers within the ILO deserves attention. Women, who are already discriminated against in the world of work, have lesser representation in trade unions both in terms of membership and decision-making power because of numerous reasons which will be

discussed below. The limited membership and exclusion from the decision-making process in the trade union also limit women workers' agency within the ILO. However, there exist some unions such as the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), basedin a developing country like India, which has emerged as a remarkable forum for women workers in the informal economy. SEWA, founded by Ela Bhatt in 1972 from the women's wing of the Textile Labour Association (TLA), played a crucial role in the adoption of *the Home Work Convention (C177)* in 1996. Hence, issues like how women workers advocate for their interests even after limited membership in trade unions, and how unions like SEWA advocate within the ILO, deserveclose attention.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section- Women in the World of Work focuses on women workers'predicament and why their concerns as workers matter in the ILO. With reference to expanding the size of the informal economy, their plight is assessed. The second section- The Participation and Representation of Women in Trade Unionsemphasises onwomen's representation and agency in mainstreamtrade unions, as these unions are represented in the tripartism of the ILO. The third section- SEWAand the Tale of*Home-Work Convention (C177)* focuses on this exceptional trade union of women workers which has been influential within and around ILO. In that context, the phenomenal contribution of Ela Bhatt is also considered. By focusing on the process of adoption of the *Home Work Convention*, the agency of SEWA is examined and how traditional trade unions view this union of informal workers is assessed. This section is followed by a conclusion.

The paper is based on secondary sources comprising journal articles and book chapters. In terms of primary sources publications of the ILO and SEWA have been referred to. Interviews have been conducted with ILO researchers and members of IUF, WIEGO etc.

Women at Work

As participants in the labour market, women are in a disadvantageous position both in quantitative and qualitative terms. In the formal or organized sector, women are numerically less, whereas in the informal or unorganized economy they have overrepresentation. If the employment rate of women is considered, it is less compared to their male counterparts. As per the United Nations' five-yearly report 'The World's Women: 2020 Trends and Statistics'

the percentage of men in the labour force is 74 per cent while for women it is 47 per cent (Unite Nations, 2020).

Women have entered various fields of employment in the last few decades and they are continuing to make inroads into many male-dominated professions such as defence, however, their presence is very limited in such workplaces. It is a normal tendency to extrapolate the gender roles of the home to the workplace. The work profile of women is generally defined by the role that they supposedly have to play at home. Therefore, women are mainly employed in the healthcare and teaching sector because of their conventional role of caregiving and nurturing while their male counterparts overshadow other professions in the formal sector. Although there is a recent rise in women workers' number, it is only in the informal economy (Anker & Hein, 1985, pp. 75-77; Standing, 1999, p. 583; Hussmanns, 2004, p. 9; Chen, 2002, p. 3, Bacchetta,Ernst& Bustamante, 2009,p.112; International Labour Conference, 2009; Ramani,Thutupalli, Medovarszki, Chattopadhyay & Ravichandran2013, p. 1 and Sharma, 2015).

As per ILO's 2018 report, 60 per cent of the world's population, which is 2 billion women and men, earn their livelihood in the informal economy. Informal employment is significant in developing countries as it covers one-half to three-quarters of non-agricultural employment and therepresentation of women is overwhelming there. The number of women in the informal economy is around 89 per cent in South Asia, 90 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 75 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean (Ramani et al. 2013, p. 1 and International Labour Organization, 2018a). There are many reasons that explain the higher participation rate of women in the informal economy. Women can go for self-employed, home-based, part-time or casual work, as they are also entrusted with the household work sincethese kinds of jobs offer flexibility in terms of working hours (Chen, 2001; Ramani et al., 2013, p. 2 and Das, 2017, p. 111).However, the working condition and the rights of workers in the informal economy are very difficult to protect. Although it provides work and financial assistance to many women, the work conditions are unregulated, unprotected and sometimes precarious. The jobs in the informal economy are mostly low-wage, low-skilled, dead-end, and the workers are easily dispensable (Akubue, 2001, p. 3; Chen, Vanek& Heintz,2006, p. 2133; Albin, 2012, p. 2 and Janardhanan, 2015).

In terms of wages, women workers are paid less as they are viewed as unskilled workers. There is a disparity in average wages between salaried

men and women both in developed and developing countries. The wage gap is more in the informal economy where women are engaged in casual and piece work. Although the formal sector is regulated, the gap persists. (International Labour Office, 2010, p. 52; Nghia, 2010, p. 3; International Labour Conference, 2011 and World Bank, 2012, pp. 201-202). The Global Wage Report 2018-19 of ILO states that the global gender pay gap is around 16 per cent (Pillay, 2018).

By narrating the case of the garment industry, Enloe (2014, pp. 263-67) has illustrated how women's work is made low-priced because of norms constructed by a patriarchal society. According to her women are considered 'naturally' and 'traditionally' good at sewing and are paid a low wage on that account. The employers believe that a work which someone does 'naturally' is not a skill. By elucidating the case of women lace makers from Narsapur, Andhra Pradesh, Mies (2012, pp. 55-56) shows how home-based wage labourers are not even considered workers. The manufacturers and local officials consider that lace making is a way to spend leisure time for those women who actually devote six to eight hours per day to that task. Most women have to work more than eight hours a day as they have to perform household work too. As a result, the real work involved is ignored (Daniels, 1987, p. 405 and Hale, 1997, p. 14).While work from home is different from home-based work, the home has become the domain of work at a time of the pandemic. However, the home has always been a workplace, with clear-cut division of labour endorsed by tradition and societal norms. This renders women's work invisible and unrecognized in official surveys (Bergan, 2009, p. 221). Women work as subsistence farmers, and at home as unaccounted caregiver. According to an ILO report, women perform 76.2 per cent of total unpaid care work (James, 2012, p. 67 Federici, 2014, International Labour Organization, 2018b). Women's work is also presumed to be safe and therefore little attention is paid to their occupational safety and health. If they start facing health problems, usually, the reason is attributed to either unfitness for the job or hormonal factors (Forastieri, 2010, p. 5; Morse, 2010 and Stellman,Lucas & Anderson, 2012, pp. 245-46).

The pandemic and post-pandemic period are particularly difficult for these workers in the informal economy. According to an ILO report, 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy are severely affected by COVID-19 in the first wave (International Labour Organization, 2020). Already in precarious job condition, these workers have suffered unprecedented hardship

due to the global health disaster. In India alone, the influx from metros, and major cities uprooted many migrant workers from their workplaces without any assurance of security or protection. The volume of unpaid care work also increased for women during this time. The Pandemic was not just a global health crisis but a socio-economic crisis too.Rather than the proverbial 'we are in this together,' the norm of 'social distancing' prevailed in the war against the disease by distancing people of different strata. The disproportionate level of suffering and burden sharing on the part of the poorest of the poor is a wake-up call to consider these people in the informal economy in protective legislation and policies.

Although recognized, all these issues are not resolved, even after so many years of the trade union movement. Therefore, women themselves have to raise their concerns in forums related to workers' conditions. The ILO being the International Organization dedicated to social justice, betterment of workers' condition and protection of their rights gives that platform. Within the ambit of ILO, the tripartite constituents- government representatives, International Organization for Employers (IOE) and International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) representing employers and trade unions respectively, can negotiate and bargain in the International Labour Conference (ILC) for their interests. However, is it easy for women's group to register their concerns in the ILO as workers? The answer to this question requires examiningtheir representation and participation in trade unions.

The Participation and Representation of Women in Trade Unions

The ILO is a unique organization with a tripartite decision-making structure. In the ILO each member state is represented by two Government delegates (in most cases Cabinet Ministers), one representative from employers' groups and one from employees' groups. While this feature sets the ILO aside from other organizations and is also credited as the reason why it survived the First World War unlike the League of Nations, the same feature is criticized for not being able to give space to the expanding unorganized sector. It is basically the mainstream trade unions that represent workers in the tripartite structure (Faupl, 1969, p. 44 and Razavi& Miller, 1995, p. 49). Representation and participation of women in mainstream trade unions are in a poor state even to date.

However, before dealing with their membership in trade unions a brief look at what agency mean is needed. The theoretical conceptualization of agency is very meticulous in Sociology. Many sociologists and theorists have given their interpretation of the term. Nonetheless, the idea of agency refers to 'freedom, free will, action, a possibility of change through an act of a free agent.' Agency is socially constructed and differentially distributed resources that determine its expanse. As a result, some actors can exercise more agency compared to others (Barker, 2003, pp. 236-237). In this paper, women workers' agency within the ILO is examined with reference to their agency within the trade unions. Trade unions have an important role in the ILO as representatives of the employees. However, the membership of women in trade unions and their ability to influence decisions within trade unions needs a critical look.

A trade union, by definition, represents the interests of workers or employees in the non-agricultural sector. Initially, unionism happened among male factory workers. However, with the evolution of the capitalist economy and developmental process, trade unions became more representative. Nonetheless, the formal sector is the focal point of such unionization with the domination of a specific segment of workers-male, blue-collared workers. As a result, women, who over-represent the informal economy as contingent workers, i.e., part-time, casual, temporary, and contract workers, along with immigrant workers are numerically weak in trade unions. Since the number of such workers is increasing in the present global economy, they should not be neglected in any form of representation meant for the betterment of workers' conditions. Indeed, the ILO has adopted amelioratingmeasures for these workers in its present agendas and frameworks on numerous occasions. However, there are inherent limitations in organizing these groups of workers. These flexible groups of workers came into being in the global economy because they are non-unionized andeasily expendable for employers. As they do not enjoy permanent or even long-term employment in a particular firm or place, it is difficult to establish a point of contact. In addition to such complexities, they might have dual employers, one principal employer and the other a contractor. These kinds of employment also lack contractual agreements and rights for the workers. Thus, unionization among such workers is a real challenge (Ledwith& Colgan, 2001, p. 3; Sundar, 2007, pp. 713-714 andKhan, 2010, p. 6). In a research report compiled by Global Labour University alumni, a few barriers have been identified that limit women's participation in trade unions. These barriers are patriarchal culture, male hostility and resistance, sexual harassment, unwillingness to share power, and household work (Chong & Ledwith, 2010, p. 9).

However, it does not mean that the informal economy and women workers are completely excluded from the trade union movement. The growing number of such workers makes it pertinent for the trade unions to consider them within their ambit. These categories of workers have also become vocal about their rights as workers. Thus, trade unions started to include women workers in their membership. Undoubtedly, membership provides strength to these unions as an entity. Otherwise, a fragmented and heterogeneous working class would create a crisis in the union movement. Membership of these workers not only increases the number of trade unions but also strengthens them. By including women workers, trade unions also enjoy legitimacy because of the added social dimension (Sundar, 2007, pp. 719-720). Although the door of membership opened for women and informal workers because of transitions in the global economy and labour market, the concerns of these groups of workers have not found their place in the unions' main agenda. Ideally, trade unions' priorities should include the needs and expectations of their members (Ratnam, 2007, p. 626).

Forrest (2001, pp. 658-659) identified a prominent problem of industrial relations that emphasises on similarities between men and women, although there is proper documentation of women's paid and unpaid work. Based on interviews conducted among workers and union representatives of an auto parts packaging plant in Canada she found that gender dimension was not given much importance in union campaigns. The workers' concerns, i.e., job security, fairness, and dignity did not seem to be gender specific by the interviewees. Some women interviewees acknowledged certain issues that they face for being women, such as unfair treatment, precarious job security etc. Dash (2019, pp. 32-34) conducted such aninterview-based study among committee members of Contract Workers' Union in India and drew three findings- (i) full participation of women is a myth, (ii) masculine leadership dominates unions, (iii) participation is monopolized by certain individuals holding an important position.

Hence, women workers' concerns are yet to become a priority issue in the agenda of many trade unions. Studies have found that trade unions exclude women from the decision-making structure. Gill Kirton, an employment relation expert, finds out about this in the United Kingdom. According to her, there is a democratic deficit in the union as women are underrepresented in the decision-making structure from the local level of workplace representatives to paid officials and executive bodies. Linda Dickens, Professor of Industrial Relations at Warwick Business School also finds that women workers' concerns are not adequately addressed. Women workers have other inherent constraints because of the double workloads at the workplace and at home. This puts them in a difficult position to take responsibility as union officeholders. According to another report by Global Labour University alumni, prepared in 2011, women comprise only 20 per cent of bargaining teams. Even when women have representation in the decision-making structure it does not necessarily mean that they represent the interest of working women. There are some unions like UNISON (UK) which have tried gender democracy strategies, i.e., reservation of seats in proportion to the number of women in the constituency but the desired result of empowerment has not been achieved. Many observe that the quota system would not bring change if it is not coupled with a change in the gendered division of labour between men and women (Yilmaz, 2014, p. 107). In most cases, new women members of unions are less likely to take part in the bargaining process. As result, men who are deemed to be experienced remain in an important position. Women members exercise self-censorship as they do not want to be accused of dividing issues of a larger movement. Women's issues like pay inequality and menstrual leave are considered subordinate to other demands within trade unions. At the time of negotiation with employers, these items are traded off from the agenda of trade unions. Employers often disagree with provisions which deem to be costly such as day-care facilities for working mothers or special leave for women workers. Barring reproductive health and protection against sexual harassment, all other women-related proposals in collective bargaining are traded off most of the time. Indeed, many unions do not pursue legal provision related to women workers and in many cases, workers' right is considered gender-neutral (Baker & Robeson, 1981, p. 26; McBride, 2001, pp. 1-8; Gracia,2002;Britwum& Ledwith, 2014, p. 8 and Lurie, 2014, pp. 94-96).

As a result of such discrimination and biases, women still find it difficult to have agency in trade unions. Their weak position in trade unions weakens their stand in the ILO. Thus, the tripartite structure comes into the picture again. In a personal interview, an ILO official expressed thatthe representative nature of ITUC and the IOE is very limited. Trade Unions do not represent the diverse world of work. The exclusive nature of the ILO's tripartism is also addressed by R. Cox (1971). According to him, the representational gap within the organization due to the lack of representation of informal, unorganized workers from developing countries became more

noticeable. In these countries, the size of the formal sector is minuscule so the trade unions are weak and employers' organizations hardly exist (Webster, 2011, p. 10). As a result, large numbers of the working population are also excluded from the decision-making process in the ILO.

However, there are instances of resilience when many women workers and activists fought their way to be part of not only the decision-making process in the ILC but also influence the standard setting process of ILO. SEWA was ironically formed around the same time when scholars were debating the limitation of the tripartite system and eventually became a trade union to be reckoned with.

SEWAand the Tale of Home-Work Convention (C177)

SEWA, which is based in a developing country, India, has made its mark as a women workers' trade union and has been a strong mover of some of the frameworks of the ILO ever since its formation.

India has a long history of trade unionism, one of the first unions Madras Labour Union was formed in 1918 and the first union movement happened after the First World War to coordinate activities of individual unions (Elembilassery, 2018, p. 437).However, unionization is still low in Indian working class. The density of trade unions is also lowest in India in the Asia Pacific region (Kapoor, 2007, p. 557). Unionization is even lower in the informal economy where women overrepresent (Spooner, 2004, p. 25 and Chatterjee, 2014, p. 45).In the case of India, women are underrepresented in trade unions. Sen (2021, p. 378) traced women's membership and leadership in trade unions in India during the colonial period. Although she talked about upper-class women steering union activities when male leaders were in jails, their participation dwindled from the 1950s. As per her a form of hypermasculinity in unionism emerged, as middle-class male leaders and working-class intermediate leaders capitalized on the helm of affairs. When the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), one of the major central unions of India was formed in 1970 there were no women members. By 2011 the membership of women was 31.9 per cent, which is an improvement. So, out of 5796033 members from 4487 unions, 1850892 were women members in 2011 (Rashmi, 2018, p. 618). Given this background and even the present condition, SEWA is incontrovertibly a union that deserves accolades. The section- *Women in the World of Work* has already portrayed the condition of women workers in the informal economy and how they are discriminated against. The previous section establishes how women workers lack decision-

making power in trade unions. Therefore, SEWA holds a unique position by being a trade union of unorganized women workers.

SEWA was founded in 1972 as a trade union by self-employed women workers in India comprising 14,12,148 members by 2017 (Kapoor, 2007, p. 557 and Self-Employed Women's Association, 2020). Ela Bhatt's role in the foundation of SEWA deserves special attention. Bhatt herself documented how the condition of women in the informal economy moved her to form SEWA in her book *We are Poor but So Many: The Story of Self-Employed Women in India*(2006). Even after a lifetime of service to women in the informal economy, she proceeded to describe the formation with a humble note that she could not claim to speak for these women but for herself. She through her account of experience and actions captured the history of SEWA as well as the state of women in the informal economy. She also credited her husband Ramesh Bhatt's support and help while charting this history.

Her journey with trade unions began in 1955 when she joined the legal department of TLA, which already had a unique origin. TLA was founded by Anasuya Sarabhai, the first woman trade union leader in India, and Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. Sarabhai also opened a women's wing in that union (Pathak, 2018).

A gradual decline of the textile industry in Ahmedabad in the 1960s led Bhatt to realize the unaccounted role of women in the informal economy. In 1968 when two major textile mills closed down Bhatt was tasked with a survey to assess the impact of the closure on families that depended on those mills. During her survey, she came across the reality that when men were protesting for the reopening of the mills, women shouldered the responsibility of running the homes. Bhatt recounted-

It was women who were earning money and feeding the family. They sold fruits and vegetables in the streets; stitched in their homes at a piece rate for middlemen; worked as labourers in wholesale commodity markets, loading and unloading merchandise; or collected recyclable refuse from city streets... These were informal, home-based jobs operated outside of any labour laws or regulations. They were jobs without definitions. I learned for the first time what it meant to be self-employed. None of the labour laws applied to them; my legal training was of no use in their case. Ironically, I first glimpsed the vastness of the informal sector while working for the formal sector. One was unprotected, the other protected-although both contributed to the national economy… to lump, such workforce into categories viewed

as ‘marginal,’‘informal,’‘unorganized,’‘peripheral,’‘atypical,’ or ‘the black economy’ seemed absurd to me. Marginal and peripheral to what, I asked. The mainstream was shrinking and the margins were getting wider! In my eyes, they were simply ‘self-employed.’ The diverse occupations of the self-employed evolved out of traditional, inherited occupational skills adapted to the changing needs of the times. Such diversity and adaptability signified the strength of the women! What they needed was the support of society and their government (Bhatt, 2006, pp. 8-9).

Hence, to give them a voice as workers Ela Bhatt or Elaben as she was called, not only founded a union but also initiated a movement. As an organization as well as a movement, SEWA exhibits an unprecedented commitment to improving the condition of the poorest in the informal economy, like petty vendors, domestic workers, laundry workers, contract labours, landless agricultural labours, construction workers, home-based workers, artisans and craftswomen, weavers, potters and the like. Through cooperatives, SEWA provides direct benefits to women workers in the informal economy and also helps unionization among the most unorganized (Saini, 2007,p. 826; Self-Employed Women’s Association, 2020 and Bonner, Horn &amp Jhabvala, 2018, p. 180).

As a result of SEWA’s work in the informal economy, the ILO India Office contacted it for a legal and policy research project aiming at increasing knowledge of informal women workers in 1980. The study initially tried to see how the workers could be included within the ambit of existing labour laws. However, it was soon decided that instead of bringing these workers within the ambit of existing laws, a new law would offer a better solution. So, based on the research, SEWA prepared a bill to address the labour rights of home-based workers. Bhatt, who was a Member of the Parliament of India then, presented the draft bill. Although the bill was not passed as an Act, it was the first time in the country that the informal workers became visible in the policy-making parlance. Nonetheless, SEWA continued its work for the informal workers both in the national and international domains. At the national level, the union has extended its branches far and wide in India. SEWA’s hard work has also brought policy changes in the country. In 2004, the Government of India approved a policy protecting street vendors and in 2008 passed legislation on the social security of informal workers (International Labour Organization, 2012 and Bonner et al., 2018, pp. 182).

The organization is also associated with international networks; SEWA collaborated with the International Federations of Food Workers (IUF) and

Textile, Garment, and Leather Workers (ITGLWF) and with some national trade unions to propagate home-based workers’ concerns. SEWA also assumed a pivotal position in the development of national and transnational networks. It founded the National Alliance of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), Street Net International and HomeNet International. Along with Harvard University and UNIFEM, SEWA initiated the Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) network in 1997 to bring together organizations of informal women workers. The network helps other membership-based organizations (MBOs) to organize, advocate, and also in fundraising. WIEGO also plays an important role in incorporating its research into mainstream labour economics (Crowell, 2003; Datta, 2003, pp. 355- 364 and Kapoor, 2007, pp. 557- 560).

Along with these networks and MBOs, SEWA continued its work to give home-based workers a framework to safeguard their rights as a worker. Women’s trade unions from other countries also recognized the need to have a framework for these neglected workers. SEWA connected with many home-based workers’ organizations from other countries like- Australia, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Spain. These organizations were trade unions and NGOs dedicated to the cause of home-based workers. These organizations came together along with SEWA to have a Convention for home-based workers. HomeNet International became the lobbying front, and trade unions like the Dutch Trade Union Federation (FNV- *Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging*) and the German Trade Union Federation (DGB- *DeutscherGewerkschaftsbund*) helped HomeNet with fund and advocacy.UNIFEM helped in making contacts with governments. These organizations are also associated with ILO’s tripartite committee for the clothing industry, the staff of the Programme on Rural Women of EMPLOI andone of the Technical sections of the International Labour Office. The contribution of individuals like Martha Chen and JenneferSebstad is mention-worthy, as they provided much-needed statistical data to establish the case of home-based workers internationally (Bonner et al., 2018, p. 183 and Boris, 2021, p. 123).

In 1991, a Meeting of Experts on the Social Protection of Home Workers in Geneva was organized by the ILO in response to the campaign led by SEWA. Since then, home-based work has become a part of the ILO and the European Union’s agenda. However, it took a few more years to have a Convention on home-based workers. In the 82nd session of the ILC in 1995, the Committee on home-based workers carried out a contentious

discussion among employers, governments and workers' groups. The employers' group was against any Convention on home-based workers as they considered that it was difficult to ascertain their number and their work and there was no statistical evidence to determine these issues. The governments were also uncertain because of the same reason. Some trade unions also disputed the issue of home-based workers. They opined proposition of the Convention would undermine the wage agreements reached in factories and also render trade union movements weak. The presence of SEWA, which only had an observer status along with HomeNet, was also viewed with contempt by many trade unions. Some remarked that it was not a 'real' trade union (Datta, 2003, p. 364 and Bonner et al., 2018, p. 184). Thus, the discussion in the Committee was intense regarding the Convention.

The workers' group had compelling arguments. The IUF UITA IUL (Uniting food, farm and hotel workers worldwide) expressed-

The expansion of home-based work at the expense of formal, regulated employment deepens labour market inequalities both internationally and at the national level. Without international standards establishing minimal conditions and terms of employment, home-based workers are trapped in a global race to the bottom as employers compete internationally to produce at the lowest possible unit cost. Society as a whole is the loser in this global competition...there is no proof that minimum standards have reduced employment opportunities. What is true, however, is that the absence of minimum standards has contributed to the growth of child labour as the wages paid to home-workers are often far below the minimum requirement...the function of a Convention is to establish minimum standards. The proposed Convention is a flexible one, whose application, like all international Conventions, can under no circumstances serve to weaken existing national legislation which may contain specific provisions to the minimum standards (WIEGO).

In the 83rd session of ILC in 1996, the workers' group were ready with statistical evidence to show that the informal sector is expanding in the present global economy. According to Barbro Budin's account (2018) after the conclusion of the previous year's ILC, Ela Bhatt realized that it would be essential to have statistical data to present to the Committee in the next year's meeting. Therefore, she contacted Martha Chen, Lecturer at Harvard Kennedy School for help. Chen managed to get some statisticians to assemble the data. Hence, for the second meeting in 1996, there was a small booklet of data with Harvard University's stamp on it and that proved the credibility

of the research work. As a result, the employers could not keep arguing that there were no data. Thus, the process of negotiation had to be initiated for a Convention.

The negotiation process of the Convention was litigious. The definition of a home-based worker was debated in the Committee. There were two types of home-based workers in SEWA and in the Global South, the first type- individuals who work under a contractor and are paid by the piece rate and the second type-individuals who directly sell their produce in the market. On the other hand, in the Global North, the second category of self-employed workers doesn't exist, therefore, many trade unions from developed countries were not ready to consider this second category of workers. Thus, a compromise had to be made and self-employed home-based workers were not considered in the Convention. It was only after 2002 when Resolution concerning Decent Work and the Informal Economy was adopted, that the ILO officially recognized self-employed individuals as workers (Bonner et al., 2018, p. 184).

Interestingly, SEWA and HomeNet had observer's status in the Committee; however, their years-long lobbying along with WIEGO, led to the adoption of the *Home Work Convention* (C177) in 1996. Ela Bhatt was also in the Expert Committee to help draft a report to outline the course of the discussion. Thus, despite hostility from the employers' groups, the Committee succeeded in achieving enough votes in favour of the Convention. Lobbying in national government paid off as many governments supported the Convention. It also broadened ILO's narrow definition of work by including informal and home-based workers. According to Ela Bhatt, before this Convention was adopted, the ILO had a narrow vision of the definition of work as employer-employee transactions (Rowbotham, 1995; Vosko, 2002, p. 35; Nayak, 2003, pp. 410-411; Boris & Jensen, 2012, p. 7; International Labour Organization, 2014 and Bonner et al., 2018, pp. 184-185).

The broadened approach of the ILO towards the definition of work subsequently led to the adoption of the *Domestic Workers Convention (C189)* in 2011. SEWA again played a crucial role in the adoption of this Convention. The field study conducted by the SEWA to understand the migration of women and girls to work in the domestic sphere which also leads to trafficking at times is one of the pushes behind the adoption of the mentioned Convention. However, the most remarkable role is played by the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), a WIEGO affiliate and federation of domestic workers of the world. This network was instrumental

in mobilizing domestic workers to come together and raise their voices for their rights (International Labour Organization, 2015 and Fish, 2017).

Thus, SEWA, a union of informal, unorganized workers has exerted a considerable impact on these frameworks of the ILO. Its partner unions and organizations have provided a voice to neglected and excluded sections of the economy. Now that their concerns have become clauses in the mentioned Conventions, the agency of women within the tripartite structure and trade unions can be assumed to be improved. However, SEWA has been subjected to humiliation and non-recognition as a trade union by other leading trade unions. The cold war between conventional trade unions and SEWA upholds the former's inclination towards the status quo. SEWA which was initially associated with TLA was no longer tolerated by the latter. There were often clashes regarding the demands of SEWA within TLA. Thus, in 1981 SEWA started an independent journey (SEWA 2016). However, the obstacles were not over. In 2005 SEWA applied for the status of a central trade union. But they faced rejection by a Standing Committee comprised of twelve members of Central Trade Union Organizations (CTUOs). The reason for rejection was that SEWA was not registered in four states of India. SEWA took legal recourse and emerged victorious to become a central union. The same thing happened again when it applied to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) for membership in 2005. The opposition came from the existing Indian affiliates of the ICFTU. Fortunately, a Mission from the ICFTU visited the SEWA to examine these objections. Subsequently, SEWA has been admitted to its fold later. These incidents are an indication of the fact that new forms of labour organizationsare not welcomed by mainstream, conventional trade unions (Ratnam, 2000, p. 87; Sundar, 2006,p. 911 and Sundar, 2007, pp. 727-729).

Recalling such an ordeal, Ela Bhatt in the inaugural speech of National Centre for Labour, (1995) quoted-

How can I forget the day at an Annual Conference of one Central Labour Union where I was a delegate of SEWA, representing the unorganized women workers and speaking about their problems of exploitation and I was hooted out. The others made me sound ridiculous! There was no one delegate to support me there at that time except my own members! We had to swallow the humiliation... what place it (unorganized sector) has in the labour movement? The labour of the unorganized sector remains totally unrepresented at all the significant forums of decision-making. We want our representation there... I say that the unorganized sector labour remains

unrepresented because of the combined bias of our Government and the Organized Trade Unions who have merely 7% workforce of the country within which only 25% to 30% are unionized. Let us build up our organized strength to reclaim our rightful place in the mainstream. When unorganized labour will be recognized by the mainstream (we are the mainstream, in fact), the whole structure of society - economic and social - will be changed. Private and Public Sectors, of course, will remain, but the People's Sector will become the most important backbone of the national economy. And we are the People's Sector. We are the majority (Ratnam, 2007, pp. 632-633).

Renana Jhabvala, National Coordinator of SEWA also recounts:

We are workers and want to register a trade union, Ela Bhatt, the founder of SEWA, and a group of head-loaders and street vendors told the Registrar of Trade Unions in Ahmedabad, India, 40 years ago. "We want to name it the Self-Employed Women's Association." The Registrar was uncertain, "You don't have any employer, you don't work in factories, how can you be called workers?" he asked. "And you are all women. We cannot have a trade union with only women" (Bonner et al., 2018, p. 179).

These statements by Bhatt and Jhabvala succinctly capture how conventional trade unions consider women workers and union by them. This aversion by conventional trade unions coupled with the complexities that they encounter many women's trade union leaders feel that their role and responsibilities are more difficult than male union leaders. They have to be exemplary to lead un-unionised women. They are also burdened with household work that male leaders do not have. Thus, in their comparison male leaders find more time to devote to their union work (Britwum, 2014, pp. 127-28). Notably, Bhatt was not even allowed to talk in the Plenary session for the *Home-Work Convention* because of the exclusionary nature of tripartism. Ironically, she was one of the ardent initiators of this Convention (Budin, 2018). As it is apparent, mainstream trade unions at times try to create an obstacle for unions by women workers. These constraints prove that it was not an easy journey for SEWA to reach out to the ILO with the concerns of women workers. It has also become obvious that agency within trade unions determines agency within the ILO. Luckily, the determination of Bhatt bore fruit and SEWA has become one of the mainstream and influential trade unions today.

Conclusion

It is difficult to quantify something such as the agency of women workers within the ILO. The conventional and mainstream trade unions are not representative of women workers or their concerns. This impacts women who work in the informal economy or perform unconventional work. The expansion of the Global economy and subsequent transition in the world of work requires the Organization to expand its vocabulary, standards and frameworks. Thus, the unconventional unions are not only lobbying and campaigning for the interests of the groups that they represent but also drawing ILO's attention to the ever-changing labour market. In the process, they have achieved or have been trying to achieve agency within the Organization. SEWA along with UNIFEM, WIEGO, and HomeNet have earned the distinction of having some amount of agency within the organization. However, does their work and having a Convention impact the lives of home-based workers needed to be addressed. More than twenty years have passed since the adoption of this Convention; so, it is expected that there is an improvement in the lives of home-based workers. However, there is still an ongoing movement by these workers for their rights. The ratification rate of the Convention draws the real picture. There are only ten countries that have ratified the Convention so far including- Albania, Argentina, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Tajikistan, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Ironically, India has not ratified the Convention, although SEWA played a crucial role in the adoption of this Convention. Nevertheless, the positive development lies in the fact that a movement has emerged from this process and workers worldwide have become more united. Attention is drawn to the informal economy, and unconventional work and subsequently another movement has emerged- the movement by the domestic workers, for an International Convention. In terms of ratification, the *Domestic Workers Convention* is more successful than the former. So far, twenty-five countries have ratified it in the last seven years. According to Barbro Budin (2018), when the *Home-Work Convention* was adopted, the World was not yet ready for such a framework; which may explain the low rate of ratification.Indeed, ratification or non-ratification by states is a curious case and a lot of literature exists explaining such behaviour of the states. Most often many states do not ratify a Convention on the ground that there are already existent national policies in the country dealing with the issue. In fact, constituents of the tripartite structure of a particular country continue with their lobbying within the country when the government considers a Convention for ratification or non-ratification.

Nonetheless, a movement has emerged and workers in the informal economy have become aware of their rights as workers and the role of organizing for collective bargaining. Thus, the inclusive nature of trade unions and broader outlook would make the world of work much better for workers, even for those who are in the informal economy. But the path remains long as the informal economy is becoming more complex and unregulated. Therefore, there are many more issues that the ILO also needs to consider as a world forum dedicated to workers' betterment. Even though the ILO's credibility is questioned because of its lack of sanctioning authority, this organization will remain an important one in today's world. Its unique tripartite structure (which needs reform to become more inclusive) and frameworks including Conventions, Recommendations and Declarations definitely influence the world of work.

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WOMEN EXPERIENCES IN INFORMAL WORK: INTERSECTION OF GENDER, SOCIAL HIERARCHY AND WORK

Dr. Phulmoni Das

Abstract

The present study aims at understanding the gendered experiences of women working in informal sector and the degree of vulnerabilities faced by them in unorganised sector by focusing on wage earners in a construction site. Discussion primarily focuses on the narratives of the women workers and their everyday experiences in work site through different subthemes covering their views on wage discrimination, worksite vulnerabilities, their socio-economic status and its impact on their work life.

Key Words: Informal Work, Women, Patriarchy, Capitalism, Social Hierarchy.

Introduction

With the process of globalization, Indian political economy has entered into a new phase under which global flows of capital, commodities, information and people are regulated. The process of globalization and new economic policy in India has created both new opportunities and new challenges for the working-class section of the society. The changes introduced in India since 1990s have also transformed the discourse of capitalism and the existing class dominance in the society. Dismantling of license regime, greater entry of foreign capital and opening up of different sectors such as infrastructure, transport, banking, information and technology etc. to private capital have enabled many new entrants into capitalist class. This has further led Indian economy to set up a more unorganized or informal sector. This is usually defined as a unit belonging to the informal sector which can be identified in terms of the small size of the enterprise, the small number of workers employed or relatively unregulated nature of business. Post Globalization of Indian economy is marked by huge set of informalisation, wide scale of informal economy and informal workers who remain mostly invisible. Indian

economy has dominance of informal and unorganized sector both in terms of number of workers and enterprises. The biggest challenge with the informal workers in India is the lack of adequate information about the total numbers of workers engaged in informal sector.

India initiated many important policy changes towards liberalization and privatization of its economy from the late 1980s onwards especially through structural adjustments policies (SAP). These SAPs opened India's economy to globalised world and has made it a part of private capital. With SAP the nature of the Indian economy and labour market changed drastically. The private sector expanded with the state withdrawing from welfare activities and giving away more power to private capital and market forces. These changes brought by SAP in the nature of work available and both in the quantity and quality of work, have had a strong impact on India's women workers (Agarwala, 2013). Accordingly SAP is one of the reasons for the increasing growth of informal sector and so-called unskilled work was hugely subcontracted and de-regularized. It has opened up another new phase in the integration of women workers into capitalist development in the history of India. Moreover, the expanded labour market has further provided the way to exploitation of women's labour with unequal payment and unjust policies. SAP has some positive impact on a small minority of educated and skilled women in paid work, while it has negative impact on the poorer, unskilled section of the majority of women workers. Like in many other developing countries, in India too, women's work participation rates (WPRs) not only declined but the work was also increasingly casualised.

Workforce can be categorized as - formal or organized sector and informal or unorganized sector. The 'organized sector' covers all public sector enterprises including Government and Semi-Government organizations. The organized sector is covered or protected by various laws and acts. The unorganized sector covers all the rest, mainly all the unincorporated enterprises and household industries (not covered under organized sector) which are not regulated by any legislation' (Agarwala, 2013). The informal growth of economy or the informalisation of economy is the calculative and strategic outcome of global capitalism. As Kalyan Sanyal has opined that globalization is leading to the economic marginalization of huge numbers of people in third world countries. These people are being confined to a space of informal survivalism (Sanyal, 2013).

The role of state is necessary to interpret, while discussing the nature of capitalist development in case of India. Corporatization of Indian state has declined the role of state and opened up some of the major sectors to market in the name of reform, development or modernization which again led to the emergence of vast section of marginalized and deprived section mostly from the informal sector. Informalisation of economy is the significant outcome of post colonial capital, which mostly signifies the vulnerability that is associated with the process of informalisation. An important aspect of quality of employment in India is the predominance of informal sector. The size of the organised sector characterised by higher earnings and job security is small, it accounted for less than 6% of the total employment in 2004-05 (Mohapatra, 2012). Over the years employment in organised sector has been declining and the faster growth of unorganised sector is seen particularly. As a result, there has been increasing informalisation of employment over the years. This informalisation has been more pronounced in case of female workers. About 96% of female employment is in unorganised sector as against 91% of males (Mohapatra, 2012). Indian economy has preponderance of informal and unorganised sector both in terms of workers and enterprises. The biggest problem with the informal sector in India is that there is no precise information about the total numbers of workers engaged in this sector. Moreover, the definition and percentage of unorganised sector are blurry and confusing. Most of the people working in unorganised sector are not covered under labour legislation and they have no protection in terms of employment. They are at the mercy of the employer.

In this process of informalisation of Indian economy, it is the women workers who are one of the most vulnerable sections of the labour force. Unequal wages, lack of welfare schemes and regulations, especially in the informal sector makes the condition of women informal workers most deplorable. With the further growth of new liberal economy, there is massive entry of women work force into both formal and informal economic process. However, it is significantly in the informal sector or in unorganised sector, that the participation of women is seen mostly. In respect to women's work, as Jayati Ghosh has mentioned certain paradoxes are seen in recent decades. With respect to women's work, there have been four apparently contradictory trends; simultaneous increase in women's paid work, underpaid labour, unpaid labour and the open unemployment of women (Ghosh, 2018). Another interpretation of the exploitation of women's work as feminisation of labour technically replacing the term 'sexual division of labour' emerged in the post-

globalised context. This phenomenon can be used particularly to describe the impact of globalisation on the role of state in the developing economies, withdrew from their responsibilities, particularly from welfare policies for the people in social sector. It refers to the rapid and substantial increase in the proportions of women in paid employment over the last two decades. The de-regularisation of labour markets, fragmentations of production process, de-industrialisation and new areas of export specialisation have all generated an increased demand for low-paid, flexible female labour force. It can be said that even though employment opportunities may have increased, but weak immobile labour class has been left at the mercy of mobile and powerful capital. Evidently bargaining power of the labour irrespective of gender is on decline.

Moreover, post-independent India witnessed a consistent decline in the agricultural sector production and gradual decline of rural economy. Majority of women workers were involved in these sectors and its decline naturally marginalised their existence. This has pushed the women to migrate and join the unorganised section of the economy and have turned them as informal workers involving in various activities which are devoid of getting any formal rules, safety or welfare provision regarding work. Women workers in the informal sector work as piece rate workers, self employed workers, paid workers in the informal enterprises, unpaid workers in the family business, casual workers without fixed employers and as wage-earners etc. India after 1990s has gradually opened itself up to the global economy, becoming part of the globalised world of private capital. The changes brought in the economy have also made a strong impact on women's work in terms of both quantity and quality. With the rise of informal sector, unskilled work has gradually become hugely sub-contracted and de-regularised. Therefore, the expanded labour market increasingly gave access to the exploitation of women's labour with unequal payment and unjust policies. Furthermore, since 1990s, Indian economy has been witnessing rise of casualisation or informalisaton of women's paid work and decline of the participation of women workforce. India has recorded one of the lowest women workforce participation rates (WPRs) in the world in 2018-19 (Chakrabrty, 2020). Lack of any compulsion towards protective legislation or better welfare measures may also be working as an incentive in the contemporary time towards the inclusion of women workers in the informal sector and decline of women work in formal sector. Though labour market flexibility contributed to an increase in work opportunities for women, but huge number of women has entered into the

informal sector mostly under exploitative conditions with long working hours, low wages and no benefits (Sreerekha, 2017)

Objective of the Paper

The present study aims at understanding the gendered experiences of women working in informal economy in unorganised sector and the degree of vulnerabilities faced by the women workers by focusing on wage earners in a construction sites. Discussion is primarily focused on the narratives of the women workers and their everyday experiences in work site. Article aims to discuss their narratives through different subthemes covering their views on wage discrimination, worksite vulnerabilities, their socio-economic status and its impact on their work life.

Methodology

The present article is based on the findings of the narratives of the women informal workers of a private construction site in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam. Present study has adopted purposive sampling and focused group discussion as the method to understand the issues affecting women informal workers of Assam. Focused group is primarily composed of 23 women workers. In order to understand their everyday experiences as an informal worker, they were given open ended questions. Therefore, particular emphasis is laid on the in- depth interviews conducted among women of varied age group. However, in view of the research ethics the names of the respondents have been changed to maintain anonymity and analysis of the different themes mentioned in the article are based on the excerpts from the interview conducted with the focused group.

Analysis and discussion

This part of the paper deals with the narratives drawn from the discussion with women working in informal sector. The experiences of the workers covering from wage structure and discrimination, vulnerabilities at workplace, social status and its implication on work life, public-private dichotomy, identity through work, views on state responses towards informal workers are also covered. These issues have been presented below to highlight the experiences of the women workers and their narratives are discussed in different themes and contents.

Different experiences of informality

Women working in informal economy or the wage earners are located at the bottom of the class structure. They neither can control resources and means of production nor are they skilled labour. They are mostly unskilled and don't have any formal contracts with an employer rather their working patterns are irregular and insecure. Their insecurities make them vulnerable to exploitation. Working in the informal sector leaves women in a dismal situation that too; they not only work for lower wages but also work at lower wages than men. There are gender inequities in terms of wage structure in case of informal sector. Renuka one of the informal workers has informed the wage discrimination they are facing in the worksite. Men are getting Rs.350 per day whereas the women are getting only Rs.250 per day. Despite working for similar hours or for equal work they are receiving unequal pay. Gender inequalities or the pay disparities cannot be understood without interpreting the structural hierarchy in the form of patriarchy which subjugates women's rights and issues since decades. Disparity in wage structure is noticeable not only in case of men and women but also in terms of women of two different communities. In the construction site it has been noticed that, two groups of women were engaged as construction workers. Out of 23 women, 14 women are adivasi and 9 women belong to Karbi tribal community of Assam. One women section belongs to Adivasis and other section of women identifies themselves as Karbi tribal community. Women belonging to the Karbi tribe is getting Rs 300 wage per day and whereas women belonging to the adivasi of Assam are receiving Rs 250 per day. Women belonging to the adivasi of Assam are facing double subjugation, because of their socio-economically marginalized status.

Adivasis of Assam are mostly associated in the tea plantation and who were brought into Assam during colonial period by the British Government from different parts of India. Since colonial days their socio-economic status has not changed much. It is predominantly characterized by low wages in tea plantations, poor living condition and marginalized status socially, economically and politically. Being women members of this community, they face multiple socio-economic discrimination. *"We Adivasis suffered a lot, whether it is in society or in working site we always suffered. Nobody is concern of our sufferings,"* narrated by Radhika, an adivasi worker. Women are not only in disadvantageous position while getting their wages in terms of men but even within the women group itself the employers discriminate

because of their social and ethnic status. Karbi tribe is one of the indigenous ethnic groups of Assam which is socially, culturally, economically and most importantly politically in a superior status than the adivasi of Assam. Historic subjugation of since colonial period makes the women of the Adivasis to face continuous discrimination. This asymmetric treatment while determining the wages of adivasi and Karbi women have indicated the disadvantageous position of adivasi women in terms of income, autonomy of bargaining power and of rights. Adivasi women working in the construction site are basically temporary workers in nearby tea estates of Golaghat District of Assam. Tea plantation usually recruits temporary / casual and permanent workers based on the requirement of the garden. Adivasi women workers have also compared their experiences working as workers in tea gardens of Assam and as wage earner in the construction site. *"We prefer to work in tea gardens of Assam, because in tea gardens we seldom have to ask for our wages, here we have to wait for more than one week, sometimes one month to get our wages,"* said Bohagi. *"We are getting only Rs 250 per day that too after many days, it makes our lives hard. I have two children and my husband passed away, so not getting wages regularly have further pushed our family to more marginalized state,"* said Junti, another adivasi woman. Multiplicity of problems for the marginalized women is frustrating. Poverty has been experienced by both men and women. According to Whitehead, "men and women are often poor for different reasons, experience poverty differently and have different capabilities to withstand and or escape poverty" (Dubey, 2016) The intersection of gender and poverty plays a different role than poverty in general. Moreover Pineda-Ofrendeo and Acosta also pointed that, "poorer the household, the longer women work" (Ibid) It is relatable to the condition of the adivasi poor women; they have to work for longer duration and cannot even bargain with the employer for getting their rights and wages. The financially weak conditions of these women make them vulnerable and exploitable. Women as subaltern are the most miserable of all oppressive sections. It becomes a lethal combination for the subaltern to be a woman. Patriarchal power structure, socially disadvantaged status and exploitative working condition are the significant pressure experienced by the adivasi women informal workers.

In comparison to adivasi women, Karbi women are in better position in terms of their family income, education and social status. Rubi Teronpi a Karbi women informal worker was matriculated and her children are doing graduation now. Moreover, her family has other source of income such as agriculture land, so they do not need to worry much about their economic

condition. *"I am working here, but it is my choice to work here, not compulsion, and my husband is also working,"* said Julia Engtipi. *"We are working here, because this site is in Karbi Anglong and its near to us, moreover currently it is lean agricultural season, so we prefer to work here,"* said Lolita Hansepi. However, Karbi tribal community are in an advantageous position, as they have their own land for cultivation and other source of earning such as poultry farming etc. Therefore, compared to adivasi women who are educationally and economically backward, Karbi women are enjoying relatively better position in the society. Their social status has also impacted on their working site. During the conversations with the two groups of women workers it has come to notice that employer has given Rs. 300 to Karbi women and Adivasi women are getting Rs. 250, despite performing the same work. This discrimination itself shows the underlying intersection of caste, class hierarchy and gender with that of the economic rights of the women working in informal economy in their worksite.

Vulnerabilities at work place

Women's occupation in the informal sector faces double exploitation. On the one hand they belong to 'a marginal mass' who do not have any kind of social security or labour guarantees. On the other hand, they are exploited as a subordinated sex. The abuse of workers in the informal sector in jobs that include home-based workers, street vendors, domestic workers, waste pickers and manual workers in the construction and agriculture industries have been a global problem for decades. Women informal workers in the present study also have narrated their sense of insecurities and vulnerabilities that they are experiencing constantly in the work site. *"Many times, the male person mostly the employer and his friends try to pass certain unacceptable sexist comments, which we either ignore or avoide during our work time,"* said Malini an adivasi woman worker. *"I hate coming and talking to these people. Most of the time they annoy me by asking to get married with them and give proposal to go with them. I avoid them, I have no option, I can neither complaint it to anybody else nor I have a choice,"* said Radhika, another adivasi woman. In view of lack of other resources and opportunities for earning income, these women have been suffering sexual abuses silently. Sexual harassment at workplace adds another layer to the endless list of challenges that these women working in informal economy are facing apart from fighting against patriarchal and structural discrimination in the society. Similar asymmetrical working environment is seen in case of adivasi women. When they are asked about the sexual abuses

and violence in the workplace the Karbi informal workers have mentioned that they have not faced any unwanted situation. *"We are being treated very nicely by the employer, in fact sometimes they offer lunches to us,"* said by Bare Hansepi. These two contradictory views represent two different treatments meted towards the two groups of women in the same working place. Owing to the community-based discrimination which are also reflected in case of different degree of behavior received by the women shows undeniable social context in which women working in informal economy survive.

Intersection of patriarchy and capitalism: Reinforcing women oppression

Women have occupied diverse class positions under different material conditions and systems. Therefore, historical interpretations of women's contribution to economy in general would have to be related to their specific positions in the systems of productions and social relations. Women have to be perceived, not merely in terms of labour but also in terms of their relation to men, children and other women, both within and outside the family (Deka,2013). Moreover, subordination of women informal workers can be seen in terms of domination of capitalism and patriarchy. Patriarchy and capitalism as distinct systems of domination interact with each other. Capitalism divides populations into classes based on their relationship to the means of production. The primary mechanism of exploitation is profiting off labour value. Patriarchy, in turn, divides populations into sexual subjects based on gendered constructs. The primary mechanism of exploitation is control over sexuality and social constructions of gender. The social relationship reproducing patriarchy is intimate interdependence (within household and family) (Agarwala,2013). Construction work has long been acknowledged for its contributions to GDP and employment, and construction workers are predominantly male. Although construction work is generally considered "of worth," female construction workers are not. Moreover, the issues of construction women workers such as uneven and unequal pay, sexual harassment, access to sanitation and drinking water etc are some of the issues which never get any consideration and importance. The Marxist explanation of the origins of women's subordination is linked to an accumulation of wealth, the introduction of private property and subsequent control of women's' sexuality and reproduction to ensure property inheritance (Beneria, 2017). The Marxist explanation of the historical interpretation of women subordination is also equally relevant in case of the oppression of

women informal workers in the post colonial capitalist sphere. Here the women informal workers not just have to fight against the capitalist accumulation of wealth by contributing their labour through exploitative labour regimes and oppressive working conditions without having any social and other welfare legislation. Therefore, new capitalist economy led to an accumulation of wealth and private property with marked class and gender differences.

It is noticeable from the narratives of the women informal workers and how they have been differentiated and discriminated in case of wages. Here not only gendered discrimination but also structural differences in the society which creates social hierarchy also become the cause of the marginalization of the women informal workers. The concept of 'Public Patriarchy' of Sylvia Walby is significant in terms of understanding the patriarchal norms of work for women informal workers both in family and public space; and they have been discriminated and exploited in both the domains. Sylvia Walby has used this concept of 'Public Patriarchy' in Theorising Patriarchy', where she uses the term with reference to economic sex discrimination motivated by the demand of capitalism in developed nations. Women informal workers have been struggling not for the bare minimum wages they are receiving for whole day long equal work with men, but also suffering in terms of accessing proper sanitation facilities which impact their privacy. *"Man can openly defecate in any space, but we women have to go to safer place for defecation, sometimes we move to nearby forest area for defecation*," said Meena an informal worker. She also said *"Not having proper sanitation facilities at the worksite, makes us ill, because during our periods, we have to be more conscious of sanitation facilities."* The problems of accessing proper sanitation and water facilities reinforce the burden of women informal workers, which men workers seldom suffer. Lack of proper sanitation facilities for women informal workers in the worksites are the gross negligence of women's fundamental rights to access sanitation facilities. Apart from these, gendered division of work in family creates double burden for women workers. Women's reproductive work never gets proper acknowledgment. *"We are not only doing work outside but we also work at home. More than men, it is the women who do work'* said Junti, an adivasi women worker. *"I reach home at 6.30 pm in the evening, then I have to do all the household work. In my family me and my mother perform all the household work. I can only go to bed only at night and night seems to be short for me, because just after some hours another hectic morning begins,"* said Bohagi. In addition of being a laborious

worker in the construction site, women have to perform all the domestic unpaid labour, which often cut down their leisure and rest time. Therefore, it can be said they neither get acknowledgement for their significant role in informal works nor their unpaid reproductive work are recognized.

Informal work and formal politics

As it has been discussed above that capitalist accumulation in the modern economy has always relied on the labour of formal and informal workers. Unlike with formal workers, however, informal workers' relationship to capitalists remains tenuous. Employers are not obligated to pay informal workers minimum wages, and they can hire and fire informal labour according to market needs. Although some informal workers' unions are fighting for minimum wages, the shifting structures of production have undermined their bargaining power vis-à-vis employers. In the last few years Government of India has been introducing different measures for formalizing the Indian economy through introducing Goods and Service Tax, digitalization of financial transactions and enrollment of informal workers on government portals such as E-Shram. Despite all such measures for formalizing the Indian economy, the challenge of informality is still there. Huge sections of informal workers are outside of the any formal mechanisms of getting social security schemes. Covid-19 Pandemic has reflected the plight of the informal workers generally and migrant workers particularly. Lack of any social security measures for these informal workers has made them vulnerable. Launched in 2021 e-Shram aims at registration of unorganized workers such as construction workers, migrant workforce, street vendors and domestic workers among others etc. The objective of this portal is to provide welfare schemes to unorganized workers in the country. While asking the women workers about the registration in the web portal, it is found that all of them are ignorant about these provisions. *"We neither have any time left to go for registrations, nor we have any unions for claiming our rights,"* said Basudha Tanti, an adivasi woman worker. Job pattern of these casual workers are not stable, as they frequently change their job sites based on their needs; and these unorganized worksites have no mechanisms to provide welfare measures to them. Moreover, while asking one of the contractors about the unequal wages paid to adivasi women section in comparison to Karbi women, no direct answer was received from them. They showed no interest in giving answer to that question. *"We try to provide equal wages to all, but as the construction site is in Karbi Anglong so we give comparatively high wages to Karbi women than adivasis,"* said Babulal Singh, the contractor of the site. Location of the construction site in their district can also be cited as privilege for the Karbi women in terms of receiving higher wages than the adivasis women. Apart from superior socio, economic and political status of Karbi tribal women, the location of the worksite in their native district gives them advantageous position than the adivasi women who are looked down upon because of their historic disadvantageous position.

Therefore, it can be said that flexible regulations towards the fixations of wages for the informal workers creates a wage disparity not just between men and women but also between two different sections of women. From this finding, a conclusion can be drawn that gender, caste and class all three elements intersect with each other while analyzing the plight of the women working in informal economy. Global unregulated market mechanism guided by capital forces has reduced the bargaining power of women labour. Traditionally women workers have found themselves at even a greater disadvantageous position. This 'greater disadvantages' can be explained through a patriarchal structure, formed with the status of identities and their bearing on society. The bargaining power of lower caste, lower class women workers in this structure is much lesser in comparison to upper caste, and upper-class groups of women.

Concluding observation

Capitalist accumulation in the modern economy has always relied on labour of both formal and informal workers. Unlike with formal workers, however, informal workers' relationship to capitalists remains tenuous. Employers are not obligated to pay informal workers minimum wages, and they can hire and fire informal workers according to the needs of the market. Across the developing countries informal workers faces lot of challenges, on the other hand women as informal workers faces multiple disadvantages. The above study has raised the pertinent fact that women belong to the bottom of the social hierarchy, faces multiple difficulties-such as social discrimination, economic disadvantages, lack of occupation related security and gender related oppressions. Major findings related to the study is that the two groups of women-Adivasi women and Karbi tribal women experiences informality differently. In comparison to the Karbi tribal community, Adivasis are placed at the lower position in the social stratification. Their social positions led them to witness different forms of discriminations in the worksites such as-differential wages for similar work, vulnerabilities,

etc. More importantly despite their social differences, both the two groups of women are equally facing the disadvantages associated with the nature of the informality of their work. All of them have been facing low wages compared to men, job insecurities, exhaustion due to long working hours, exploitative workplace and burden of carrying out reproductive and household care work. The present study clearly projected both common and different experiences of being an informal worker. Therefore, mere creating regulations for transforming informal economy to formal economy will not certainly help informal workers, rather their access to basic welfare facilities such as equal pay for equal work, secured work places, hygiene and sanitation facilities, health, nutrition and education should be considered as their rights and providing them their rights should be the prime duty of the state.

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POLITICAL FUNDING AND THE ELECTORATE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE INDIAN POLITICAL CONTEXT

Hasmin Ahmed
Dr. Borun Dey

Abstract

As said by American politician, Jesse Unruh "Money is the mother's milk of politics", it is impossible to think of elections without financial resources in a country like India. The country from a one-party dominance till the 1960s to the formation of coalition governments and the increasing number of political parties with each election has intense the need for more finances in the election to attract the voters in their favour. This has resulted in a growing involvement of the business groups in the electoral politics of the country. There has been a 613 per cent rise in donations from the corporate sector to the political parties since 2004 and more recently with the introduction of the electoral bond scheme; the contributions to political parties have increased much more than before. Therefore, this paper moves forward with the objective to analyse the corporate funding to the political parties and has also focused on the impact of this growing involvement of the corporate on the electorate.

Keywords: Elections, Political Funding, Electorate, Corporate.

The 2019 Lok Sabha elections in the country is considered to be the costliest in the history of Indian elections with a total expenditure of Rs. 55,000 crores according to a Centre for Media Studies report with 35 percent spending on campaign or publicity. The report mentions that the election expenditure has gone up by around six times from 1998 to 2019 (Centre for Media Studies Report, 2019).The election expenditure includes advertisement and publicity, public meeting expenses, assistance to candidates, travel expenses and other miscellaneous expenses. One of the new kinds of expenses added in the recent years is the digital campaigning expenses. The political parties hire dedicated team of Public Relations (PR) firmsthat planned everything for themto add more innovation to the election campaigns since2014

Indian General Elections to catch the attention of the voters in the new media platforms (Khan, 2019).But this has resulted in more cost to the expenditures during election. The estimated election expenditure has increased from Rs. 30,000 crores in 2014 General Elections to Rs. 55,000+ crores in 2019 General Elections in the country and social media was a major head of expenditure during 2019 elections (Centre for Media Studies Report, 2019).According to the data from the advertising transparency reports by Google and Facebook, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has spent 25 crores while Indian National Congress (INC) spent a total of 1.42 crore for advertisements on Facebook and Google. However, in the opinion of the experts these figures do not reflect the true spendings of the political parties. According to Ashish Bhasin, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at Dentsu Aegis Network - India and Greater South (media buying agency), huge amount has been incurred by the major political parties on social media specially to attract the first-time voters and it is likely to spend a total of Rs. 350-400 crores at 2019 General Elections in the country (Hindustan Times, 2019).The rising election costs can impact on the public policy as money allows wealthy individuals to influence on the electoral politics. This results in a policy that responds more to the interest of the rich thereby creating inequality in the country.

In this changing context question arises regarding the huge amount of funds received by the political parties and what implications these carry for the electorate in the country. This article moves forward with these questions.

Political Funding: Who Pays?

Financial resources are considered as an essential precondition for election contestation, however money in the political system complicates it and results in more inclination of the political actors for those who contribute to their party i.e., post-election there are manipulation of the public policies in their favour. In regard to the Indian political system, the role of money has been growing with each passing year, Kapur and Vaishnav (2018) in their book, 'Costs of Democracy: Political Finances in India' states certain inherent factors responsible for such changes in the country such as the growing size of the economy since the 1990s have likely 'independent effects' on the election spending, the electoral landscape becoming more competitive due to emergence of multi political parties after the end of one-party dominance in the country, organizational strength of the political parties have decreased and focused its shift to 'charismatic' leaders who often more dependent on private funds and also the increase competition to win local elections. In this situation question arises who funds the political parties to incur huge expenses

in the elections? Whether there is only individual funding or other organizations involved?

The huge amount of election expenditure is met through the political funds from the voluntary donations that consist of both individual and organizations. The political funding in the Indian political context has changed since its first election and this growing funding can be attributed to recent developments – the electoral bond scheme introduced through the Finance Act, 2017 that allows anyone to donate to the political parties maintaining confidentiality of their identity. A citizen of India or a body incorporated in India will be eligible to purchase electoral bond within a ten-day time period in each quarter to donate to political parties that would be issued or purchased in any value, in multiples from Rs. 1000 to Rs. 1,00,00,000 from specified branches of State Bank of India and must redeem such bonds by the political parties within a period of 15 days. The most striking feature is that it will not mention the name of the payee but the purchaser should have to fulfil all the Know Your Customer (KYC) norms and to make payment from a bank account (Press Information Bureau, 2018).

The electoral bond scheme faced a lot of criticism regarding the issue of transparency. The Finance Act, 2017 diluted several provisions that were previously active to make political funding a transparent affair. The Finance Act, 2017 nullifies the safeguard mentioned in the Section 29 (C) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 that mandates – "The treasurer of a political party or any other person authorised by the political party in this behalf shall, in each financial year, prepare a report in respect of the following, namely:

(a) The contribution in excess of twenty thousand rupees received by such political party from any person in that financial year;

(b) The cont.ribution in excess of twenty thousand rupees received by such political party from companies other than Government companies in that financial year."

The Finance Act, 2017 also deleted the Section 182 of the Companies Act, 2013 that mandate a company, other than a government company that has been in existence for less than three financial years may contribute any amount directly or indirectly to any political party however, the aggregate of the amount which may be so contributed by the company in any financial year shall not exceed 7.5 per cent of its average net profits during the three

immediately preceding financial years. This provision was removed by the Finance Act, 2017 that resulted in companies to donate as much as they want without any sort of restraint. The Act further modified sub-section 3 of the Section 182 of the Companies Act, 2013 that mandate, "Every company shall disclose in its profit and loss account any amount or amounts contributed by it to any political party during the financial year to which that account relates, giving particulars of the total amount contributed and the name of the party to which such amount has been contributed." However, after the amendment, the companies only required to disclose the total amount donated by its profit and loss accounts.

The Government of India defend its decision by arguing that the electoral bond scheme achieve two purpose – to prevent the victimization of donor by political parties and secondly, check inflow of black money through cash donations as only individuals or companies with a verified KYC account can purchase electoral bonds. But the Election Commission of India (ECI) made objection to the electoral bond scheme and made it clear that it will violate provisions of the Reserve Bank of India Act (1934), Representation of Peoples Act (1951), Income Tax Act(1961), Foreign Contributions

Regulation Act (2010) and Companies Act (2013). In this regard, former Chief Election Commissioner S.Y. Qureshi remarked that any reform is a good reform but electoral bond scheme is destructive. The companies paid crores of rupees and no one will know who has given money to whom and this is not transparency. He further said, "Now, a company can exist to run political parties; 100 per cent profits will go there. This is crony capitalism. Capitalists will run the country: as probably they have been for years and now, more legalised." (The Hindu, 2018).

Amidst such criticism, according to an Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) report, total 18,299 electoral bonds worth Rs 9856.72 crore have been sold in twenty phases between March 2018 to April 2022 in the country. In the months of March and April 2019 i.e., the period of general elections, 36.74 per cent of the total value of electoral bonds was purchased. The report further points that Rs 9201 crore i.e., 93.34 per cent of the total value of bonds purchased were in the denomination of Rs 1 crore indicating that these bonds are being purchased by corporate rather than individuals. The analysis of the ADR reports on donations received from corporate and individuals by national political parties from Financial Year (FY) 2014-15 to 2019-20found an increase from Rs. 621.6 crore to Rs. 996.445 crore.

The recent developments have increased the flow of corporate funds into the political system. This politicians-business nexus resulted in social, economic and political unaccountability and also resulted in concentration of power and elite domination. The analysis of corporate share in political funding to national political parties shows the increasing number of contributions. The Table 1 shows the corporate share in funding to major national political parties from FY 2017-18 to FY 2020-21.

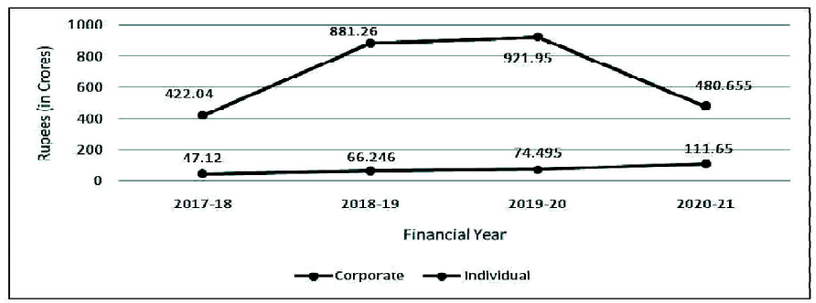
Table 1: Corporate share in funding to major national political parties from FY 2017-18 to FY 2020-21

Financial Year	Corporate Funding
2017-18	422.04 crore
2018-19	881.26 crore
2019-20	921.95 crore
2020-21	480.655 crore

Source: Association for Democratic Reforms Report

The FY years 2018-19 and FY 2019-20 shows an increase amount of funding and it can be attributed to the 2019 General Elections in the country that resulted in huge contributions from the business sector. The amount of corporate funding is much higher than individual contribution in the above-mentioned financial years. The Figure 1 shows a comparison of the corporate funding and individual contributions to the national political parties between FY 2017-18 to FY 2020-21.

Figure 1: Comparison of Corporate and Individual Funding to the National Political Parties between FY 2017-18 to FY 2020-21

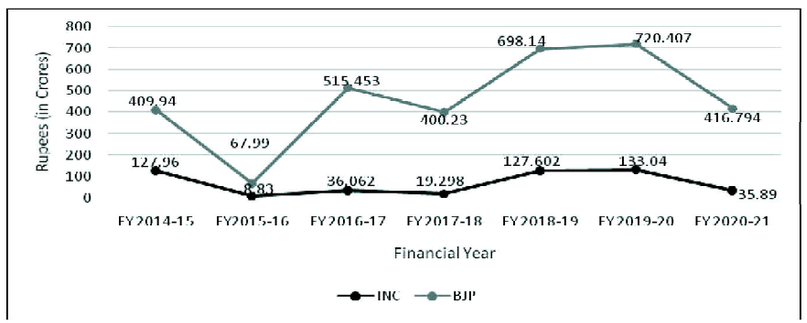


Source: Association for Democratic Reforms Report

The corporate sector maintained good relations with the government as they need permissions from time to time such as environment clearance to set up new plants and therefore, they cannot alienate the party in power or the party that is likely to come in power because they do not want to find themselves in vulnerable position (Gupta, 2018). This results in the corporate willing to fund the election for any particular political party or candidate who is willing to give them an advantage in the market place through government permit, sanctions or any such related matters (Kumar, 2022).There are reports that suggest that up to 90 per cent of the donations are received from the business sector such as Satya Electoral Trusts, A. V. Patil Foundation etc. According to an Association for Democratic Reforms report on election funding, corporate funds accounted for 91 per cent of the total contributions of political parties in FY 2019-20.

However, reports suggest that the corporates have created a funding gap between the political parties. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has so far received the highest amount of funds from the corporate sector. The party collected 95 per cent of their donations in 2018 through electoral bonds. The audit and income tax reports of the party suggest that it received Rs. 210 crores through electoral bonds of the total Rs. 222 crores donated in 2018 while the Indian National Congress (INC) received only Rs.5 crores during the same period (The Print, 2019). The Figure 2 shows the graphical representation of the funds received from the corporate sector by BJP and INC from FY 2014-15 to FY 2020-21.

Figure 2: Comparison of funds received from the corporate sector to BJP and INC from FY 2014-15 to FY 2020-21



Source: Association for Democratic Reforms Report

The funds to both the parties show increasing during the period of elections such as in FY 2014-15, FY 2018-19 and FY 2019-20; however, the funds received by BJP is comparatively much higher than INC in all the years. The BJP has been occupying a key position in tapping corporate donations and it is even during the time when the INC was in power in the centre. In the years 2005-2012, INC received Rs. 172 crores while the BJP received Rs. 192 crores. But this gap has increased since 2013 as the business sector donated Rs. 1621 crore to BJP while INC received only Rs.235 crore till 2019 (The Print, 2019).

In this context question arises what implications this involvement of the corporates in the electoral politics has on the electorate.

Impact on the Electorate

The media has an important role to play in 'stopping the private interests from subverting public good through the purchase of controls and favors' (Gupta, 2019, p. 419). The role of media as a criticiser has even more expanded due to the advent of the new media platforms that provides a forum to the public to share their opinions on the policy issues as well as decisions of the political parties in general and government in particular. The electorate who was once not active and cannot share their views due to limited participation and one-way communication in the traditional media has in the present scenario made active involvement in the politics of the country due to the interactivity feature of the new media that allows two-way communication and sometimes, multi way communication possible through user-generated content production and dissemination.

In the traditional media the criticisms to the political parties are countered through the corporates as mentioned in the 'Propaganda Model'[i]. The corporates through their ownership as well as a source of revenue to the media houses controlled the production and dissemination of the news and information and the media houses also do not upset them. The corporates act as a defence mechanism against the criticism towards the political party that they supported or in other words, they have invested their funds for the election. Krishna Kaushik (2016) mentioned that five Indian media houses namely, News24, Network18, India TV, News Nation and NDTV are indebted to industrialist Mukesh Ambani, Mahendra Nahata and Abhey Oswaland it is predicted that due to the large investments these corporates may have control over 20 to 70 per cent of their news content. This scenario

remains more or less same even in case of the new media as the ownership and other factors still remains dominant. The basic idea of the model that economic and political elites has an iron hand in the production and dissemination of news and information remains unchanged and also the traditional media under the ownership of corporate also has their control and dominance in the new media platforms. But as the electorate in the new media age can produce user-generated content and the political parties face more criticism than before therefore they resort to other means to counter the criticisms towards them.

The political parties use 'flaks'[ii] against the media houses that highlighted their shortcomings through the corporate bodies that funds the party as they are the shareholders as well as source of revenue of the media houses. The use of 'flaks' in the new media is done through the pages and groups that support any particular political party as every political party besides their official pages or channels have a number of unofficial pages created by their supporters in their name that spreads contents that are not true but are posted only to show the bright side of the political party. In other words, false news and information are circulated to avoid criticism and also to divert the attention of the electorate from core issues to other things. The Ministry of Law and Justice in response to a question in Lok Sabha on July 2019 regarding the list of complaints against false news on social media during the 17th Lok Sabha Elections answered that a total of 46 cases were reported to Facebook, 97 cases to Twitter and 11 cases to YouTube and directed the respective social media platforms to remove the false information (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2019).

According to a study, 'Political hazard: misinformation in the 2019 Indian general election campaign,' the misinformation during 2019 General Elections do not reached people only through WhatsApp forward messages but also through legitimate political entities. The study examined 1014 fact-checked stories from March 10, 2019 to May 23, 2019 and found that BJP and INC were responsible for majority of the fake information posts. In this regard, two fake news that were widely circulated by BJP and INC against each other during 2019 General Elections can be cited here. The INC was targeted that its main leader, Sonia Gandhi is richer than the Queen of Great Britain. This story was shared widely during the time of election campaign including by a spokesman of the BJP. Another such false news was regarding Prime Minister Narendra Modi. A video was circulated and shared by the

INC supporters where Narendra Modi said that 'he had not studied beyond high school.' But the video was just a part of an old interview where he makes it clear that his higher education qualifications were attained through external exams after leaving formal schooling. However, this video is still in circulation in the new media platforms (BBC News, 2019).During the time of election false information sometimes spread only to mislead the voters. A photo of a fake or prosthetic finger lying on a table has been circulated with the claim that they will be used to cast multiple votes in the 2019 elections. Even the Tripura INC has accused the BJP of importing fake indelible ink and prosthetic finger to cast fake votes in the 2019 elections and report the incidence to the Chief Electoral Officer (The Indian Express, 2019). However, it was found that the image was from Japan and was in circulation since 2017. Election Commission of India reported about 145 post related to voter misinformation during 2019 elections to social media platforms to take action (Election Commission of India, 2019).

In this situation the one that is most effected are the electorate. For most of the electorate just like traditional media, the new media is also a source of news and information. The electorate depend on it for keeping themselves update on political issues and events. However, the menace of false news and information threatens their access to objective and authentic information and may have an impact on the electorate's political perceptions and decisions. In this regard the political decision that is of utmost concern is voting. The fake news tends to spread and remain within a group which has the same ideological view specially in the political context and because of this they do not access the different information that resulted in the creation of an artificial perception of consensus about any particular issue or topic (Ottonicar, 2020). The spread of false information is more during the time of elections when the political parties tried to create a threat mechanism in the minds of the voter against the other parties. Forrest and Marks (1999) states that the effects of media on the voters are larger among highly stable voters and highly volatile voters where the former paid close attention to media's coverage of political news because of their interest in politics and decided their vote before the election campaigns while the later used media as a source of political information to help take a voting decision. In both the cases media plays an important role and in the present context where new media has made access to news and information easier and faster therefore it can be assumed to have an impact on the voting decisions of the electorate.

Another important aspect is that the electorate from all walks of life irrespective of their age use the medium for news and information and not everyone is equally technologically strong to differentiate between what is a filtered content and what is authentic. Here, the education of an individual plays a significant role as it gives the ability to identify the false information as Maddalena and Gili (2020: 9) mentioned that the most vulnerable to manipulate with false news and information are those with "the fewest intellectual resources, a low level of education and a low self-esteem"(p. 90). But it should be also mentioned that high levels of education do not mean that an individual have sufficient technical knowledge. Even people with high levels of education cannot differentiate what is false and what is authentic in the absence of technical know-how because individuals use technology but do not know about how technology works. The advantage of this situationis taken by the political actors to spread their party agenda to attract the voters and also to deviate them from the issues such as unemployment, health, education, corporate involvement in politics etc. and even if any individual or group criticize the political parties than they faced flaks from their party members.

Therefore, although it cannot be concluded that the corporates have a direct impact on the electorate through their funding to the political parties but from the discussion it can be derive that they have an indirect impact on the electorate that can have an effect on the electorate's political perceptions and decisions.

Concluding Remarks

The corporates are one of the most important sources of political funding and the political parties will always be wanted to maintain a good relation with them and vice-versa as both the corporate and the political parties moves towards the same goal of capturing power while the former in the economic field and later in the political. But both cannot move forward without support from each other. In this situation the issue of concern is the electorate as this corporate-politician nexus will impact on the public policy making and indirectly on the electorate's decisions and perceptions. Therefore, the need is to check to some extent the corporates involvement in the politics as total elimination of them is not possible in the present scenario but steps for transparency in their contributions to the political parties together with limited funding should be adopted.

End-notes:

i. According to the propaganda model the news content before presented to the audience goes through five news filters that comprise, ownership of the media firms, advertisement, source of news information, flaks and ideology. The propaganda model reflects the ability of the government bodies and dominant business entities to influence the news content so as to maintain their power and profitin the society.

ii. Herman and Chomsky (2008) define flaks as "negative responses to a media statement or program" (p.24). The flaks may be in form of letters, telephonic calls, petitions, lawsuits etc. Flaks can be organized centrally or locally or may consist of independent actions of individuals. They can be costly to the media houses if produced on a large scale or can also be problematic if produced by an individual or group with considerable resources.

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BORDER FROM HUMAN SECURITY PERSPECTIVE: A CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Indrakshi Phukan

Abstract

In simple sense, borders are the lines that separate two different entities whether it is country, state, province, city or town. For a nation-state borders are the symbol of state sovereignty. But most often, the people residing along the borders are not considered as a citizen of a particular nation-state. Even they are deprived of the basic facilities which are being enjoyed by the mainstream people. A nation-state views border through the lens of national security putting less importance on borderland people. The notable thing is that the borderland people perceive the concept of security which is not similar with the kind of security the nation-state perceives. Their lives are not only associated with the issues of national security, but also with the issues of human security. In this context this article makes an attempt to provide a conceptual analysis of border from human security perspective.

Key Words: border, borderland, borderland people, national security, human security.

Introduction

The territory of every modern nation-state is demarcated by a border. In that sense, border signifies an area of geographical boundary separating sovereign states, federal states as well as internal administrative units. Since the emergence of modern state system, mapping of borders became an important business of the states (Michel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, 1997) through which states established a world-wide system of clear-cut territorial jurisdiction to have their legal and political sovereignty. The literature on border has reflected that the term border, which is considered as the symbol of state sovereignty, can be viewed from different perspectives. If some scholars have defined border as political construction, some others

have defined border from economic, cultural even psychological perspective too.

A nation-state however, views borders always from national security perspective. For nation-state border always represent the symbol of state sovereignty. Borders are, in fact, the defining limits of nation-states (Sikder and Sarkar, 2005).

Border, Borderland as concepts

The term border does not have any specific definition which can be unanimously accepted because the term border has been defined by different people from their own disciplinary perspectives. Therefore, it is difficult to have a precise definition of the term border. Initially, it was Friedrich Ratzel, a German Geographer and Ethnographer first coined the term "Living Space" by the name "Lebensraum" and through his work he made a foundation for German Variant of Geo-Politics. His argument was that like human body states are also organic and subjected to growth and development and borders are the expression of the power of that organic state. Borders are too subjected to change (P. Laine, 2015). Following his organic state theory Karl Haushofer also made an attempt to conceptualize the term border and considered border as delimiters of territorial control and ideology (Hans W, Weigert, 1942). Later on scholars from different disciplines have provided their own definition regarding border and thus contributed towards the conceptual growth and development of the concept. Notable thing is that though people belonging to different disciplines have made remarkable contribution towards the conceptual understanding of border, but David Newman, Brunet-Jailely, Malcolm Anderson, Donnan and Wilson, Michiel Baud and William Van Schendel etc. are the most celebrated authors of border studies who have made valuable contribution towards the conceptual understanding of the concept. Border, however, became an important matter of discussion especially for the geographers since the end of 19th century. Along with that the changes that took place in international relations including the end of cold war also contributed towards the growing importance of borders and border studies among scholars/academicians belonging to different disciplines. It is noteworthy that the initial works on borders primarily discussed borders from the Geo-Political point of view but gradually scholars started viewing borders from different perspective and as a result it has gained an interdisciplinary character (Jussi Laine, 2015). There have been however, some remarkable definitions of borders that have been put forward

by different scholars working on borders at different period of time. In this paper, an attempt has been made to highlight two such definitions of border. A remarkable definition of border has been put forward by J. Agnew according to whom border is a line on maps or barriers on the ground, whose existence are confirmed on many grounds: political , economic and social (J. Agnew, 2008). Another remarkable definition was put forward by Gabriel Popescu who stated that borders are the lines represented on the maps that separates earth's surface. According to him borders carry with them a sense of division or separation in space and at the same time borders have the power to inculcate a sense of commonness among some people and also people's perception on neighbors (Popescu, 2012). In contemporary period, however, the most widely accepted definition of the term border is the line that divides two territorial entities. (Newman, 2003) It needs to be mentioned here that most often, the terms border, borderland have been used interchangeably though convey conceptual differences. Borderlands are the adjacent regions of the borders. Borderlands are geographical places demarcated and defined by state designed boundaries (Chan and Womack, 2016). A Borderland is usually understood as the region in one nation that is significantly affected by an international border.

On the other hand, borderland people or border communities are those which are lying on the margins of more than one state and those which are physically closer to a foreign regime (Chan and Womack, 2016). Following the definition of Robert MacIver on community where he stated in a community there must be a sense of belonging and of sharing its customs and traditions, it can be said that border communities are also a group of people who follow a way of life or patterns of behavior which mark them out as different from people of another society and from other people in the larger society in which they live in

However, Borders, in the age of globalization have become porous leading to frequent flows of goods and people more often without state control (Levitt, 2004), and thereby posing a threat to the national security and integrity of nations. There are some borders that have been known for tremendous mobility of goods and people across borders more often without state control. The South-Asian borders are in this regard best instances where there have been lots of cases of such informal/illegal activities including smuggling of arms, cosmetics, gold, drug, animals, human trafficking, human right violation etc. at the borders. The borderlands in view of this emergent problems has turned out to be a high security zones with deployment of security forces,

construction of electric fencing, more surveillance both human and technological etc. Within this context, the situational condition of the people residing alongside the border or the borderland communities needs to be addressed because nation-states look at the border primarily through the lens of national security, ignoring the human security dimension of the border. But with the coming up of new emerging challenges in the era of globalization, it has been felt that only national security dimension would not substantiate without the dimension on human security. There has been a world-wide recognition regarding the need of the concept human security in response to the complexity and the interrelatedness of both old and new security threats - from chronic and persistent poverty to ethnic violence, human trafficking, climate change, health epidemics, international terrorism, human right violation etc.

Human Security as concept

As a concept human security represents a new approach to security. Traditionally the concept of security was understood narrowly and the meaning was only associated with the state. In relation to this discussion, the views put forward by political realists such as Hans J Morganthou, John Herz and many others can be mentioned. They argue that in international relation/ politics when security is talked of, it represents only state security, i.e., the safeguarding of nations territory, national border and protecting national interest and maintaining domestic political order. And all these together constitute the framework of the concept national security. The concept of national security, however, was contested by the ideas of liberal theorists in the 1970's and gradually there had been a growing realization that military security is not adequate enough to tackle with the non-military threats to national security. (Chari and Gupta, 2009) It was realized at the global level that the world can never be at peace unless people have security in their lives. Finally it was in the year 1994, the United Nations Development (UNDP) came out with the Human Development Report that provided a new understanding of the concept security emphasizing on security of people rather than state, territories or arms. The Human Development Report defined Human Security as "*Legitimate concern of the ordinary people in their daily lives, for whom security symbolizes protection from the threat to disease, hunger, unemployment crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards*." The Human Development Report of UNDP recognizes seven components of human security and these include economic

security, political security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security and community security.

However, what represents a human security policy is mostly unclear. Academicians as well as policymakers have criticized the concept on various grounds. But in spite of having criticism, it has gained much significance in post-cold war period as new sources of threats have emerged for which states around the world started focusing more on individual security than the states. Even human security started occupying an important position in security policy agenda of many countries including Switzerland, European Union, Japan, Canada and the like. who have given priority to different aspects related to human Security. It needs to be mentioned that one of the first countries to adopt the human security approach in their security policy was Canada (Axworthy, 1997). While the UNDP report identified the seven elements of human security associated with underdevelopment, the Canadian approach as well as Norwegian approach talks about human insecurities resulting from violent conflicts. Hence Canada talked in favor of the concept of "the responsibility of intermediate powers" for international peace and security of people and in that context the Canadian approach advocates military intervention in the internal affairs of the state with good intention (Human Security and Global Governance, 2001). In the same way Japan as well as Bhutan too has come out with their own approaches to human security. While Japan's human security approach gives importance on two aspects, freedom from want and freedom from fear, as the prerequisites to have human security, hence Japanese human security policy gives importance on economic development and provision for basic human needs. In the same way, Bhutan's human security approach also gives importance on providing vocational education, literacy and income security, job security for vulnerable people including women and children in Bhutan so that the nation-state can achieve the wellbeing of all section of the society and thereby can achieve national happiness. The notable thing is that their approach to human security is much closer to the idea of human development which is about expanding the richness of human life, creating a condition of fair opportunities and choices for people. As far as the application of the concept of human security in Indian context is concerned, this view has been found that India too shows its concern for the concept of human security. In Indian context, it has been observed that Indian has not sought to make human security a policy goal, instead it has sought to operationalise the concept by adopting a large number of social and economic security measures that attempt to place people at the centre of

concerns. India's approach to the concept human security has sought to find solution to the emerging security challenges that the state has been suffering from. However, for most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life on issues like job security, income security, health security, environmental security, security from crime, etc; these are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world (United Nations Development Program, 1994).

Border/Borderland from the human Security perspective:

Before making an attempt to understand border from the perspective of human Security, it is noteworthy that states view border and borderlands through the lens of national security. In other words, borders and borderlands always function as symbol of state securitization (Diener and Hagen, 2012), ignoring its human security aspects. But border is not just the dividing line, it is not only the markers of states, it has meaning beyond that. Border symbolizes different political, social and cultural distinctions and at the same time implies the existence of networks and system of interaction across them (Baud and Schendel, 1997). In the borderland there is the existence of social, economic and cultural affinities which are found in the form of cross-border trade, having a border lingua franca, cross border networks of friendship, courtship, kinship etc. From that point of view, border can be an economic border, border can be a political border and border can also be a cultural border as stated by David Newman while explaining about borders. David Newman stated that it is the border that determines the nature of group belongings, affiliation and membership and also determine the way in which the processes of inclusion and exclusion are institutionalized. Border both works as a barrier and engines of connectivity. People living in the borderlands share cultural similarities with the people living in the other side of the border and it leads to a sense of belongingness to a group of people which is also accompanied by emotional attachment. Such intermingling of border culture is hence called as 'spaces of hybridity,' in which people share a sense of belonging and this is what that distinguishes them from the other parts of the nation-states (Donnam and Wilson, 1999). The notable thing is that the way border gets importance/focus by the government, the people residing along borders are not considered by the state in the similar manner. Most often the borderland people or the border communities are ignored by the nation-states. Though borderlands constitute an important part of a nation-state, but borderland people are not considered as equal in different aspects with the

other parts of the country. They fall in a dilemmatic situation of citizen or non-citizen due to their similarities in language and cultural attachment with the neighboring states. As a result, they always stay away from the mainstream people and experience different challenges. Most of the time, their national identities are considered as vague and undefined. Due to their close proximity/ affinities with the neighboring state the borderland people suffer from identity crisis which makes them bound to have blurred identities. It has been stated that the borderland people are most often ignored by the mainstream and even governments pay little attention to them (Papademetriou and Meyers, 2001). It has also been stated that borderlands are considered as marginalized region and hence get less attention as far as national policy is concerned. (Thapa, 2014) Border areas tend to lack effective political and economic control over major decisions which affects their day to day life and it has been commented that such isolation leads to a sense of alienation of those people from the mainstream (Sofield, 2006). Moreover, these people have been deprived of not only the basic necessities but they face some other problems too like trafficking, smuggling etc. as some of the border regions are serving as transit point of a large number of illegal migrants from neighboring countries and a place of some other illegal activities (Srivastava and Pandey, 2018). With regard to illegal migration, it can be said that, illegal migration or undocumented migration poses a great challenge to the political, social, economic and cultural security of a state by changing the social fabric. This view has also been found that the border communities are the most vulnerable local communities which encounter with different kind of problems at the borders. As far as trafficking is concerned, along with trafficking of goods and services, people get trap in the hands of traffickers and it has been found that trafficking in the borderland takes place on the blessings of some governmental officials who keep providing shelter to the traffickers and surprisingly the trafficked persons are not considered as victim by the state authority for which they rarely go to the authorities with their complaints (Fukuda, 2003). Thus their lives and security get threatened.

With regard to the issue of migration either, legal or illegal, there have been stories of harassment, violence and discrimination that migrants face when they cross borders. Different research done on this issue have brought it to the light that people who have migrated from countries like Nepal and Bangladesh to India for different purposes including in search of better work and livelihood opportunities, they too face harassment, violence and discrimination at the borders. In a research carried on the experiences

of Nepali and Bangladesh migrants to India, it has been found that the intensity of violence that the Nepali migrant face at the borders is comparatively less than the Bangladeshi Migrant and it is because of the Friendship Treaty between India and Nepal (Samuels and Wagle 2011). On the other hand, in case of Bangladeshi migrant they need to produce passports and Visas at the time of entering into India and most often some enter without documents especially at night taking the advantage of no border controls but at the borders their lives become prone to violence. It has been found that since 2006 about 347 Bangladeshis have been killed by Indian Forces along the India-Bangladesh border (IRIN (2011).

Again, though for national security purpose state deploys paramilitary forces at the borders but its effects on the border communities are most often ignored or underestimated. Sometimes the presence of heavy paramilitary presence leads to enormous suspicion and human rights violation. The militarized border sometimes becomes a threat for the borderland people as sometimes borderland people are suspected for various illegal activities taken place at the borders because of their trans-border ties. In addition to that, the nexus between criminal and border guarding forces make borderland more vulnerable (Das, 2010). It has been found that borderland people are living in fear of the BSF. Basically their presence makes women lives more vulnerable by indulging in activities like sexual harassment, rape etc. All these clearly reflect the gross violation of human rights at the borders and thus the presence of Human Security at the Borders. In addition to these, some states are silent regarding the prevention of the "global crime'. It has been stated by Sakiko Fukuda in his article that most countries/states do not show its interest in providing assistance towards the fight against the global crime (Fukuda, 2003). The Human Development Report (HDP) 1994 stated that the concept of security has long been interpreted narrowly which emphasized only security of territory from external aggression and protection of national interest. According to the report the concept of security has been related more to a security of nation-states than people (UNDP, (United Nations Development program, 1994). However, in the context of the above discussion, the views put forwarded by Jennifer Leanings regarding human security can be mentioned. According to her, human security not only includes the existence of the basic needs of people but it also includes psychosocial needs such as identity, participation and autonomy and individuals' relationship with location, community and time which means the right of the people to have relationship with the society and family. Following this definition it can be said that

borderland people lack human security. The Borderlands are not object of concern for the states though human security is considered as a universal principle and an obligation of states to give a similar status as given to the international human rights. But states are either unable or unwilling to do so (Thede, 2008). It has been argued by many that it is the sole responsibility of the state to build the foundation of an effective democratic state that values its own people and protects the rights of the minorities (Kilgour, 2000) and thereby can promote the concept of human security. But most often it has been seen that states try to maintain its national security by violating the security of individuals as said by Ramesh Thakur (Thakur, 2000). As the borderlands are affected by a foreign regime, its impact can also be found in their language. Generally border marks the spatial limits of language. But in case of borderland people what happens is that their close proximity in language with the neighboring state, most often they develop a mixed language, called as "border lingua-franca." Language barrier, however, is a form of exclusion, that leads to potential discrimination and harassment and their accent and lack of fluency sets them apart from the mainstream and for all these reasons they live in a dilemmatic situation of citizen-non-citizen. As a result, states view them through the lens of suspicion and get deprived of the basic facilities which are meant for the citizens. As far as political rights are concerned, from the view point of state they become doubtful voters. There are instances where it has been found that many such people have been deprived of their political rights. In this context, the denial of political rights by the state of Assam to some people who have been suspected as foreigners for having such blurred identities can be mentioned. A large number of people have been excluded from the recently updated NRC list in Assam for being suspected as foreigners.

However, in relation to the above discussion, it can be said that the existence/presence of human security in different borderlands vary from one to another. In other words, the concept of human security differs contextually. Human security in a political borderland is different from that of an economic borderland or cultural borderland.

Human security in a militarized and securitized border:

As expressed by Martin Deleixhe, Magdalena Dembinska (Deleixhe and Dembinska: 2019) border encircles the territory on which a state claims sovereignty and demarcate its spatial boundaries from the others, this is the political concept of border. The notable thing is that to protect this political

border from external aggression and war and also from other external threats nation-state gives importance on border management. In some cases it has been seen/observed that state deploys paramilitary forces at the borders to keep border safe and also peaceful by combating the illegal activities taken place at the borders. The notable thing is that in such militarized and securitized borders the concept of human security is really a matter of concern / discussion. Borders get securitized or militarized from the perspective of national security. In such militarized or securitized borderland the human security of borderland people get threatened in a multiple ways. These people most often get harassed by the Security forces for various reasons. Some times their freedom of movement also gets curtailed. The securitized border not only bring threats to the borderland communities, but in some cases, such border can be a threat even to the human security of the security personnel deployed at the border if such border situates in a difficult geographical location. Adverse geographical location of border poses threat to very existence of security personnel in number of ways. Moreover, highly militarized border is also associated with human sufferings at the borders. Here, in relation to this discussion, the US-Mexico border can be mentioned. U.S Mexico-border has changed from relatively calm, highly interconnected border cities into a heavily patrolled border with new entry and exit requirements which brings lots of sufferings to the undocumented migrants. (Slack and Martinez, 2016) While discussing about border militarization, Raymond Michalowski held the view that border militarization in countries like U.S brings lots of sufferings to the migrants or those cross U.S-Mexico border violating the Immigration law. Michalowski (2007) has commented that militarization policy of U.S such as "Operation Gatekeeper" unnecessarily brings lots of social injury to the migrants. The policy is such that it makes them bound to away from the safer routes and toward more dangerous routes just to showcase their 'operational control over the U.S-Mexico border.'

However, Michalowski has also highlighted the deployment of Border Patrol Agents by the U.S Government to take care of the migrants who are in distress as a means of providing humanitarian assistance which is for him quite contradictory. In the same way, South-Asian border like Indo-Bangladesh border though considered as peaceful but this securitized border has also many stories of gross human rights violation.

Cultural borderland and human security

Border can be a cultural borderland too. There are some border scholars who have viewed border from the perspective of culture. Scholars

like Brunet Jailly, Victor Konrad, Heather N. Nicol and David Newman have noted the growing importance of the cultural and humanist perspective in understanding and conceptualizing borders in geopolitically and geographically oriented border studies (Tuulikki, 2014). By the term "culture," these scholars refers to "a specific culture of the borderland communities," (Jailly, 2005) "the way of life," and also as a social construction, i.e., as a "Representation of that life" (Konrad and Nicol, 2011). It needs to be mentioned that the territorially placed border is seen as a zone of cultural, linguistic or physical contact, which enables the diffusion of cultural traits from one cultural area to another by denoting regional and temporal differences between cultures. Kuri Tuulikki while discussing about border cultures mentioned that the borderland represents as less developed form of cultural traits. On the other hand, the mainland or the centre represents as the sources of innovation from which novelty and developments travel towards the margin, but the notable thing is that cultural traits survived in more authentic forms in the margins than in the centers (Konrad and Nicol, 2011). Regarding border culture, however, it has been stated that with the emergence of the new generation of border studies, people started understanding border as "Hybrid spaces," where several cultural features fuse and form a hybrid culture which cannot be returned to any previously existing forms and thus leads to such borderland as an area of new and emerging cultural forms (Canclini, 1995).

Economic borderland and human security:

Border can also be an economic border. Though border serves as important symbolic function in maintaining stable conception of national identity which constitutes the corner-stone of the nation-state, but at the same time, border facilitates the movement of goods and services and thereby enhances the process of economic development (Makwerere, 2018). Though the globalization theorists hold the view that the process of globalization has led to the gradual decline of border but in reality it serves as important symbolic points of economic connection between trading partners (Herz, 1957). There are various instances throughout the world where it has been found that border region are no longer isolated and unproductive spaces in the age of globalization, rather they are performing vital function. If some are working as cross-border economic zone, some are playing important role in enhancing local economies. In other words, border trade can be an important vehicle for the Socio-economic development of the bordering territories. But notable thing is that in case of some borders, the movement of goods and services and other economic activities take place illegally, in other words informally.

Hence in the eyes of government these have been a source of insecurities to the nation-state but the rural poor people living in the borderlands do not consider it as a source of insecurity, rather for them such economic activities taken place at the border bring lots of livelihood opportunities to them. Hence for them, it is a source of security. In this context, the views put forward by Trevor H.B Sofield, regarding border can be mentioned. In his article he shows the possibility of borders becoming an area of tourism and thereby it can enhance the local economies and according to him, there will be a possibility of facilitating cultural interaction, if governments embrace co-operation along their borders.

Conclusion

When we talk about border, borderland and human security, it needs to be mentioned that borders are always considered as the defining limits of nation-states. But human life exists at the borders. From the above discussion it has become clear that human security of different groups of people get threatened at the border-primarily the borderland communities or the inhabitants of the borderland, the migrant people as well as the refugees and also the security personnel who are bound to live in the midst of adverse geographical location. In Indian context it has been observed that India still views border from national security perspective. But in the context of the changing socio-political and economic scenario, the need of hour is to diversify the concept as well as the operational meaning of the term national security. The contemporary situation is such that now the security of individuals, nation-state and world community has an interdependent nature. Hence attack on any one of this requires collective mechanism to deal with. Gradually it has been observed that there has been paradigm shift in the national security notion of the state though not adequately comprehensive in scope and perspective. However, seeing the contemporary challenges it has been stated that it is the high time for states like India to realize the concept like national unity and territorial integrity not through weapons but through process of economic development amongst the different section of society through equal distribution of benefits of economic development. However, the life narratives of some borderland people bring a different picture of the borderland and their perception on the concept human security. For them security not only means freedom from want but also from any kind of danger that can emerge in the borderland at any point of time. The available literature on borders have revealed the fact that though states like India has emphasized on border

areas development program, construction of roads, rural health infrastructure, construction of border *Haat*, as a part of border management, still government has a long way to go in inculcating a sense of security among the borderland people. It is the urgent need for every government to take the issues related with border with utmost importance and must view border not only from the national security perspective but also from human security perspective which emphasizes individual security more than state security, where states provide more option to people in the areas of education, health, income, job opportunity irrespective of caste, religion, geographical location etc. Moreover, to make the borderland developed, it is important for every state specially for the developing countries to view border not merely as line that demarcates national boundary but to view border as connecting zones for inclusive growth and development then only states like India will be able to inculcate a sense of security among the borderland in habitants and will be able to maintain human security there in the borderland.

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PARADIPLOMATIC INVOLVEMENT OF INDIAN STATES: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE STATE OF ASSAM

Gitashree Sharma

Abstract

Though traditionally, the federal government of nation-states had sole hold to engage in cross-border activities, in due course of time, particularly after the cold war, due to the force of globalisation and regional integration caused by complex interdependence the regional political units of sovereign states have also started to participate in issues of international relations. The trend of cross-border involvement was evident in Western nations; later in the subsequent period has also become prevalent in developing countries like India. With the help of many factors, including the formation of coalition government at the centre and the adoption of LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation), Indian states have paved the way to approach cross-border issues. Like the rest of India, under the aegis of the Union Government of India, Assam, the gateway Northeast, has also been involved in trans-border activities.

Keywords: Paradiplomacy, Coalition government, LPG, Look (Act) East Policy.

Introduction

Subnational presence on the international scene has become a fact of life in an interdependent world.

—Ivo Duchacek.

The Idea of a "nation-state" emerged following the establishment of the "Treaty of Westphalia" in 1948. Nation-state or state is regarded as the highest of all associations and possesses essential elements, including sovereignty, population, territory and government. Most states of the world are federal and unitary; some exist between the two. Though the world's

states differ in many outlooks, they are the same in several aspects. Having a Constitution is one such similar aspect. The Constitution of most states, whether federal or unitary, entrusted some issues having cross-border concerns, such as foreign policy formulation and implementation, in the hand of the centre with varying degrees of autonomy. Hence, the involvement of federal units or sub-state actors in foreign policymaking seems odd (Sridharan, 2003). However, many such instances of sub-state actors' influence or participation in non-domestic or foreign policy matters can be found to ensure political, economic, and socio-cultural ambitions abroad. Many scholars have considered sub-state actors' involvement in cross-border issues as complementary and contradictory to the interest of their host country. In this world of complex interdependence in due course of time due to globalisation and regional integration, the involvement of constituent units in international affairs has become an evident phenomenon and brought a paradigm shift to the Westphalian concept of sovereign States as exclusively responsible for the conduct of diplomacy (Chatterji & Saha, 2017). As a result, many scholars have considered that the centre has lost its unitary grip over transnational issues or foreign policy formulation and implementation. Kripa Sridharan (2003) stated, "the exclusive grips of centre in this area is slowly being weakened by the activities of the units/members in federal unions. These units are variously called states, regions, provinces, lander, cantons and so on". However, at the same time, it has also been seen that the regional political units of many countries can engage in trans-border activities only within the framework provided by their host state (Wolf, 2007). In this article, an attempt has been made to analyse the meaning and concept of Paradiplomacy, the factors behind Indian paradiplomacy and the paradiplomatic involvement of Assam within its given framework.

Meaning and concept of paradiplomacy

Though the genesis of modern diplomacy can be traced back to the city-state, their involvement in international relations cannot be termed as paradiplomacy, as the then city-states were sovereign and independent (Tavares, 2016). The modern form of international exchanges of local governments can be found in the late nineteenth century when some crown colonies under British rule, such as Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Quebec, Tasmania, and Western Australia, appointed their agents to either London or Paris (Tavares, 2016). Sao Paulo, a sub-state unit of Japan, signed an international pact with Japan for the first time

on matters related to Japanese immigration into Brazil (Tavares, 2016). The emergence of transnational regimes in security, trade, human rights and other areas due to complex interdependence impacted specific issues directly coming under the jurisdiction of constituent units, which later resulted in the integration of foreign and domestic economies as well as the erosion of the division of responsibility between the federal government and sub-state units (Keating, 2013). Consequently, sub-state units got involved in cross-border engagements to promote their economy, culture, language etc. (Wolf, 2017).

Traditionally, the national governments of sovereign states were empowered with sole jurisdictions in foreign policy formulation, as the Constitutions of sovereign nation-states entrusted the sole authority to its hands (Jacob, 2016). Subsequently, in due course of time, particularly after the cold war, the growing complex interdependence among the nation-state, as well as some changes in international and domestic milieu, paved the way for sub-state units of sovereign states, popularly known as states, provinces, canton, lander etc. to involve in some trans-border activities (Sridharan, 2003). The trend or practice of involvement of sub-state actors, also known as federal units, constituent units, subnational units etc., in the process of foreign policy formulation and implementation, sometimes for its own sake or sometimes for the interest of the host nation to which it belongs is variously known as paradiplomacy, subnational diplomacy, constituent diplomacy, micro-diplomacy, federated state diplomacy, foreign policy capacity, foreign policy localisation, plurinational diplomacy, protodiplomacy, sub-state diplomacy, micro diplomacy, multilayered diplomacy, catalytic diplomacy, local diplomacy, local government external action, local foreign policy, regional diplomacy, pos-diplomacy etc. (Knznetsov, 2015; Tavares, 2016). All these terms indicate the transborder involvement of non-central governments with different degrees of engagement. The factors that have paved the way for sub-state units to involve in paradiplomacy include increased regional integration, globalisation, devolution and decentralisation caused by the opportunity structure created at the regional, national, continental and global levels, different sets of motivations, including economic, cultural and political, an amalgamation of foreign and domestic issues etc. (Hazarika, 2020). Besides fulfilling own socio-cultural, political, economic etc. interest, sometimes for its own sake and sometimes for promoting central government's policies via participating in cross-border issues, impacting the centre's decision and policies concerning matters related to a foreign country, establishing diplomatic relations with nations, seeking support for independence, sending

representatives to international or regional or sub-regional organisations etc. is one of the significant reasons of sub-state units' approach to cross-border involvement (Hazarika, 2020).

Different scholars have defined the transnational engagement of regional government in many ways. For the first time, in the 1980s, Ivo Duchacek and Panayotis Soldatos used the term "Paradiplomacy" in their writing (Tavares, 2016). Regarding the term paradiplomacy, Ivo Duchacek viewed that 'Para' precisely indicates what it is all about. The word para means the parallel trans-regional or direct international activities of sub-national actors; that can support, complement, correct, and challenge nation-state diplomacy (Tavares, 2016; Kuznetsov, 2015). However, some other thinkers have critically pointed out that paradiplomacy cannot be considered complementary to mainstream diplomatic activities as the subnational government have its nature and personality (Tavares, 2016).

Similarly, trained diplomats have also critically questioned the term "diplomacy" used within paradiplomacy (Tavares, 2016). In their view, diplomacy is an instrument of statecraft carried out by diplomats, the representatives of sovereign states in the international arena (Tavares, 2016). Ivo Duchacek, in his article 'The international dimension of sub-national self-governments', used the term micro diplomacy to indicate the external involvement of regional government or regional diplomacy (Kuznetsov, 2015). He also defined the term proto diplomacy, which describes the initiatives and activities of non-central governments abroad that have more or less separatist messages (Kuznetsov, 2015). Then John Kincaid used the term' constituent government,' which indicates states, provinces, cantons, landers, and republics (Kuznetsov, 2015). The term 'constituent' gives a clearer view of the actor performing trans-regional activities (Kuznetsov, 2015). Kincaid distinguishes constituent diplomacy from subnational diplomacy and paradiplomacy based on the degree of autonomy involved in international issues (Rob Jenkins, 2003). He preferred the term constituent diplomacy over subnational and paradiplomacy as it bypasses the need to label the international activities of constituent states as inferior, ancillary or subsidiary to that of the Centre or Union (Asthana & Jacob, 2017). The term paradiplomacy can be understood as the involvement of sub-state units, belongs to whether the federal or unitary country, in the issues having cross-border implications for promoting their own as well as the centre's policy within the parameter set by their host government (Chatterji & Saha, 2017). Besides, the term "paradiplomacy"

will be primarily used for the present study as the cross-border involvement of states in India is not independent; instead, it takes place within the framework given by the country's party dynamics. The paradiplomacy of constituent units of different countries was studied under federal literature to analyse the impact of Paradiplomacy on federalism and intergovernmental relations rather than on paradiplomacy as a new political phenomenon (Jha, 2014). Later the study of paradiplomacy in the literature on Foreign policy and International Relations also became evident (Sridharan, 2003). Though the regional political units are neither legitimate international actors nor the involvement of states and local governments are constitutionally valid, their importance in cross-border matters cannot be ignored (Jha, 2014).

To understand the paradiplomatic involvement of Indian states, it is reasonably necessary to have a basic understanding of the political and the financial system of India along with the devolution of political and financial power of the centre with the emergence of the coalition at the centre and the adoption of Economic Liberalisation Policy by 1991. In the next part of the article, an attempt has been made to analyse the party dynamics in India and the enhanced financial autonomy of regional political entities after the adoption of LPG.

Paradiplomacy in the context of political and financial system of India

The Republic of India has adopted the Parliamentary system rather than a presidential one, following specific contextual elements of the State. India's parliamentary system consists of both federal and unitary elements. Before partition, the Constitution Assembly favoured the adoption of the mainstream or decentralised model of federalism in India (Tillin, 2019). However, after the independence, despite being a country with such diversity, the Constitution Assembly of India had proposed to entrust significant subjects, including foreign policy, defence, communication etc., in the hands of the Union government of India along with the residuary power to ensure country's unity and integrity or to restraint the country from breaking up in the future (Arora, 2007).

The Indian model of federalism has been referred to as a quasi-federal or diminished version of an existing model due to the lack of autonomy enjoyed by the regional government of India in comparison to the provincial government of mainstream federal structures such as the USA, Switzerland, Australia, and Canada (Arora, 2007). However, the Indian version of

federalism is neither derived nor diminished; instead, it is original, novel, and distinct in itself, with a centralised model and a reasonable level of interdependence between the federal government and the states, including the provision of Constitutional amendment to address issues related to the accommodation of diversity (Tillin, 2019). The Constituent Assembly of India divided the Indian federal system primarily into two levels of government, namely the Central and State governments, to demarcate their respective jurisdictions and to carry out their entrusted roles under the protection and supervision of the Constitution and Supreme Court of India (Tillin, 2019). Due to its adaptability, unlike the mainstream federal structure, the Indian kind of federalism could be transformed from unitary to federal and vice versa depending on the needs and opportunities of any circumstance (Tillin, 2019). Hence, 'flexibility' is considered a unique and salient feature of the Indian federal structure. Therefore in most cases, it has been seen that in normal times the Indian federal system functions as federal while becoming unitary to resist unwanted changes (Tillin, 2019). Besides, the base or element for intergovernmental collaboration and cooperative federalism has been incorporated in the Indian Constitution since its formation, though the term 'federal' is absent (Tillin, 2019). Hence, the "Indian version of federalism" is the consequences of the context and the circumstances that existed during the time of the adoption of the Indian Constitution, most notably the continental size of India, which necessitates the sharing of decision-making rights, the occurrence of partition of India, the vision of the political elites of India, influence of other constitutions, the impact of Government of India Act, 1935, the goal for state-led industrialisation, social integration and rehabilitation of refugees from Pakistan (Khan, 2003; Arora, 2007).

The division of political power between the Centre and states in India is asymmetrical in different ways. The division of political power between the centre and states in India is asymmetrical in different ways. This asymmetry includes the allocation of inferior status to Rajya Sabha, the provision of enhancing the centre's jurisdiction under articles 249 and 312, power of the centre to alter the existing boundaries of Indian states without having any approval from the state(s) concerned, provision of discretionary power of the governor etc. Along with these, the legislative power between the centre and states is divided under Article 246 into three lists, i.e., Union, State and concurrent (Maini, 2014). Among all the three lists, the Union list of India includes certain major subjects of India, such as Defence; Foreign Affairs; atomic energy; Diplomatic, consular and trade representation;

Participation in international conferences, associations and other bodies and implementation of decisions made thereat; Entering into treaties and agreements with foreign countries and implementing of treaties, agreements and conventions with foreign countries; War and peace; Foreign jurisdiction; Maritime shipping and navigation; Trade and commerce with foreign countries; import and export across customs frontiers; Taxation Powers and Financial Resources etc. (Jha, 1999). On the other hand, the state list includes the subjects like public order, police; local government; Public health and sanitation; hospitals and dispensaries, communications, agriculture, water; land; Fisheries etc. (Seventh schedule, Ministry of External Affairs). Finally, the concurrent list empowers the Centre and state to make legislation on the subjects like Criminal procedure; criminal law; Marriage and divorce; Transfer of property other than agricultural land; Bankruptcy and insolvency; Economic and social planning; industrial and labour disputes; Social security and social insurance; employment and unemployment; Education etc. (Seventh schedule, Ministry Of External Affairs). Nevertheless, whenever there is any conflict over the laws on the Concurrent List, the centre prevails (Tillin, 2019). Moreover, the Union government of India is given residuary power under Article 248 (Asthana & Jacob, 2017). It has granted the centre the sole authority to enact laws on any subject not included by the Concurrent List or State List (Indian Const. article. 248). Besides, the Article 253 of Indian Constitution ensure the legislative power of Parliament's to effect international agreements (Indian Const. art. 253).

The Constitution has also divided financial authority between the federal government and states by placing significant taxes in the hands of the federal government, such as taxes on income and wealth derived from non-agricultural sources, cooperation taxes, taxes on production, and customs duties, while putting less significant taxes in the hands of the states, such as sales taxes, state excises, and stamp and registration fees, which are insufficient to cover state expenditures and responsibilities (Tillin, 2019). As a result, the centre gives funds to states as per the advice of the finance commission (Jha, 2019). Moreover, central ministries can also provide grants directly to states either as "central sector projects" or as "centrally sponsored schemes" (Phukon, 2021). Besides, almost all the subjects of the state list have a direct or indirect connection with the subject 'Economic and social planning; therefore, the Inclusion of the respective subject in the concurrent list ultimately helps the centre to control states' acts on the subject (Phukon, 2021). The centralised financial federalism that prevails in India causes the

dependence of regional political units on the Union government of India for financial assistance, even to implement those programmes and policies entirely entrusted to the hands of states. Moreover, because of financial centralisation during pre liberalised era, industrial development and investment in Indian states depended on the political consideration of the then Central Government of India (Jha,2014). The centre determined the places for establishing public and private sector units without following any objective criteria (Jha, 2019). Similarly, during single-party domination, the states with the same party government received more discretionary grants than those ruled by opposition parties (Sharma & Sweden, 2017).

However, later, the formation of a coalition government at the centre with the help of regional parties and the adoption of economic Liberalisation Policy resulted in the devolution of political and financial power, particularly during the coalition era. For the first time, the regional parties stepped into the centre's coalition, during the Janata alliance in 1989 (Jaganathan, 2019). In the year 1998, the NDA-led coalition government with regional parties from the south and east India came into power only for a few days and then by the year 1999 NDA led BJP ruled until the expiration of its full term (Tillin, 2019). Then, from 2004, the UPA alliance was continuously in power for ten years with the help of a regional alliance (Khan, 2003). The weakness of national parties and the share owned by regional parties in decision-making processes provide a fertile ground for the regional parties to influence the decision-making process of the Centre (Pattanaik, 2014). Later, the multi-party presence at the centre via coalition alliance replaced the trend of one-party domination in India (Jaganathan, 2019). Besides, the dependence of coalition alliances headed by national parties on the consensus and support of regional political parties has made the regional parties proactive and politically vocal in domestic and external matters (Jaskolska, 2021). Hence, though formally, the national parties of India had a stronghold over the centre and the states of India, they had started to lose their majority hold, particularly from 1989, due to the active presence of regional parties both in the centre and states (Mehra, 2013).

Moreover, the devolution of financial power became evident in India with the adoption of the Economic Liberalisation Policy in 1991 during the tenure of the Narshimha Rao government (Basu, 2016). Following the adoption of LPG, the centre's discretionary authority over industrial licensing has terminated (Jha, 2019). Additionally, states have progressively begun to assume a strategic position in a market-driven economy, which ultimately caused the transformation of a command economy to a market economy (Tillin, 2019).

The regionalisation of power ended with the victory of NDA led BJP (Arora & Kailash, 2021; Sweden & Sharma, 2017). Despite being the single largest party, the BJP, led by the NDA, has a different perspective on state involvement in foreign policy than the previous one-party government at the central level. It has encouraged states to participate in foreign policy formulation (Bywalec, 2018). The implementation of cooperative federal practices and its promotion of competitiveness among the regional political entities show the emphasis given by the single-party majority government over states. However, at the same time, partial treatment of the BJP government towards states regarding their presence in foreign policy issues is also prevalent.

Factors behind Indian Paradiplomacy

The trend of sub-state actors' involvement in foreign policy formulation was formally evident in the West. However, later due to globalisation and regional integration, the practice of sub-national diplomacy also became prominent in developing countries like India (Sridharan, 2003). Besides, the autonomy of sub-state actors' involvement in cross-border engagement depends on the political system of the State, whether federal or unitary, the pattern of distribution of power between centre and units, the presence of well-demarcated or disputed border, the presence of ethnic similarities with foreign states etc. (Chatterji & Saha, 2017). In the era of globalisation, interdependence has become an inevitable characteristic of every nation, irrespective of its ideology and forms of government. Such interdependence made the force of paradiplomacy also blatant in developing countries like India (Kripa Sridharan,2002). The Constitution of India has also authorised the union government with absolute power in foreign affairs (Stefy V Joseph 2016). However, due to external factors like globalisation and changes in the country's internal political and financial milieu, India's central government cannot ignore the cross-border concerns of its regional units despite having sole authority on matters of international transactions and foreign affairs.

The inclusion of regional political parties in the Centre's coalition has paved the way for Indian states to participate in the decision-making process of domestic and non-domestic issues of the Centre. The rise of regionalism in states and the establishment of a coalition government at the national level have fundamentally altered India's political landscape (Khan, 2003). During the phase of coalition politics, the consideration of states' consensus became

important not only in internal but also on external issues (Blarel & Willigen, 2021). The longevity of the coalition government depends entirely on the consent and support of each party that is part of the coalition alliance (Mehra, 2013). The regional political parties have realised the importance of their presence in the coalition government for the continuity of the government. In such circumstances, states' bargaining power has begun to increase, and the regional parties have started raising their voices on every issue related to their interest, including foreign policy formulation and implementation, which later enabled them to engage in the issues of cross-border relevance (Tewari, 2017; Sridharan, 2003). For an instances, due to the strong opposition from the state government of West Bengal under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee, the Teesta River Water Agreement was dropped in 2011 to conclude, despite having a consensus between the federal government of India and Bangladesh to conclude the concerned treaty (Hazarika, 2020). It became possible for the TMC government of West Bengal to go against the centre's decision, as it had a secured amount of seats in the then UPA alliance.

Adopting the Economic Liberalisation policy has also allowed Indian states to participate in trans-border commercial policy creation, execution, and evaluation (Rudolph & Rudolph, 2001). Following the LPG Policy in 1991, the Central Government of India retreated from supporting welfare programs (Tillin, 2019). As a result, assistance from the central government became insufficient for the states of India to attain their infrastructure development which is essential for the benefit of the market economy (Tewari, 2017). In addition, India's states cannot borrow money independently (Sridharan, 2003). As a result, Indian states have faced opportunities and problems: reduced Centre's aid and access to the global market. Hence, to reap the benefit posed by the economic Liberalisation Policy and overcome the challenges that arose due to the reduction in the Centre's funds, the regional political units have decided to be directly involved in commercial diplomacy, which later resulted in the commercial paradiplomacy in India. As part of commercial paradiplomacy, the states of India have begun to adopt many trans-border initiatives, including organising investor summits, travelling abroad to attract FDIs, raising loans from external financial agencies such as ADB, WB etc., participating in world economic forums, and adopting different initiatives for overseas diaspora in pursuit of remittance from foreign investors.

The geographical existence, socio-cultural, historical, racial, economic, linguistic, etc., and proximity that the Indian border states share across the border, have also placed them in an advantageous position in foreign policy

formulation. Moreover, any cross-border decision of the Union Government of India concerning its neighbouring countries would definitely impact the interest of its border states (Pattanaik, 2014). Besides, the border regions also possess first-hand experience and information on many cross-border issues (Pattanaik, 2014). Along with these, due to the growing complex interdependence and regional integration, the border region of India has also been suffering from many issues, including illegal immigration, smuggling of drugs and weapons, informal cross-border trade, trafficking of children and women etc., which could have a severe impact on the economic stability and the security of the region. As a result, due to the presence of all such circumstances Government of India has begun to emphasise the concerns of its border regions in case of dealing with respective neighbouring countries. Taking the concerns of west Bengal and the Northeastern states of India during the conclusion of the Land Boundary Agreement in 2015 is one such instance which indicates the importance of including border states during the process of foreign policy formulation concerning the respective neighbour (Hazarika, 2020).

Encouragement from the Centre can also be considered another vital factor of paradiplomacy in India. The Central government of India has also been encouraging the states of India to participate in trans-border issues from time to time (Maini, 2017). For many a time, Chief Minister and state-based non-state actors accompanied Prime Minister and other Union ministers abroad (Jacob, 2016). The single majority party government under the leadership of Modi has been upholding cooperative and competitive federalism, thereby consistently supporting increased states' involvement in trade and FDIs (Maini, 2017). Besides, the Union government, under the leadership of Modi, created the State Division of the Ministry of External Affairs in 2014 to institutionalise the role of states in foreign policy (Lok Sabha Unstarred question No. 2970, 11.05.2016).

Paradiplomacy in Assam

In the past, Northeastern region was considered as the most globally connected region India (Kokho, 2022). It was closely linked to Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, and ASEAN countries (Hazarika, 2022). Assam (Presently, North East India) has a long history of trade internationalisation with a high level of openness; as, along with West and different parts of India; Assam had trans-border trade connectivity during the Ahom era with neighbouring nations like China, Burma, Bhutan, and Tibet through various passes of the Eastern Himalayas as well as via sea routes to meet the domestic

requirements (Gogoi, 2020). Later, during British colonisation, the Northeast got separated from Myanmar, and then the then independent kingdoms of the Northeast were included in the Indian Union in the post-independent period. Further, without considering its closer proximity to its neighbouring countries, all forms of cross-border connections in the region gradually halted in the name of security concerns (Bhaumik, 2014). As a result, the ever-accessible Northeast shifted to a landlocked one that had further severely impacted the region's overall development (Gogoi, 2020).

Paradiplomacy has also become evident in the state of Assam. Like the rest of India, Assam has also been actively involving in paradiplomatic activities. Following the end of the cold war and the adoption of LPG, India has shifted its focus to its eastern neighbours or ASEAN members by adopting the Look East policy (Act East Policy) to harness the economic opportunities offered by the ASEAN and to counter the expanding influence of China in the region (Majumdar, 2018). Most of the literature makes it evident that previous New Delhi governments deliberately forbade themselves from implementing any plans or initiatives for the improvement of the North East region because of the threats from China; thus, it is evident that the North Eastern Region, including Assam, is falling behind in several development indicators due to New Delhi's negligence (Borah, 2019). However, unlike the previous aggressive measures taken in the Northeast, New Delhi began to implement economic and infrastructure development projects with the introduction of LEP, through which the Government of India started to emphasise on Cross border connectivity of the North Eastern Region, including Assam, to restore transboundary social and economic integration (Osada, 2022). In the context of LEP, the geographical existence of India's Northeast became vital, as it shares a land border with one of the ASEAN members, i.e. Myanmar. The Union government of India has decided to connect Southeast Asia through land routes via the Northeast of India. New Delhi made developing the North East a top priority to deepening its relationships with ASEAN and East Asian nations like Japan (Borah, 2019). Subsequently, under the initiative of Act East Policy, India started to adopt several unilateral or multilateral initiatives with its eastern neighbour in different sectors, including infrastructure, education, agriculture, communication, transportation, trade & commerce, culture etc. (Toppo, 2016). Moreover, India has adopted several connectivity projects in collaboration with many ASEAN countries and Japan to reconnect the Northeast, including Assam to Bangladesh, Bhutan, ASEAN and Japan via road, sea and air (Borah, 2019). Besides, the geographical existence of Assam has also become vital in the context of the

sub-regional initiatives to which India is a member (Pattanaiik, 2016). India has shifted its focus from regionalism to sub-regionalism and adopted many unilateral, bilateral and multilateral initiatives in several sectors such as energy, tourism, infrastructure, transportation, trade and commerce etc., so that it can build closer relations with its neighbouring nations which would be beneficial for national as well as regional interest (Kumar, 2016). Therefore, in the context of Assam, the developmental model created by the centre's foreign policy i.e. the Look (Act) East Policy is the major reason behind its cross-border involvement in foreign policy making. Moreover, the Northeastern states are surrounded by foreign countries like China, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh, where Assam shares its boundary with Bangladesh and Bhutan (Hazarika, 2022). Hence, Assam became crucial to India's economic and strategic concerns because of its location and the long history of cross-border economic and cultural exchange with its eastern neighbours (Majumdar, 2018). The success of India's Act East policy (Act East Policy) is firmly dependent on the active involvement of Assam as well as other states of North East India. Besides, Assam, as a border state, is in a favourable position to deal with border issues because of its geographical contiguity and socio-cultural, economic, ethno linguistic, historical, etc., linkages across the border (Hazarika, 2022). Along with these, as a border state of Assam has also been suffering from the problems like illegal immigration, smuggling of drugs and arms, kidnapping, extortion, insurgency etc., which can only be solved via diplomatic negotiations with neighbouring countries in which the concerns of Assam also become important (Bhaumik, 2014). Besides, the changing of India's security-centric approach, the emergence of the Northeast as a transit country, and India's successful diplomacy to ensure connectivity between the Northeast states of India and its neighbours have also provided a fertile ground for Assam to engage in trans-border activities (Borah, 2019). Hence, in such background Assam's paradiplomatic engagement has been developing, and the state government of Assam has been actively participating in this regard by constructing its own mechanism to address its cross-border issues, under the guidance of the Central government of India. Additionally, Assam's effective paradiplomatic engagement will positively impact India's relations with its eastern neighbours including Japan.

Moreover, the development deficit is one of the significant constraints in the Northeast. Besides, the region's infrastructural development is essential to ensure cross-border connectivity (Gogoi, 2020). On the other hand, scarcity of finance on the part of the Union and states has made the problem of

development deficit more severe. Consequently, the Union government of India has encouraged the states to approach foreign investments. Therefore, the foreign policy-driven developmental model is the primary factor behind NE states' paradiplomacy.

The state administration of Assam has been making the best efforts possible given the constrained framework New Delhi has provided. The Government of Assam established the Act East Policy Affairs Department on May 22, 2017, to promote the centre's Act (Look) East Policy by connecting the region with South East Asia (Hindustan Times, 2017). With the establishment of this department, Assam became the first state to institutionalise its participation in foreign policy making and strengthen its cross-border engagement with State, sub-state, and non-state actors of different parts of the world. The department has been preparing for the timely implementation of policies and programmes taken under the Act East Policy and facilitating an environment for investment and rapid industrialisation in the state (AEAD, Government of Assam). Assam shares ties to South Asia, South East Asia, and East Asian nations like Japan in terms of geography, culture, tradition, ethnicity, religion etc., from the pre-colonial period. As a result, it is clear that including Assam's legitimate interests will allow India to pursue an effective neighbourhood strategy as well as New Delhi's Act East Policy. Thus, for Assam the adoption of LPG, geographical existence and the Act (Look) East Policy provide a base for Assam to restore its pre-historic relations with its neighbouring countries. Assam has been engaging in cross-border activities with countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Japan, and member States of ASEAN to revive its traditional political, economic, and cultural relations.

Conclusion

In Indian context, the paradiplomatic involvement of Indian states has both positive and negative consequences towards the overall interest of the country. Though, during the time of coalition era, in some cases the then Central government of India was bound to act in accordance of the interest of states that to protect its political interest but at the same time in many other cases more particularly during the single majority government the states of India are able to act only within the given framework. Thus, the degree of Indian states' engagement in foreign policy formulation is depending on party dynamics to a large extend. Moreover, states' involvement in cross-border activities is also depends on party politics. Many a times, it has been seen that, the central government of India restrains the foreign visits of Chief

Ministers from opposition or other political parties. Moreover, in some other cases, the trans-border involvement of regional political units in India is encouraged by the central government probably due to the linkages of the fulfillment of the overall interest of India and the cross-border involvement of the respective state. Hence, in India the paradiplomatic involvement of Indian states to a large extent depends on the interest of the Union government of India. However, the legitimate interest of states needs to be considered during the time of foreign policy formulation and execution.

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PERSONALITY AND NEGOTIATIONS: A STUDY OF ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE AND PERVEZ MUSHARRAF AND AGRA TALKS

Dr. Bhupendra Kumar

As an individual's motive may change or may not change the state's status quo position, the individual's cognition decides whether an individual leader is inclined towards war or peaceful negotiation. Thirdly, personal traits involving behavioural aspects like a bellicose or peaceful individual and delusional elements such as the grandiose vision of leaders shapeother states' behaviour. Also, the leader's ambitions and objectives alter or destabilise the international system. Lastly, the social context of actors influences the negotiation process. The above discussions entail the imposing role of personality on negotiation and diplomacy; in this context, the paper has explored it theoretically. The paper has examined the role of personality in negotiation by taking one case each from India and Pakistan. It will analyse the individual characteristics of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pervez Musharraf and their impact on the diplomatic process involving peace and conflict by examining the Agra talks in 2001.

Personality and Negotiation: Theoretical Discussions

Understanding various dimensions of personality has been done in recent times and in different ages where several philosophers and thinkers have investigated and dwelled on human behaviour. Their quests have been wider than investigating to understand personality and its characteristics. Their reflections pertain to the tensions between society and individuals; added to it, their apprehension was to bring ideal constructs to resolve all tensions. In this regard, Plato's ideas of individual qualities based on different attributes such as reason, courage, and appetite explain the corresponding composition of society based upon differentiation of needs where the king represents courage, the philosopher consists of reason, and merchants dwell on appetite (Plato 1969). In the same period, ancient Indian philosopher Kautilya talked of several characteristics attributing a king to success or failure (Saran 2017:12).

Defining personality has been proven difficult as it requires navigating multiple perspectives. In the history of scientific psychology, competing perspectives attempt to define 'personality', such as the psychodynamic perspective, the learning perspective, the humanistic perspective, the trait perspective, the biological perspective and the cognitive perspective. Multiple definitions of personality bring distinct concerns to each perspective. No single authoritative definition of personality can entail multiple conceptions of personality. However, for a functional purpose, we may define personality as asum of multiple qualities of individuals, such as traits, motives, cognitions, andsituational aspects.

Negotiation and personality

Negotiation constitutes the cornerstone of international politics, and it is considered a binding force that holds continuities and discontinuities of the relations between different international actors, such as nations, international organisations, and non-state actors. The term negotiation may refer to individualacts or institutional acts. However, when we talk about it, negotiation primarily refers to how different actors in international politics immersed themselves in exchanging aims and objectives. The importance of individuals and their characteristics has received less attention in the scholarly discussion of negotiation theories. David G. Winter, in his study of the relationship between individuals and politics, states the relationship between individual personality and its association with the institution (Winter 2003).

Byman and Pollack underline the importance of personality in international politics. Their observations entail that the role of the individual becomes essential, mainly when power is concentrated during conflict and significant change (Byman and Pollack 2001). The ability of individuals, their goals and intentions changes the action of their own countries and transforms and shapes the reactions of the other states (Byman and Pollack 2001). In everyday international politics, the diplomatic relationship of one country with another country depends upon the characteristics and quality of the leadership. It may bring good relationships or bring hostility to other countries. For example, under Hitler's leadership, the other European countries' responses changed drastically vis-a-vis Germany (Carr 2002).

Generally, International politics has been considered as a result of historical determinism. This view rather distorts actual reality where individuals wield power and bring changes in the life of people. To see world politics as

the outcome of 'man's free will' brings clarity to understanding the process of forming reality. Albert Camus noted that there is no truth, only truth. No single theory can ever present all international situations. This tension between man's free will and historical determinism has resonated well in structure-agency debates in world politics (Isaak 1975).

Outcomes driven by personal factors shape people involved in diplomatic activities equally. The understanding of social facts such as existing values, social and political institutions, personalities, and game rules are reflected in the very process of negotiation. Impersonal categories such as history, political process and rules of games have always been seen as the absolute constraining factors that leave very little scope for individual characteristics. Therefore, an analytical attempt to focus on individual qualities that shape their surroundings is essential. According to Robert Isaak, by focusing on the psychological tensions of people interacting with other people in the arena of the world, the scientific grounds of psychology, economics, biology, sociology, and political science can be integrated with the humanistic interests of political theory, history, and philosophy brings a comprehensive explanation of human behaviour in world politics (Isaak 1975).

Robert Putnam states that international negotiations represent a two-level game (Putnam 1988). The first level, namely the national level, includes different factors such as leadership, public opinion and non-governmental actors such as opposition parties and various other pressure groups that shape government policies. The second level includes the international level, where the national government maximises national-level interest in international negotiations. At the national level, the individual encompassing political actors play an important role in formulating important government policies toward other nations; also, at the international level, the role of a statesman in defending the national interest constitutes a significant role.

The above discussion necessitates a systemic study of the role of personality in negotiation and diplomacy which requires the identification of various components of personality, such as traits, cognition, motives and social context and their likely impact on diplomacy. Each of these components of personality plays a specific role in diplomacy. Firstly, an individual's motive may or may not change the status quo position of a country. For example, Hitler was deeply unsatisfied with the post-World War First arrangement, and he pursued to avert Germany's position in the international order and sought to question the status quo position of Germany.

Secondly, an individual's cognition, such as an inclination toward war and diplomacy, shapes the outlook of a state. It depends upon whether a leader is inclined toward war or peaceful negotiation. In the history of international relations, the nature of leadership determines the responses of countries. After the First World War, the Paris Peace Conference's outcome in 1919 was a compromise between US President Woodrow Wilson's idealist vision and the belligerent's leadership of France and Britain.

Thirdly, Individual traits involving behavioural aspects like a bellicose or peaceful individual and delusional aspects such as craziness and grandiose vision of leaders shape other states' behaviour. Furthermore, leaders' ambitions and objectives alter or destabilise the international system, such as Stalin and Hitler's visions. Lastly, the social context of political actors also shapes the negotiation process because of its integral association with the actor's identity.

The above discussion brings out another important aspect of foreign policy, which signifies the importance of heads of state, namely presidents and prime ministers, who perform most diplomatic roles on the international stage consisting of bilateral and multilateral meetings with their counterparts. The summit signifies the practice of diplomacy at the highest level, and it unfolds leaders' capacities to mould relationships with other countries. In this context, the research has firstly examined short biographical sketches of both political leaders - Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pervez Musharraf, and then the paper has discussed the process and outcome of the Agra summit.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Atal Bihari Vajpayee was born in Gwalior in a traditional Hindu Brahmin family onDecember 25, 1924. His grandfather had migrated from Bateshwar in Uttar Pradesh to Gwalior. His father and Grandfather were schooled in Sanskrit rituals. Conversations used in his home were in Hindi. His father, Krishna Bihari, was a teacher and an employee of the Scindhias. Atal spent his earliest years in Batheshwar. Most of Atal's early literacy took place at home; with great fondness, he remembered his mother's reciting of the Ramayana and stories from the Hindu epics in Sanskrit and Awadhi from his grandfather (Choudhary 2023:17). Ramacharitmanas has a particular influence on him, later Ram's life became a major inspiration to him (Choudhary 2023:17).

Vajpayee studied at the local Gorakhi School, funded by the Maharaja of Gwalior. In 1941, Vajpayee entered Victoria College. In college, he became

familiar with Marxism and Socialism, Gandhian thinking and Arya Samaji. From his college days, he started writing poems, which elicited a mixture of ideas which influenced him. In college, Vajpayee developed an aversion to the caste system in Hinduism, which he saw as a threat to Hindu unity.It is important to notice that by the late 1930s, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has expanded to non-Marathi speaking areas. A Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) functionary converted the teenage Vajpayee into what he remained with his life. Though Vajpayee entered wearing his sacred thread, he removed it soon after joining the RSS. As swayemsevak (volunteer), Vajpayee regularly visited morning shakhas (branches). Attending Shakhas, he learnt the RSS version of Hindu History, whichprimarily focused on Shivaji, the Maratha Empireand the third battle of Panipat of 1761. Vajpayee also noticed the historical lessons translated within the RSS organisation. It is essential to be noted the RSS has been championing the causes of Hindutva politics. It aims to promote consciousness of the one Hindu Nationhood (Sitapati 2020:19).

Vajpayee joined a law program and MA in Political Science at the DAV College in Kanpur in 1945. It is important to notice that Vajpayee's father, now a retired school Inspector, joined the college as an equal. Later a classmate told Vajpayee virtually grew under his father's shadow (Sitapati 2020: 21). Vajpayee continued studying law during the tumult of the partition. By late August 1947, Vajpayee, a 22-year young man, was appointed as the first joint editor of a Hindi monthly Rashtradharma launched by the RSS in Lucknow, and a few months later, he joined the weekly Panchajanaya as the editor (Choudhary 2023:53). Young Atal had no idea about the larger picture and RSS's broader activities such as its role in partition riots, self-appointed vigilantism, publication of anti-government propaganda which would lead to a serious discord between Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the architects of newly independent Republic of India (Choudhary 2023:54). It is relevant to look into an essay authored by Atal in Rashtradharma, where he staunchly defended the cultural revival of Hindu and blamed Muslims for the partition of India and most importantly, he defended the dream of Akhand Bharat – a reunified India (Choudhary 2023:61). Following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, there had been a ban on the RSS, which was lifted in July 1949. As Atal was only associated with the RSS for less than six months and then again only as an editor, he was not arrested.

Vajpayee contested his first election in 1955, which he lost; in the General election in 1957, he won Balrampur, a parliamentary constituency and entered the Parliament aged 33, and he became the leader of the party 'Bharatiya Jan Sangha' in the Lok Sabha. Vajpayee won praise from Jawaharlal Nehru in the Parliament because of Vajpayee's foreign policy opinions in Hindi. Nehru also predicted him to be the future Prime Minister (Sitapati 2020:50). Vajpayee's first speech in the Parliament was on foreign policy, which remained his favourite subject throughout his public life (Sinha 2020:3). Atal's writings on foreign policy displayed ingenuity; he viewed foreign policy as realist, unsentimental, and transactional (Choudhary 2023:92).

In 1977, the Janata Government came into power, defeating Indira Gandhi. Morarji Desai became the prime minister, and Vajpayee became his foreign minister. It is essential to be noted that there has been continuity in the foreign policy outlook of India during Desai's tenure. The Janata government fell in 1979. During the 1980s, Vajpayee's political career was dormant. During the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s, Lal Krishna Advani became the prominent face of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Following the mid-term election after the brutal assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, BJP won 119 MP in a house of 542, the Congress with 221 seats and other allies formed the government headed by PV Narasimha. Advani became the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. After December 1992, the demolition of Babri Masjid and its subsequent happeningsstarted shifting the BJP's focus away from Advani and towards Vajpayee (Sinha 2020:8).

Vajpayee headed the government in 1996, which lasted only thirteen days; then again, he became Prime Minister following the March 1998 election. One of the important decisions he has taken was the nuclear tests. According to Vajpayee, India has to be recognised as a great power, which is India's destiny. Once again, his government fell short majority, which he would again regain in the next election. In 2004, his government was replaced by the Congress-led government headed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Personally, Vajpayee was a shy person and generally kept to himself; when present, he was a man of very few words (Sinha 2020). Vajpayee was a mesmerising public speaker; he could hold audiences, and not just supporters in thrall, but not just through eloquence.

In relation to Pakistan, Vajpayee sought peaceful relations. Once, he said, "We can choose our relatives, not our neighbours (Sitapati

2020:236). After nuclear tests in both countries, the Sharif government, crossing its swords with the military by firing its top commander and following an activist foreign policy, invited Atal Bihari Vajpayee to the United Nations General Assembly's sidelines in 1998 (Shah 2014). Vajpayee accepted the invitation, following its famous Lahore declaration was signed between both countries, aiming to bring peace and stability to both countries. The peace process between both countries suffered grievous injuriesfollowing the Kargil War in 1999 and after the arrival of the military general Pervez Musharraf. The Agra talk aimed to resume the dialogue process and resolve longstanding disputes between both countries, which has been discussed in the later part.

Pervez Musharraf

The biography of Pervez Musharraf highlights some specific aspects of his personality, comprising his family background, birthplace and the impact of partition on his initial life. Pervez Musharraf was born in a middle-class family on August 11, 1943, at his ancestral residence Neharwali Haveli, Mohallah Saad Ullah, Old Delhi. Pervez Musharraf was born in the cosmopolitan city of Delhi, representing the fusion of multiple traditions. The Nehar Wali Haveli is historically important as the Chief Wazir of the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah II, inhabited this place. The surrounding of Haveli was once inhabited by many of the Mughal noble families. Even after the arrival of the British, Old Delhi continued to be the thriving centre of Muslim protocol, culture and tradition.

Like many other places, Delhi was one of the worst affected areas during the partition. Mutual trust and confidence between Hindus and Muslims were shattered in Delhi's flagrance of hatred and madness.Pervez Musharraf, with his mother, father and two brothers, left Delhi in 1947. His family arrived in Karachi on August 15 1947. Pervez Musharraf vividly remembers his arrival in Karachi in his memoir, 'Line of Fire', "I remembered, too, the swarm of thankful people who greeted them. There was food, there was joy, there was laughter, and there was a lot of hugging and kissing. There were Thanksgiving prayers too" (Musharraf 2006).

It is significant to notice that Pervez Musharraf was born in a traditional middle-class family. His mother was highly educated; it must have left a deep impression on the personality of Musharraf. In an interview, his mother, Zarin Musharraf, casually revealed that she had been greatly

influenced by progressive intellectuals such as Sajjad Zaheer and Sibte Hassan[1]. (Ali 2003). Tariq Ali wondered upon Zarin's bold revelation to claim friendship with two convicted traitors. Though she did not directly mention that her views had genetically influenced her children, the impact of her liberal views on Musharraf cannot be denied. Since Musharraf was brought up in a liberal family, he had never acted as a dictatorial figure, and during his entire period of presidency, he never evoked any conservative policies as former General Jia ul Haq had done during his tenure.

Musharraf received favourable conditions for the growth in Pakistan. As Musharraf's family, who migrated to Pakistan, was from a highly educated middle-class family, this proved advantageous. Pervez Musharraf recounts that his initial years in Karachi were happy days and the hardship of migrating to a new country, overcome by hope and excitement. He narrates that a metamorphosis took place in him in the first months and years after partition, and he found the soil of Pakistan that was natural to him (Musharraf 2006).

After two years in Karachi, his father was posted to the Pakistan embassy in Ankara, Turkey. In Turkey, he, along with his family, stayed for seven years. Musharraf remembers his stay in Turkey as the formative years hugely influencing his worldview.

His career in elite military services started in 1993 when he was appointed as the director-general of military operations (DGMO), the military think tank of Pakistan. In 1995, he was promoted to lieutenant general in Mangla. He also became part of the army's highest decision-making body-the Corps Commanders' Conference (Musharraf 2006: 77). In his memoir Musharraf remembers ten years of the alternate democratic government between 1989 and 1999 as the worst kind of governance Pakistan ever had faced (Musharraf 2006). After the controversial retirement of Chief of army staff (COAS) General Jehangir Karamat, Musharraf was surprisedly appointed as the thirteenth chief of the army in Pakistan. The Kargil conflict focused on then-General Pervez Musharraf, who had planned the entire war script.

[1]Sajjad Zaheer and Sibte Hassan were two of the finest literary critics of the subcontinent. Both joined Communist Party and after partitions, they moved to Pakistan to organise Communist Party. In the Rawalpindi conspiracy case, Sibte Hasan, Sajjad Zaheer, and poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz were imprisoned. The former prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, intervened, and Sajjad Zaheer was released from prison and then returned to India.

When Pervez Musharraf became Pakistan's chief executive, many people worldwide assumed him as an anti-Western fundamentalist Muslim. However, when his brother Dr Naved Musharraf, a doctor in Chicago, was approached, he introduced a different conception of his brother. He said, "Pervez is a secular-minded man, and Pervez believes in the separation of church and state. He does not want a theocracy" (Dugger 1999). If we observe the entire tenure of Musharraf, he was certainly different from previous army generals in Pakistan. For instance, unlike General Zia ul-Haq, referred to as the Chief Martial Law Administrator, Musharraf likes to call himself the Chief Executive (Schofield 2010).

In the 2003 Organisation of Islamic Countries Summit, Musharraf unfurled his grand vision of 'moderate enlightenment'. His vision of moderate enlightenment appeared in the post-9/11 world when there were widespread linkages of Islam with fundamentalism, fundamentalism to extremism, and extremism to terrorism (Musharraf 2004).

When Musharraf assumed the presidency in Pakistan, his movements were closely watched by the Indian government and analysts, who already knew Musharraf's alleged role in the Kargil conflict (Lavoy 2009). Though the arrival of army rule in Pakistan surprised India and the rest of the world, it is not hidden that the military establishment has been the most powerful institution in Pakistan. Three generals already had ruled Pakistan's side-stepping democracy.

Pakistan's approach to the relationship with India has always been fraught with distrust and suspicion. Pakistan always views India in terms of its existential threat. The negotiating structures in Pakistan that involve negotiating with India are much more centralised (Schaffer and Schaffer 2011). There is a clear distinction of authority between civilian leaders and military leaders in this respect in Pakistan. In comparison to their civilian counterparts, military leaders enjoy more power. Even in terms of legitimacy, the military enjoys more power. In October 2004, he proposed that he was ready to move away from Pakistan's longstanding demand for a plebiscite as called by the United Nations Resolution in 1948-49, provided that India would not insist that Line of Control (LOC) be accepted as the International border. In 2006, Musharraf proposed that people's free movement should be allowed along both sides of Kashmir (Schaffer 2009: 186-187). Such announcements by civilian leaders are not possible in Pakistan.

According to Howard Schaffer and Teresita Schaffer, the sense of sovereign equality in Pakistan vis-a-vis India is the product of Islamabad's frustrations over India's perceived readiness to use its power to damage Pakistan's interest (Schaffer and Schafer 2011:146). It has been the longstanding aspect of Pakistan's negotiation strategy.

The analysis of Pakistan's negotiating strategy reveals the importance of its military establishment. For example, Musharraf's background in the military gives him more leverage in negotiating with India than any civilian leader would have. Moreover, at this point, the role of the personality of military leaders becomes vital in negotiation. Next follows the analysis of the Agra talk between India and Pakistan.

Agra Summit, July 15-16, 2001

After the arrival of Musharraf in Pakistan, the first diplomatic stand-off between India and Pakistan occurred on December 24, 1999, when a band of five, Pakistan based Islamic radicals, hijacked an Indian Airlines Airbus carrying one hundred seventy passengers when the plane was going from Kathmandu to New Delhi. Indian government secured passengers by handing over three militant prisoners to the hijackers. This hijack episode was followed by the killing of six Indians across the Line of Control and the rising militant activities in Kashmir. Strobe Talbott (2004) mentioned that Pakistan was clearly involved in both incidents, and he praised the Indian government's extraordinary restraint on these issues (Talbott 2004: 187-188). Strobe Talbott's observation underlined the growing importance of India in the international community. Then within India, the political party in power, BJP, had a strong anti-Pakistan feeling. However, Vajpayee was an exception because he realised that without having an understanding with Pakistan, he would not receive the attention he sought from world leaders (Raghavan 2017:247).

Hussain Haqqani, former Pakistan Ambassador to the United States, said otherwise when he noted the intense international pressures resulted in both countries agreeing to continue the dialogue for a feasible solution to a number of contentious issues (Hussain 2007:104). Before Musharraf, Pakistani leaders had pitched hard for a negotiated settlement of disputes with India; however, it remained centred around the Kashmir issue. Therefore, it was up to Musharraf to continue dialogue with India. In his assessment of the India and Pakistan relationship, Musharraf mentioned that he had taken bold

steps towards a rapprochement with India because this step would bring socio-economic cooperation and development in South Asia and, further, he stated that the military could not solve problems between both countries and relationship between both countries could be improved only through diplomacy (Musharraf 2006:297).

Talks, after all, have started after a gap of two years; India initiated the process of dialogue with Pakistan. The Ceasefire between India and Pakistandid not bring any cumulative results. Moreover, the secessionist group Hurriyat had been adamant about discussing with Pakistan (Dixit 2002). J. N. Dixit mentioned that then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was not ready for the talk. However, Advani and other senior colleagues pressed for taking something bold and dramatic to break the deadlock followed after the Kargil war in 1999 (Dixit 2002).

Vajpayee formally invited Pervez Musharraf on May 24 2001, which Musharraf readily accepted. The tentative schedule for the summit was decided for mid-July which ultimately took place between the 14th and 16th of July (Dixit 2002:398). Further, the Indian government announced several unilateral initiatives, such as offering scholarships for Pakistani students and cultural exchanges. The Pakistani government's response could have been more enthusiastic; their unilateral focus had been on the Kashmir issue. In a statement, Musharraf announced that Kashmir is "the unfinished part of the partition" and should be given more importance, though he had no objection to discussing other issues (Dixit 2002:400).

Before going ahead, examining the reasons behind Musharraf's acceptance of India's offer to talk is crucial. G Parthasarathy observed that Musharraf was personable and warm-hearted and was different from other military rulers in the past. Professor Kalim Bahadur traced the reason behind Musharraf's enthusiasm. Firstly, the Pakistani regime knew India was not on the verge of military and economic collapse. Secondly, Pakistan could not compel India to accept the UN resolutions internationally. Thirdly, Islamabad had started to lose the support of the Islamic world regarding the Kashmir issue. It happened because then Prime Minister Vajpayee had successful visits to Saudi Arabia, Iran, Malaysia and Indonesia, which caused anxiety in the Pakistani establishment. Fourthly, Musharraf was aware that the nuclear status of Pakistan could not help it win a war against India. Fifthly, Pakistan's deteriorating economic condition compelled Musharraf to compromise with India, whose economy had been growing impressively. Lastly, Musharraf

realised the fragile condition of Pakistan, where various terrorist groups fostered by ISI had started to lose control of Islamabad and had established direct control with the Taliban.

Pervez Musharraf, in his memoir, mentioned that he accepted the invitation after realising that a military solution could not solve problems between both countries, and diplomacy was the best way forward (Musharraf 2006). Musharraf mentioned that he was upbeat about the visit to India. He reached New Delhi on July 15, 2001, and began a formal dialogue with Prime Minister Vajpayee on the morning of July 16, 2001. Musharraf mentioned that they prepared a joint draft that would be acceptable to both. It contained a declaration of the condemnation of terrorism and recognition that Kashmir needed a resolution to improve bilateral relations (Musharraf 2006). However, Musharraf observed India rejected the draft resolution.

Further attempts to redraft also have yet to yield any results. Finally, Agra Summit was concluded without any substantive outcome. The official spokesperson informed, "I am disappointed to announce that though the commencement of a process has taken place, the destination of an agreed joint statement has not been reached" (Prasad 2001). After the summit, when people saw nothing happening, Vajpayee, an experienced, highly respected man, did not see off Musharraf (Dulat et al. 2018:146). Musharraf departed for Islamabad at midnight night on July 16.

The result of the Agra summit has been vigorously debated and analysed. In The Asian Age newspaper, HY Sharada[2] The most distasteful aspect of a two-day vigorous summit was the absence of documents and no leaks (Prasad 2001). The failure of the Agra Talk raised many questions. What were the reasons behind the failures of the Agra talk?

According to Pakistani foreign minister Abdul Sattar, Musharraf projected his persuasive views on the need to resolve the Kashmir dispute to a spellbound audience in both countries, while his counterpart Jaswant Singh found Musharraf a 'belligerent' and grandstanding fever had induced Musharraf into a great deal of unrestrained comment (Raghavan 2017:250). The draft statement negotiated between both countries did not bring progress on the issue of Kashmir and terrorism. Later a long meeting between Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Musharraf took place to see if matters still could be resolved, but that resulted without any substantial outcome (Raghavan 2017:251).

According to J. N. Dixit (2002), there were inherent contradictions between the leaders' objectives, Pervez Musharraf and Atal Bihari Vajpayee. India initiated a talk with Pakistan because it was annoyed by Hurriyat. Moreover, India was worried due to the failure of the ceasefire. Vajpayee genuinely desired to normalise the acrimonious relationship between New Delhi and Islamabad. Moreover, he wanted to focus on border terrorism and tackle regional security issues arising from South Asia's nuclearisation. India also wanted to respond to international concerns and anxieties regarding the Kashmir issue. In contrast, Musharraf's objective differed from New Delhi's concern.

First, Musharraf successfully politicised the Kashmir issue, which the Indian government did not seek to highlight during the talk. Musharraf met with the Hurriyat leaders and publicly termed Pakistan-sponsored terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir as freedom fighters (Rajya Sabha August 8, 2001:244-45). Secondly, using the summit platform, Musharraf undermined the previous agreement reached by both countries. He disconnected Lahore and Simla's agreement (Dixit 2002 and Musharraf 2006).

Most importantly, by using the Agra platform, Musharraf endorsed his leadership in Pakistan. Musharraf's invitation to India was vigorously debated in the Indian Parliament. Dr Karan Singh[3] (Rajya Sabha 2001) observed Agra Summit as a failure, and the Indian government, which had initially refused to talk with Musharraf because he was a military dictator. Further, he stated that the Indian government's invitation appeared to him as a blessing; India not only welcomed the General but also did 'Rajtilak', i.e. coronation to him, and this indeed not only fully legitimised General Musharraf but also empowered him, as far as his country and the rest of the world is concerned (Rajya Sabha 2001:265-266).

It can be observed that the statement of Dr Karan Singh was not about his disapproval of Musharraf's visit, but it was about how successfully Musharraf utilised his visit to Agra to endorse his position in Pakistan and to the rest of the world. In a widely published press conference on July 20, 2001, he laid Agra's responsibility on the Indian government with personal praise for Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He categorically asserted that the relationship between India and Pakistan could be normalised only if

[2] H. Y. Sharada was a former advisor to the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

the status of Kashmir is resolved within the framework of Pakistan's objective (Dixit 2002).

Conclusion

The present study offers a theoretical understanding of international politics by exploring unit-level variables. Personality comprising traits, motives, world views, and cognitions has been conceived as the unit-level variable, which provided an analytical framework for this research. The research establishes the link between an individual's personality and its impact on negotiation. It has integrated various theoretical conceptions of personality from the psychology discipline, especially political psychology, with the theoretical concept of negotiation and foreign policy analysis. A theoretical understanding of the role of personality and its impact on negotiations has been conceived and applied to investigate Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pervez Musharraf's personalities and their impact on negotiations in the context of the Agra Talk. The research examined short biographical sketches of political leaders - Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pervez Musharraf; it explored leaders' world views, careers, and bringing ups. Then, the research comprehensively discussed the outcomes and process of the Agra talks.

The Agra talks have several implications, which have been discussed earlier. If we observe the entire Agra talk between India and Pakistan, it has failed. However, the impact of failure was rather more upon the Indian side than Pakistan. Under Atal Bihari Vajpayee's leadership, India had unilaterally taken the initiative to continue dialogue with Pakistan. Vajpayee sought an equation with Pakistan to engage with the world on a whole range of issues which otherwise eclipsed due to a state of tension with Pakistan. Though Musharraf had shown his willingness to engage with India, he had his agenda. Firstly, he successfully used it to endorse his military rule in Pakistan, and secondly, he successfully highlighted the Kashmir issue internationally. Still, if there was any chance of revival of the peace process between India and Pakistan, the December 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament belied and buried that prospect.

[3]Dr Karan Singh was a Rajya Sabha member in 2001; he is the son of the late Maharaja Hari Singh of Jammu and Kashmir. He served as Sadr-i-Riyasat and Governor of Jammu and Kashmir.

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FROM THE MARGINS: EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PLANTATION LABOUR ACT, 1951 IN THE TEA GARDENS OF ASSAM

Krishangi Saikia
Dr. Bipul Das

Abstract

Tea Gardens are a site of marginalisation, resulting from the remnants of a colonial past of slavery, servitude and exploitation. Called as enclave societies, tea gardens host a number of communities that have experienced slack from the authorities, both in colonial and post colonial times. The Plantation Labour Act, 1951 was a milestone legislation for improving the conditions of the tea garden workers by providing necessary benefits for an improved life. The legislation provided an impetus on the industry to incur these 'social welfare costs'. However, cases of rampant abuse of power and privilege have eroded the credibility of the legislation. Moreover, amalgamation of the legislation into the Code on Occupational Safety and Health, 2020 and the Social Security Code, 2020 has put the effectiveness of the legislation into question. This paper highlights the above mentioned concerns in the light of the effectiveness of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 in the context of the tea gardens of Assam.

Key words: Labour, Plantation, State, Tea gardens, Women Workers.

Introduction

Plantations are a paradox in their own light. They are a site of cheap labour, providing both direct and indirect employment to millions of workers and also contribute enormously to the economy of the region. Many scholars on tea plantations have identified the plantations in two ways: as a private property for the management and a public space for the labourers. Stuck in time, tea gardens are a site of continued oppression and resistance. Both oppression and resistance find their manifestations particularly in two areas

of work: one in the tea garden and the other at homes within the tea gardens. According to Gothoskar (2012), plantations "were part of the colonial capitalist accumulation process" and thereby, oppressive in nature. Plantations in general and the tea industry in particular, due to their oppressive nature are deemed as 'enclave societies' and 'total institutions'. As a total institution, the tea garden settings provide not just work but also habitation for the workers to reside with their families. Das (2013) therefore compares the tea gardens to a "walled city", where the residents "hardly interact with the outsiders" and rarely come out of the garden premises, the exceptions being during festivals or for marketing purposes. He therefore argues that there is a state within the state in the tea gardens of Assam.

Tea industry, one the most important sectors of the plantation economy, is known for its capacity to generate livelihood for millions. It justifies the true character of a plantation, with the employment of manual labour and technology, a true blend of farming and industry. Therefore, tea gardens positively are sites of blended labour. As such, in most occasions, the distinction between skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour is blurred, which again, acts as an impediment on the upliftment of the labourers engaged in the gardens.

Women tea garden workers are the worst sufferers of this arrangement. Women workers are desired for their skill of plucking/picking tea leaves and as witnessed, they are irreplaceable in this job. Male workers are hardly encouraged to carry out this task, highlighting the fact that this task is exclusively reserved for women. As pointed out by Gurung and Roy Mukherjee (2012), within the organized sector the industry with the highest percentage of female workers is the plantation industry. Conditions like cheap, regular and easily accessible labour made the women workers more desirable who could perform the tasks of production and reproduction (thereby guaranteeing a regular flow of labour) in the peculiar state of a tea garden. For these reasons, the tea industry is regarded as a "feminized industry" (Saikia, 2022). The term 'feminisation of labour' was used for the first time by Guy Standing (1989) to refer to the phenomena wherein, apart from a fall in the jobs for men, the jobs traditionally held by men were also going into women's hands. This according to Standing was a direct outcome of globalisation of labour. This phenomenon of 'feminisation of labour' is also witnessed in the case of agricultural labour in India.

However, the scenario of plantation labour is different in the sense that plucking or picking of tea leaves has always been a task reserved for women. The task of plucking tea leaves, seen as an 'unskilled job' requires women workers in huge numbers. The Statistical Profile on Women Labour published in 2009-2010 also stresses on this fact while mentioning that women constitute 55.86% of the bulk of the labour force in the plantation industry. Tea gardens in Assam are seen as an "icon" or a symbol (Baruah, 2018). This icon of Assam is symbolized through the female workers carrying baskets on their heads and printed as cover pages in newspapers, reports, documents. However, the slack received by the women workers goes unnoticed, who need to work both in the field and at home.

Tea gardens in India are guided and regulated by various legislations, which include the Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Act 1952, the Payment of Gratuity Act 1972, the Employees Compensation Act 1923, Maternity Benefit Act 1961 and most importantly the Plantation Labour Act 1951. However, these legislations have not proved to be sufficient for improving the conditions of the tea garden workers. The onus of providing social protection to the workers have been placed on the garden management, while the state is required to monitor the implementation of the same, as per the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. Lack of incentive from both the management and the state for proper implementation and monitoring of the said legislation has been witnessed. In this backdrop, this paper seeks to understand the effectiveness of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 in the tea gardens of Assam. It unfolds the impact of the provisions of the Act of 1951 on the workers in general and women workers in particular.

Methodology

This paper is a culmination of both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using tools like in-depth semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions. For the collection of primary data, a study was conducted among tea garden women workers in one of the tea gardens in the Jorhat district of Assam. Fieldwork for this purpose was conducted in the month of July, 2022, wherein, 15 women workers across different age groups were individually interviewed and three Focus Group Discussions were conducted. Secondary data has been collected from sources like books, journal articles and newspaper articles. A qualitative analysis has been arrived at using the tools as mentioned.

The Plantation Labour Act, 1951: An Overview

The Labour Investigation Committee (a committee of enquiry) set up by the Government of India in the Department of Labour in 1944-45 under the chairmanship of Mr. D.V. Rege, I.C.S (hence, also called the Rege Committee), was empowered to collect various information regarding different aspects of social security and inform the same to the Planning Committee so that a programme of social security for labour could be set up in India. It was on the recommendations of the Rege Committee that the Plantations Labour Act was enacted in October, 1951, which came into force in 1954. The core idea of the legislation was to provide social security measures to workers in the plantation industry. It seeks to regulate working conditions in the plantations. As per the provisions of the Act, the plantation owners are required to incur certain social benefit costs, for improving the living and working conditions of the workers. A safe and healthy working environment and adequate provisions for the welfare of the workers are mandated to be provided under the Plantation Labour Act, 1951.

As such, for proper monitoring and evaluation, a provision for engaging inspecting staff is also provided under the legislation. Certifying surgeons for better health conditions of the workers are also required to be appointed by the concerned State Government. With regard to provisions on health, the Act makes it mandatory for the plantation owners to provide and maintain a sufficient supply of drinkable water for all the workers at convenient places. Urinals and latrines for maintaining proper hygiene conditions are also a requirement. The welfare provisions under the Act include providing canteens; crèches with adequate accommodation, light and ventilation "under the charge of a woman trained in the care of children and infants"; recreational, educational and housing facilities. In respect of working conditions with regard to hours and limitations of employment, the Act provides the following provisions:

- That no adult workers should work more than fifty four hours a week and no adolescent or child for more than forty hours a week
- That there should be a day of rest in a week and daily intervals for rest
- That a child below the age of twelve years must not be employed in any plantation
- That every worker must be able to avail leave with wages
- That every woman worker must receive maternity allowance.

However, the Union Government in 2019 proposed to replace the existing labour laws with four codes, which could make these legislations more accessible to the general public. As per the report of the Second National Commission on Labour (2002), operational problems with regard to inconsistent definitions have been a major concern with regard to the labour legislations. Hence, the NCL recommended the consolidation of all the labour laws into broad groups like industrial relations, wages, social security, safety and welfare and working conditions. The Ministry of Labour and Employment in the year 2019 put forth four Bills on labour codes for the consolidation of the 29 labour laws. These Codes include: Wages, Industrial Relations, Social Security and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions. The Plantation Labour Act, 1951 and its provisions have been subsumed under the Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Code on Occupational, Safety and Health, 2020.

Effectiveness into Question: Cases in Consideration

This section highlights the cases that point to the fact that the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 runs short of its provisions and their implementation. To understand the effectiveness of the legislation, a thorough study must be done on the steps taken by the concerned authority, which are the garden management and the appropriate state governments.

The plantation industry has multitudes of scope for improvement. It does not, for instance, include any provisions with regard to small growers and casual or temporary workers. However, temporary workers constitute a large chunk of the working population in the industry. As mentioned in the report titled 'India's Plantation Labour Act, 1951-Need a Revisit' by Tantri (2018), the legislation suffers from definitional and institutional inclusion-exclusion problems. It highlights that the mandatory criteria of providing welfare provisions to the workers erodes the sector's competitiveness. With regards to the effectiveness of the legislation, manifold problems have been witnessed. These include non payment of wages and non-fulfilment of provisions of working conditions. Some common problems with regard to human rights violations in Assam's tea gardens highlighted in the report by The International Roundtable for Sustainable Tea (THIRST) include, low wages, poor sanitation (this includes drinking water, latrines, drainage), poor housing (this includes insufficient space and delays in repair of damages) and poor healthcare (this includes inadequate number of medical personnel or doctors who are inadequately trained) (Banerjee, 2020). Banerjee also maintains that although under the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 adequate housing

needs to be provided from the management to the workers, the housing is of very poor quality and requires maintenance, the lack of which causes wearing and dilapidation. This leads to a situation where workers need o use umbrellas to shelter themselves from the rains inside the house. Whilst facing such conditions, workers are also treated to disciplinary actions, if they carry out repair works on their own. Banerjee cites the Columbia Law School report to argue that the government is aware of the breaches of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951.

The Columbia Law School report, as cited by Banerjee (2020) with regard to sanitation facilities in the tea gardens mentions that in 2009, "plantations in Assam lack nearly one third of the latrines required". Tea gardens are also characteristic of the high prevalence of diseases like cholera, jaundice, tuberculosis, diarrhoea and skin diseases. Problems with regards to poor healthcare amongst the tea garden workers in the tea gardens arise due to issues like poorly trained and regularly absent medical staff. Moreover, the prevalence of fake doctors is rampant in the tea gardens of Assam. In addition to these, lack of proper protection while applying pesticides respiratory and skin diseases amongst the workers. Also, workers suffer from accidents arising out of occupational hazards due to the lacunae in providing protective gears like masks, coats and shoes. In situations where these are provided, workers are unable to wear them due to their poor quality.

Cases of workplace hazards have been frequent in the tea gardens, particularly in the factory settings. As per the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, safety gears like helmets must be provided to the workers working in the factories so as to avoid various health hazards and accidents. However, non-compliance is seen in this regard amongst garden owners and management. Deep (2022) highlights the case of Moina Nayak, a 24 years old temporary worker in Dibrugarh's Lepetkata Tea Estate. The estate owned by Luxmi Tea Company Private Ltd. faulted along the lines of providing protective gears like helmets to its workers working in the factory premises. As a result, Moina Nayak, the sole bread earner of her family was severely injured and admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of Guwahati Medical College and Hospital. At the time of the incident, Moina Nayak was sweeping the floor of the factory, collecting the residual tea leaves falling out of the Crush, Tear and Curl (CTC) machine. Bandopadhyay (2022) in her report mentions that the tea estate management failed in its duties of preventing the accident but incurred the post-accident expenses by providing a compensation of Rs 13.41 lakh.

Another case of occupational hazard had occurred in December 2020, when 27 year old Manki lost her life when her sari got caught to a CTC machine while sweeping the floor to collect the dust. She died as her head was dragged into the machine (Deep, 2022). Flouting of the provisions of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 has been observed in several cases of fake doctors providing treatment to tea garden workers in the Mokalbari Tea Estate, Mancotta Tea Estate and Tinkhong Tea Estate in the Dibrugarh district of Assam. According to the Act of 1951, doctors are mandatorily required to be appointed by the tea garden management. Cases of such impersonating and fake doctors being nabbed by the police highlight the irregularities in the implementation and monitoring of the legislation on the part of the management and the state. Parashar (2021) argues that lack of uniformity in appointment of doctors across the tea gardens without any proper checks is one of the reasons for such menaces existing in the tea garden settings.

Both the management and the state work in tandem to hide the loopholes in their work with regard to the Act of 1951. In a 2018 case of Doyang Tea Estate in Assam's Golghat district, 19 workers had died under mysterious circumstances within a matter of few days. The Golaghat district head of the directorate of health services concluded that the cause of the deaths was consumption of local alcohol which contains toxic substances, including electronic wastes like batteries and polythene. Locals were, however, critical of the health department's quick assessment of the situation without having conducted a post-mortem of most of the deaths. As Saikia (2018) mentions, student unions had criticised the government of covering their own inadequacies with assumptive assessments.

Lack of incentives on the part of the government and the management was also seen during the pandemic of 2020-2021, when there was a 300 per cent rise in Covid-19 cases in Assam's tea gardens. A report by The Indian Express also mentioned that the vaccination drive was not carried out in its full potential in the tribal belt of Assam. As per a report by the Labour Department, Government of Assam, titled 'Tea Gardens of Assam: A Report on Plantations Labour Act, 1951 Under 100 Days Action Plan', Assam's tea gardens have a shortfall of residential houses; latrines and water points; hospitals, doctors and pharmacists; and crèches which are violations under section 15, sections 9 and 8, section 10 and section 12 of the Act of 1951.

The Case of Women Workers: Have the Labour Legislations Done their Part?

Women workers in the tea gardens are the most disadvantaged section. They are deprived in every aspect: socially, by restricting their areas of work; politically, by minimal or negative representation in public forums like trade unions; and economically, by depriving them from the price of their labour (their earnings). Inspite of these deprivations, it is important to mention that they constitute 80 per cent of the workforce, including permanent, casual and temporary workers.

Tantri (2012) mentions that it is very important for the women workers to limit the number of hours worked in the garden as they also have roles in social reproduction. Their work at home is crucial for maintaining marital power and household harmony, as stated by the women workers. The relationship between women workers and the trade unions represent patriarchal oppression, in the sense that women are rarely seen holding important portfolios in the organisational structures of the trade unions. However, Tantri (2012) believes that "trade unions were crucial for the survival and betterment of women workers." Banerjee (2020) maintains that trade unions function "as a part of management". Moreover, workers' unions are dominated by men, leaving behind any scope of advancing the concerns and interests of the female workers. As remarked by one of the respondents:

"We are not encouraged to go to the meetings. It is mostly my husband who goes and takes part in the meetings of the ACMS. We do not get to raise our concerns in front of anyone."[1]

Dismal pictures of the health conditions of women workers are witnessed in the tea gardens of Assam. Most women consume food of low nutritional value and the calorie intake of these workers is also very low. In comparison to the hours of work dedicated and the weight carried on their backs, women workers are substantially low fed. As Tantri (2012) mentions, "women carry more than 40 kilograms of green leaf on their backs every day for years since they are very young, and later whether they are pregnant or old." As a result, women suffer from problems like anaemia and malnutrition. Alexander (2020) in her report on the human rights violations in the tea industry of Assam and West Bengal mention that tea gardens in Assam have "a high maternal death rate". The statistics show that 404 mothers per 100,000 live births lose their lives during childbirth. According to experts, this scenario is being witnessed due to "poverty, malnutrition, lack of sanitation and a lack of healthcare facilities" (Alexander, 2020), which is a direct outcome of non-compliance of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. These issues have also been highlighted by one of the respondents in the study area:

"We bring plain rice and boiled vegetables or sometimes a *roti* or a bread to eat with cold tea for lunch. Sometimes we also share the food amongst ourselves. We do not feel full but it is enough to help us keep working for the rest of the day."[2]

Deaths during pregnancy or at childbirth are witnessed across the country. Protests against the management had occurred in 2012, organised by the tea pickers in West Bengal with the help of the UIF (International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations), when one of the workers being seven and a half months pregnant was denied medical treatment (Alexander, 2020). The management gave in to the demands of the workers of securing improved housing and better maternity rights. However, respondents in the study area of this research seem happy with the medical provisions available inside the garden. They reveal that deaths during childbirth have not been witnessed in the garden, as per their remembrance. Hence, the question of protesting against the management on issues as such has also never arisen. However, it must be noted here that silent symbols of protests (wearing black badges) were seen amongst the male workers against the government's intention of leasing out the gardens under the Assam Tea Corporation Limited to private players.

Although provisions of crèche facilities under a trained woman caretaker are provided under section 12 of the Act of 1951, the workers in the study area reveal that no such facilities have been received by them at any point of time. This induces the women workers to keep their children at home, under the protection of their old in-laws, thereby perpetuating a sense of dependence on the part of these women workers in the family. This situation pushes the women workers to acknowledge the dominant role that family plays in their lives; at times, contributing to unequal power relations within the household. Understandably, failure of the state mechanism to ensure better working conditions for the women workers negatively affects the power structure at home.

Incentives from the Government

In an answer given to the Parliament by the Minister of State (I/C) for Labour & Employment Shri Santosh Kumar Gangwar on 10 February, 2021, he mentioned that plantation workers are provided social security under not just the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, but also other legislations such as the Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Act 1952, the Payment of Gratuity Act 1972, the Employees Compensation Act 1923.

The Assam government has also announced financial assistance of Rs 3000 each to around 7.47 lakh tea garden workers under the 'Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar Mela'. As stated, this programme aims to boost the financial inclusion of tea garden workers (Nath, 2021). The scheme was started in 2017-2018.

Along with this, the Assam government took the decision to engage the tea garden workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to boost their economic opportunities during the lean winter season when production is low in the tea gardens. The workers would be provided work like pond excavation and building of roads under the scheme (Singh, 2021). The latest incentive provided to the tea garden workers is mentioned in the Assam Budget for fiscal 2023-24. In a major decision, the Finance Minister had announced that electricity dues of all the families of tea garden workers would be waived off as a "special one-time relief measure" (Karmakar, 2023).

Such incentives are as much a welfare mechanism on the part of the government as a vote-garnering device. Respondents have mentioned that their engagement in MGNREGA related works boost their economic situation during the lean season. Both men and women are engaged in several tasks, depending upon their skill and physical endurance. This definitely marks a gendered connotation of assignment of tasks, further reinforcing gender roles.

However, a lot needs to be done by the state to uplift the conditions of the women workers at a more micro level, looking through the prism of the household where women workers are conveniently placed by the society and the state.

Concluding Observations

This paper was based on the premise that the 'core', consisting of the powerful, that is the tea garden management and the government need to work to provide the provisions for healthy, secure and improved lives to those at the 'margin', consisting of the powerless, that is the tea garden workers. The most important tool in this regard in the hands of both the management and the state is the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. While the management is the chief implementing authority with regards to the legislation, the state also has a definite monitoring role so that workers receive the benefits of the Act. However, as has been witnessed, lacunae and loopholes in monitoring and implementation have pushed the tea garden workers further to the margins. As a deprived community, the tea garden workers require protectionist interventions from the state with strict compliance of the provisions of the current labour codes. Stringent punishment and penalties under appropriate guidelines would facilitate proper implementation of the laws introduced by the government.

The women workers, being the worst sufferers of these malpractices are also in a voiceless position. Under-representation in trade unions or workers' unions, double burden of garden work and housework, restrictions on mobility in occupational hierarchy and terrible state of working conditions push these women workers to extreme degrees of subjugation. Hence, the onus falls upon the state to uplift the women workers, as they constitute the backbone of the tea industry in India and Assam.

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Endnotes

1. Interview conducted on 18/07/2022
2. Interview conducted on 19/07/2022

MOTHERS IN THE CONFLICT SITUATIONS OF ASSAM: UNDERSTANDING THE GENDERED TRANSFORMATION OF ROLES AND IDENTITIES

Debajani Gogoi

Abstract

This article examines how in Assam the decade's long armed conflict; ethnic movements and ethnic strife between communities influence and affect the lives of women's especially of mothers. The article also explores how the mothers experience the risks of these conflict conditions and the ways in which gender roles; gender relations and gender identities are changed in the times of conflict and its aftermath. In the context of Assam, the article analyses how mothers activism for instances as house heads, as resisters as peace negotiators during conflict or in post conflict situations establish their independent identities.

Key words: mothers, motherhood, conflict, gender-roles, Assam.

Introduction

Motherhood and mother identity hold an important place in military discourse of conflict zones. War, militarization and security discourse includes mothers in various forms in to their paradigm. However war and conflict is about death on the other hand mothering is about nurturing life (Khannel, 2009). But, directly or indirectly mothers are drawn into the deaths and difficulties of conflict. In such situations, the maternal body stands central and very relevant in the conflicts. Women's bodies are prominent site for the assertion of power (Murathy, 2016). Hence, the symbolic capacity of maternal body in different forms acquires significant meanings in the conflict situations. The symbolic metaphor of mother's figure as nation as biological reproducer

[1] This paper is a part of my current research on 'Body, Identity and Nation in Conflict affected societies: Experiences of women in BTR. The theme has been a major part of my M Phil research undertaken in the department of Political Science at Dibrugarh University.

of ethnic collectivises shape and reshape motherhood and the idea of mothering in the times of conflict. The fiction of nations is constructed on women's bodies and the material female body has been imagined as the site for viewing the nation and their bodies as literal figurative creator of identities (Eisenstein, 2000). In the process they become metaphorical representation of nation and national identity. The symbolic metaphor of mother's figure as nation as biological reproducer of ethnic collectivises sometimes makes their own identities invisible and such symbolizations consider women as procreator than as citizens and their status stands for the progress of the nation rather than their own (Eisenstein, 2000). In the late 1980's scholars encapsulate gender as socially constructed male and female roles in societies (K C et al, 2017: 177). However, in these construction and reconstruction of mothers figure as nation, vulnerable suffering mothers many mothers emerges negotiating their spaces and survives the risks of conflict breaking the traditional gender roles and norms. They take up new roles and responsibilities which are earlier reserved for the men and make spaces for their own identity (K. C. Et al 2017).

Assam is a unique land, confluence of different race, religion and ethnic tribes and communities each contributing to the life of this region through millennia despite many odds. In between love and odds, the post colonial Assam has witnessed many upheavals; the region undergoes many agitations and resistances from different tribes and communities for different socio-economic ethnic causes. The decades long armed conflict of militant for separate independent State, secret killings of 90's, events of ethnic conflict has turned this space in to militarized conflict zone. Mothers in such fragile situations of Assam have claimed an important role in framing new gender relations exercising their agency negotiates their spaces and identities as fighters, picketers, resisters, homemakers and peace negotiators despites many loss, pain and sufferings.

House head mothers: A Story from Conflict affected B.T.R

It is very difficult to precise the complex history of both violence and peace and its nature of violence in the region of B.T.A.D now called B.T.R as the land has experienced variety of conflicts across time (Sinha & Liang, 2021: 34). Many writers who are writing on the conflict of the North Eastern region find out the genesis of conflict as related to the issues of land, resources, identity and cultural protection (Sinha, Liang, 2021:34). The western part of Assam comprising the Bodoland Territorial Area District (now Bodoland Territorial Region) and its neighbouring areas which is a home to diverse

communities has experienced ethnic strife between communities, agitations, resentment from time to time over such issues of land, resource, migration and identity. In 1996, the ethnic strife between Bodos and Adivasis in the region rendered thousands homeless and caused death to many people.

In the context, a 60 years old mother named X from B.T.R region (name changed community not mentioned due to its sensitivities) who experienced the violent outbreak of 1996 narrated her story and recalled those violent past.

"The homes were burning and I, my husband with the little kid were fleeing away from our village. We had no other option but to stay in the relief camps for several days. Unfortunately, I have lost my husband in the relief camp. I had no choice but to live for my son. After the relief camp, I went to my maternal home for some days. But I decided to make a home for mine and for my son and built a hut near the Aai River (a river of Assam). But the home was swept away by the river. I started working as maids at houses and shops for daily wages. I could not turn back to my original home as it was captured by some other people. At the time someone informed me about a land plot which was to be sold by the owner. So, I decided to buy the land for which I sold my cattle. I cleaned the jungle (habi-bononi) to build the house (interaction with the respondent in B.T.R in the month of June in 2022).

She narrated how she worked hard to make a house of her own and raised her son all alone. Her mothering was not restricted to only bearing and rearing of her child. In the conflict situations of Assam, many mothers shoulder the responsibilities of households and cope up with different survival strategies with minimal facilities and resources available to them making a change in gender roles. It has been noticed that despite the laws, women have been denied access to property and resources in the patriarchal structure whereas the conflict conditions opens up opportunities and spaces for women to exercise their power on resources. The sexual division of labour assign private space for motherhood and mothering. The new gender relations make a change to it whereas mothers in varieties of conflict zones come out to the public spaces breaking the traditional stereotypes of mothering. She performed new conflict induced role such as bringing fire woods and vegetables from jungles as he stated in the interview, agricultural activities, and of living stocks in the absence of her husband. She cleared jungle to build her own house. The mother experienced risk and took up new roles and responsibilities in the face of distress and violence. Wasbir Hussain in his book "Homemakers without the Men: Assam's Widows of Violence" present the lived realities of

widows of Assam which includes lived experience of many such mothers who lost their husband in violence of Assam taking up new responsibilities survive the conflict and loss.

Protesting Mothers in the movement of ULFA in Assam

Paula Benarjee argues that women found their fair share of space as victims in any report in the conflict by any concerned groups whereas the role of the victim is not the only role women play in the conflict. Banerjee in her article *'Between Two Armed Patriarchies: Women in Assam and Nagaland' (2001)* states about how women perform their agency and deal with the conflict situations as peace negotiators, protestors, relief providers in the times of conflict. The varied roles, activities and the multiplicities of famine response break the gender stereotype. In the context of Kashmir conflict Rita Manchanda in her article "Guns and Burqa: Women in the Kashmir Conflict" (2001) discusses about different faces of women's agency in the conflict of Kashmir. In 1989-90 the spirit of Azadi touched the women of every age; mothers, daughters, wives came out into the street and for Kashmiri women coming out of their home and neighbourhood in the public space were an empowering experience (Manchanda, 2001: 50). The decade of the 90's witnessed crucial political turmoil and a difficult time in Assam. The violent activities of ULFA insurgency for separate independent State and counterinsurgency operations to neutralize the movement has hindered peace in Assam and affected the lives of civilians whereas women were the worst affected. In this context, mothers from various parts of Assam came out to the streets to protest against the violence on innocent civilians and the print media has documented those stories.

"Guwahati, Nov .21: In Kashmir, they say challenges of the veil, because the Muslim women coming out to resist the army have incarnated the spirit of a revolutionary but they dress the same traditional ways . In Assam, the women who tore apart the veil of fear have taken up the cudgels to force the army men to be cautions. The women in various parts of Upper Assam mustered up to fight against the army atrocities. They argue "We shall no more be frail commodities, we have to save ourselves and we have to protect our sons and daughters...." ...When this reporter visited the home of rape victim Raju Baruah, they assembled their and spoke out without any fear. They expressed their resolve to seek justice come what may.

In Jamugurihat of Sonitpur, whenever any military vehicle enters, women in groups raise blockades and force the team to go back. This practise

was initiated in Seunichowk there When army vehicle enter in to their village, they beat drums to alert the people, women in all corner rush out and gherao the vehicle. " (the Feminine Fury, NET, 22.11.91).

The report displays how women came out as protestors to the public spaces, to the roads wanting to protect their innocent sons and daughters. They voiced out against the unjust violence. They embraced various strategies to resist the security personnel's entering in to their villages. When conflict situations denied all the liberty and freedom to mothers, they came out to the public stood by the victims and cried for justice.

Peace interventions by mothers in the times of conflict situations of Assam

In conflict situations, women can play an important role in initiating, facilitating and sustaining peace dialogues (Hazarika, Anurita & Sharma, 2014: 6). Naga Mothers Associations in Nagaland (a state of North East India region) have played a significant role in peace building process of the State. They used the symbol and expression of the motherhood for political unity and mobilisation of women (Varma, 2022). They launched "shed no more blood "slogan to stop fatridicial killings in Nagaland and initiated dialogues and negotiations among various Naga rebel groups. Women in Assam do not get fair space in the decision making process. Though they play key roles in attempts to bring peace in the realm of conflict management, they are still invisible or very less visible in the formal peace process (Hazarika, Anurita & Sharma, 2014: 5). The late Indira Goswami tried to initiate talk between Government of India and one of the major insurgent group of Assam called ULFA but she left very little scope for her to address the gender issue (Hazarika, Anurita & Sharma 2014: 5). Sakuntala Chowdhry a trustee of Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust in an interview taken in 1998 said that in today's problematic situation in Assam only the mothers can unify the splintered groups and bring peace into the region (Banarjee, 2001: 154). Likewise, a mothers group named "Matri Manch was formed after the army atrocities in Nalbari and Lakhimpur to protest against the atrocities on women and debate on mode of achieving peace as expressed by one spokesperson of the Manch (Banarjee, 2001: 154). But these groups could not sustain their journey for peace interventions and they were unable to establish a dominant voice in public spaces (Banerjee, 2001).

Conclusion :

The traditional values and norms of patriarchal societies push women into the private domain through the institution of motherhood whereas the sexual division of labour considers mothering as a work to be exercised in the private space. This, in return distances a mother from the public sphere of decision making, both in the labour market and the other state affairs. However, every political and economic activity has its impact on the lives of mothers. Hence, mothers play varied role and come forward breaking the traditional gender norms and stereotypes. Conflict situations open up many spaces for their empowerment to exercise their agency and powers on resources and to make their voice out in the public spaces. But the agency and knowledge of these mothers are still denied in public spaces and the patriarchal structure of the society does not want to accept their voice and hence gender questions of these women are still not fully addressed.

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CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: POWER, SILENCE AND TRAUMA

Meghalee Chetia

Introduction

This article is all about the issue adhered to child sexual abuse; the range or scale of the violence has and its effects left on the abused which is necessary to sense the generosity of it. Trauma and trauma induced memory generated by the violence can also be considered as an agent that intensifies the extent of consequences that helps in realizing the enormity of the violence. Despite of the violence being so pervasive, still it has never been conferred about bluntly; it has always been obscured in secrecy, stigma and silence. To understand the issue of child sexual abuse sincerely, the article has endeavored to unveil silence and the hidden essence of it.

The article has been basically divided into three parts. The first section will deal with the issue of child sexual abuse as physical as well as emotional violence that will be explored through distinguished consequences of the event. The second section will discuss about trauma and trauma related memory caused out of the violence. The third section will stress on the silence and shrouded secrecy around the issue.

Child Sexual Abuse: An Extensive Range of Violence

Child sexual abuse is a form of abuse that includes sexual activities involving penetration, non penetration along with harassment, using children for pornographic purposes particularly as categorized in the Act Protection of Children in Sexual Offences, 2012 (Protection of Children From Sexual Offences Act, 2012). Child sexual abuse is a violence which can be considered as physical as well as emotional since it involves physical as well as non physical contacts both. Child sexual abuse as an emotional violence is way more critical than as a physical violence. Here, it needs to be noted that, to consider child sexual abuse as an emotional abuse does not indicate that the abuse should only be non physical. However, in this case, physical violence itself turns into emotional violence due to the mental pain and trauma attached it. Due to sudden shock caused by the event, a child gets sexually abused

must go through fear, emotional stress or mental disturbances (Melissa Hall, 2011). Shock and trauma gets more intensified when the perpetrator is a known one or any family member to the child whom he/she loves and is dependent on emotionally. Moreover, the situations generated after the event, for instance the behavior or reactions of the people towards the survivor, particularly the behavior of the family members matter the most. In this regard, when the child is not believed or supported by the family causes more emotional trauma and pain to the child rather than the actual event. Hence the issue of child sexual abuse can be recognized as emotional violence too (Michele M. Many, 2012).

Accordingly, child sexual abuse has profound consequences for the children. Child sexual abuse is linked to numerous maladaptive emotional, social and behavior consequences along with poor social, mental and physical health outcomes throughout the lifespan (McCabe, 2003). Furthermore, data shows that adverse event like child sexual abuse increases individual's risk for long term health consequences such as cancer, chronic lung disease, obesity and certain types of heart disease in the adulthood (Cate Fisher, 2017). Additionally, study has found a significant increase in risks for drug abuse, stress, depression and suicidal attempts in the survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Toxic Stress in children caused by sexual abuse has also been linked to difficulties with formal and informal learning as well as poorer school performance (McCabe, 2003).

In a culture like Indian, glorification of sexual violence is very apparent in film, television, music and almost every other form of media but still the issue has never been acknowledged with that much concern it deserves. Child sexual abuse is an intimate wound to both the mind and body that is often enveloped in the trilogy of shame, secrecy and stigma (Crenshaw, 1989). People are not willing to even talk about the issue openly. In Assamese society also these things are considered as '*beya kotha'*(bad things) as mentioned before or as '*popiya kotha'*(sinful talks). The matters relating to sexual abuse particularly concerning children and more precisely in respect with incest, people often avoid talking about it by saying *'aaibilak popiya kotha patibo napai'*, which literally means 'these kind of sinful stuffs should not be talked about'. The deeply rooted cultural norms, values, taboos and social stigma that exist in the society restrict the people to acknowledge the issue and to talk about it openly. Due to reason of which, the issue has been concealed in secrecy. Everybody knows its existence but cannot take stand to confront the issue.

Besides that, 'victim blaming' is another aspect of the issue relating to instances like sexual abuse that resist survivors to talk about it openly. It is often seen that after occurring such incidents people target the survivors more than the offenders. People constantly start judging why he/she have got sexually abused rather than blaming the offender for committing the crime. Even in the cases of child sexual abuse, child survivors are blamed for getting sexually abused. The notion like 'seductive children' is the example of victim blaming. According to the discourse of the 'seductive child'; sex between adults and children is harmless and sought by children. As per this discourse, children too obtain enjoyment while having sex with adults. Hence, it is seen that even the sexually abused children are blamed for seducing adults. This is how, the blame of the offenders get transferred to the victims (Han Israels, 1993)

Memory Enlivens Trauma

Child sexual abuse is said to be a series of traumatic events, since from grooming a child to abusing him/her involve threat, fear and trauma. In addition to this, after the abuse, the child is again threatened by the perpetrator not to reveal the incident to anybody. Moreover, if the child somehow comes to reveal the incident, then also he/she often gets rejected or again threatened by the parents or family members not to disclose the matter to the public, since it may harm their family honor. At the same time, if the incident gets exposed to the public, then also the child survivor may get traumatized by the negative reactions of the society towards the child. Hence, not only the occurrence of the main event of the abuse traumatizes the child survivor, but also the other factors or circumstances appear after the abuse do the same. That is why, the sexual abuse of children is considered as a series of traumatic events that specifically result in various negative emotional consequences in the child survivors of sexual abuse. The trauma caused by the overwhelming experience of child sexual abuse impacts one's entire life (Judith A McNew, 1995).

Memory of such incident makes the survivors to go through the trauma again and again and to endure the pain caused by the event. Not only the memory of the main event, but the memory of other events or situations generated by the event which caused secondary wounding or trauma to the survivors such as; the painful medical procedures through which the child had to go through for treatment or medical evidence after the abuse; the harsh procedures of reporting where they had to face interrogation by police; the stressful court procedures; all these appear into the mind of the survivors

while remembering the incident. Moreover, some survivors of childhood sexual abuse have to go through distrust or ignorance by their own parents while revealing about the abuse, which may emotionally break them down. In this regard, this creates a sense of helplessness and worthlessness which can be regarded as the worst experience for the child since being not believed by parents or loved ones can be more painful or traumatic for the survivor than the actual abuse. Hence, the memory of these secondary events developed around the main event also comes along with the memory of the sexual abuse in various phases and circumstances in the lives of the survivors (Jim Grigsby, 1994) & (Spehar, 2015)

The Politics of Silence

The imbalance of power inherent in the relationship between adults and children, adults can easily impose silence on children. Children, from very young age understand that, they are supposed to be silent and listen to the adults without speaking anything against them. If they do not do so, they may face negative consequences. This may eventually help the perpetrators in committing crimes like sexual violence easily without having the fear of getting exposed. Often, the hierarchical nature of the relationship between adults and children reduces the need of direct threat on the part of the perpetrators (Virani, 2000) & (Keith L. Kaufman, Jennifer K. Holmberg, Karen A. Orts, Fara E. McCrady, Andrea L. Rotzien, Eric L. Daleiden, Daniel R. Hilliker, 1998). Hence, in the matter of child sexual abuse, silencing comes from the children's own understanding. But, it must be noted that, in some cases perpetrators need to threaten the survivors in explicit manner to make them silent about the abuse (Ferguson, 2002).

The issue of child sexual abuse or anything related to sexuality and children is an obscured matter in India and so in Assamese society. It is considered as *'bea kotha'*(bad things) or '*dangor manuhor kotha'*(matter of adults) in Assamese society. Talking about sexuality with children is beyond imagination, where even the lesson on Reproduction or Human Body that is included in the curriculum of Science is often skipped by the teachers at school. There is so much silence around the whole matter. So, the people of Indian society usually do not want to talk about sexual abuse, and that is too relating with children. It is so ridiculous that children are always kept away from anything concerning sexuality by the adult society, though they often fail to keep their children away and keep them safe from getting exposed to sexual abuse in schools, in streets and even within the premise of homes and Temples (Virani, 2000). It is believed that, children should not be allowed to

learn sex education, but here the concern that arises in the mind that; if they should be allowed to serve the sexual gratification of adults. In India, most of the child sexual abuse cases occurred and get continued with the same child again and again for years just because of the children's ignorance about sex or sexuality. They are not aware of any sexual activities. In this regard also, adults use their power to deprive children from getting knowledge about sexuality.

Moreover, children, from its early childhood are trained to be submissive by being silent. The socio-cultural norms of the patriarchal society teach children to listen to the elders and respect them. At the same time, adult society infuses the ideas that adults are always right; they have all the rights to love them, take care of them and punish them when needed and thus 'good children' never say anything bad against elders etc. into the mind of the children. Hence, in such situations, children decide to remain silent even after get abused by adults, since the knowledge provided by the adult society as 'adults do everything for the sake of children's good future' makes abused children confused in differentiating between affection, care, love, lust, punishment and abuse. Therefore, whatever sufferings, humiliation and violence faced by the children in the name of care and concern by the adults, they do not speak up against (Virani, 2000).

The children as a minor group are supposed to be dependent on the adult society. Within the hierarchy of power exists in the adult-child relationship; children are excluded from active participation in the political, socio-economic sphere. Hence, children have to be dependent on adults for different reasons and needs. Child sexual abuse commonly takes place within the family in which the abuse perpetrated by an adult caregiver or by whom the child is supposed to be dependent on. So, the child who is sexually abused prefers to keep silence rather than exposure in order to continue its dependency on them. Moreover, a child is always emotionally dependent upon its care givers for care and protection; due to which it becomes painful for the child to confront the reality. Thus, the child survivor tries to deny the incident for normalize the relationship with the adult perpetrator. Denying the incident can also be identified as silence of the survivors. Children's dependency on the adults makes the child survivors of sexual abuse being silent (Sarah Caprioli, David A. Crenshaw, 2015). In addition to this, the fear of isolation within the family from the caregivers plays a crucial role in making the child to be remained silent in the cases of child sexual abuse. Children are afraid of being isolated within the family. They have the fear that, if they break

their silence against the perpetrator, who is a family member then the family may react negatively and exclude them from the other family members. Hence, the child survivors often remain silent.

Silence can be considered as an imposition on the powerless by the powerful. It is the power, through which one is made to be silent. The power that exists behind silence may be found in either explicit or implicit form. Sometimes, the powerful exert physical or forceful power to silence the powerless. On the other hand, sometimes the powerful need not to exert physical or explicit power. The prior knowledge or internalized image and fear for the powerful make the powerless to be remained silent. Hence, silence is a politicized phenomenon.

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POLITICS OF SEXUAL LABOUR AND SEX WORK

Pinky Biswash

Abstract

This piece of writing seeks to extend the understanding of the politics associated with sexual labour and sex work. This paper attempts to understand how stigma as a fundamental mechanism along with other mechanisms of patriarchy help to maintain the exploitations of women's reproductive labour as well as on sex workers generations after generations. Although from the last some decades, many started advocating sex work, talking and writing more about sexual labour, yet there exist little focus on the issue of stigma which primarily resist the acceptance and development of the conditions of women and sex workers particularly at the grass root levels. This paper will fill this gap. It will help us to have a more clear understanding of the politics of sexual labour and its inter-connections with sex workers.

Key words: Patriarchy, Sex Work, Sexual Labour and Woman

On 26th May 2022, the Supreme Court of India declared sex work as a profession and provide certain significant directions which upheld that sex workers should also treat equally under the law and has the right to live with dignity (Rajagopal, 2022). This is not for the first time that Indian courts have provided favourable landmark judgement towards sex workers. Back in 2011, the Budhadev Karmaskar vs State of West Bengal case the supreme court ratify the Article 21 of the Indian constitution ensures the right to life and livelihood of sex workers (Supreme Court of India, Budhadev Karmaskar vs State Of West Bengal on 14 February, 2011, n.d.); in 2019 the Calcutta Hight Court stated that prostitution is not prohibited under the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA), 1956 and stated that sex workers or their clients cannot be accused unless there is substantial evidence of financial exploitation or she was a 'co-conspirator' in the crime (Times News Network, 2022); in September 2020, the Bombay High Court again validate that sex work cannot be a criminal offence and women have a right to choose their profession.

The court ordered the immediate release of three women sex workers, who were jailed at a state correctional institution (Jain, 2022). However, legal protections are important and therefore most of the activists-people fight for legal rights for an assurance that they can reach the court of justice and they can work for their development along with a hope that with time social outlook will change. But the question here is that even after more than a decade of the implications of ITPA (not criminalise sex workers for their profession) and a series of judgements of the Indian Courts, why sex work is still stigmatised— sex workers have been continuously facing moral policing, media insensitivity (there are many recent regional and national news items where sex work regarded as immoral and forbidden business), cases of police harassments and harassment from clients. As the review of the literature related to sex, sexuality, and identity help us to understand that whatever is going on in our surroundings is not operated in vague rather socio-political forces shaped and connects in important ways to relations of power around class, race, and, especially, gender. This is not exceptional in the case of sex work and the answer of the above mentioned question can only explore in the light of the politics of sexual labour.

Let me ask certain basic questions — why does the first night of marriage regulate the life of a woman? Why should women protect her virginity till her marriage and also glorify the norms associated with this practice? Why are discussions about sex and related issues stigmatised? Why sex work is stigmatised and not the 'marriage'?

There is a bundle of questions and the answer leads us to the same issues— patriarchy and its associates. The first night of marriage is not an ordinary night that a woman spends in her life, but it is the night, through which the main purpose of marriage as a part of the larger structure of production and reproductions of the patriarchal family has been fulfilled. It ensured sexual intercourse between heterosexual people to secure the natural procreation processes of children. It is important for the foundation of the building of the institution of the family and henceforth marriage has been celebrated and glorified in most of the culture. However, the question arises here is that if giving birth of children or the procreation of family is the only aim of the institution of marriage, then why do some heterosexual marriages are celebrated and others are not even approved or snatched life of many by their families as well as the communities?

Because, simply the procreation of family is not the only aim of the institution of marriage rather to perpetuate a particular form of patriarchal

family— a family which should have pure blood family lineages and an undisputed descendants of private property and further to maintain the purity of the crucial identities of caste, race and religion (Engels, 2010; Menon, 2012: 4). Therefore, the first night of marriage has been performed under the socio-sexually restrictive values and socio-sexual conditions. Although the families in Indian society as a patriarchal institution have already been founded on the norms of hierarchical caste, race and religion, but, marriage is the main mechanism through which these hierarchical structures can unquestioningly sustain, maintain and reproduce itself. As a result, it became essential to strictly policed and control over women's sexuality and their sexual activities. Menon (2011) also added in this context that as an only 'motherhood is a biological fact and fatherhood is a sociological fiction' henceforth, in the absence of any method to confirm by a man that whether a child is his or not, he left with the only one method that is to control her sexuality (Menon, 2012: 7).

Moreover, in order to maintain control over women's sexuality, monitoring or directing the first night of marriage is not enough. Rather, it requires a more acute and continuous surveillance. Therefore, there has been introduced a number of mechanisms, which are dedicated to the larger structure, that materially and ideologically ensured to enforce permanently the socially fixed or desirable sexual identity of women. Such mechanisms fundamentally included the practices of virginity, chastity and widowhood. These practices functions both at the level of ideological and material arrangements to perpetuate, shaped, reshaped or imposed the idea of 'good' or 'pure' women, which define that a good woman should not involve in sexual relations outside marriage. Therefore, marriages outside or with the people of wrong caste or religion or clan have not only faced social disapprovals and harassments (Menon, 2012: 4; Lavaud & Mitchell, 1949; Arya, 2019; Ahuja, 2016) but violence has also been unleashed on those who were unable to prove their virginity during marriages and sexually intimate or assume to be involved outside the marriage.

The anxiety around protecting these above-mentioned carefully constructed patriarchal identities are one of the fundamental reasons behind resisting sex workers. Most obviously, because sex work poses a direct threat to this carefully constructed legitimate direction of social order. As studies on the identities of sex workers have aptly claimed that within the ambit of the sex work industry sex workers, despites of their vastly different socio-cultural background, including caste, class, race, sex, clan and religion,

provide services to a range of customers across all the strata of society (Fitzgerald, Elspeth, & Hickey, 2015; Banerjee, 2011). Such activities or practices of these heterogeneous groups of sex workers have the potential to make them fragile or pose a threat to the purity of the crucial hierarchical identities and the arrangements of naturalised pure blood descendants. Therefore, the watchmen of patriarchy are scared, because if these practices were adapted by us, the house of patriarchy will vanish. Hence, Goldman said, "to the moralist prostitution does not consist so much in the fact that the woman sells her body, but rather she sells it out of wedlock" (Goldman, 1911: 183-200).

The control over women's sexuality is not only crucial to procreations of the family and hierarchical identities, but also essential to maintaining the economy. Women are responsible for domestic labour, including cooking, cleaning, child rearing and caring practices (Menon, 2012: 19-21; Kotiswaran, 2012: 58) along with satisfy their husband's sexual and emotional need— the labour which is hidden and an open secret that goes into making men capable of working day after day and further it produces available cheap labour force. Over many decades a range of scholars proves in the context of the domestic labour debate that housewife's reproductive labour has been benefitting or buttering capitalist mode of production of producing surplus value. Even during 1970's materialist feminists refined the theories of women's labour and they delineated with increasing clarity the contributions of domestic labour to the capitalist economy. They argued that housewives were in fact exploited by productive workers, who through their reproductive labour produced surplus value of the capitalist mode of production rather than simply benefiting the capitalist mode of production through the reproduction of labour power (Kotiswaran, 2012: 57). Ironically, even though feminist within the spectrum of domestic labour debate demand wages for women's reproductive labour, yet the definition of reproductive labour has not included the sexual and emotional labour that a woman performed within her marriage often on a daily basis. These sexual and emotional services not only reproduce the labourer but also essential for sound mental or emotional health, that impact productivity at the workplace. When there is a whole structure of unpaid labour that complements and produces the surplus value for the economy, then the sexual and emotional reproductive labour cannot be considered as private. Emotional and sexual labour also consumes time, energy and has a market value, unlike other work; it is what keeps the economy going on.

It is also hard for feminists to seriously disagree that patriarchy and capitalism are the twin structures that together make super-exploitation over women. On one hand, when the economy is important to access political rights and on the other hand to grab both economic and political rights, work is essential. But in order to obtain a broader picture of what was and is (considered) work in capitalist society, nobody can ignore its gendered dimensions. One of the main reasons behind the poverty of women throughout the world is the inequality of gender division of labour and households is still more than just the sites of female invisible and undervalued activities. Despites of women invested all her productive years and restless energy in reproductive labour, but, it still largely remains unpaid, unrecognised and invisible. From the childhood level women are learning to limit their ambitions; engaged in the training of being a good wife and a good mother (Menon, 2012; Bagchi, 1993; Sharma, Pandit, & Sharme, 2013). It is hard to identify when a woman's childhood is ending and the preparations of her mental universe for married life begins, let alone the life of a child bride. The whole life of a woman was depleted on fulfilling the desirable expectations and duties of these roles. Moreover a woman who learned nothing but only the skills to be a socially desirable wife and mother; forced or coerced to involve in marriage, who has no right on her natal home, has to permanently moved to her husband's house after her marriage with little rights over her 'self' and in such a situation, her sexual self, which was veiled, secluded through a long term strict socialisation process practices only as a private affairs provides a very tight space. Even more specifically, women have no sexual identity within their marriage, they were a mere sexual object for their husband to fulfill their husband's sexual desires and produce the descendants of his family and private property. One of persuasive instances recognised by the feminism of sexual exploitations in this discourse was the invisible sexual harassment in marriage or marital rape that shows the lack of sexual liberty of women within their marriage.

The presence of sexual double standard that reinforce the stereotypical ideology that is men are initiator or experts in sexual intercourse, whereas women are expected to refuse sex, acting as sexual gatekeepers and limit setters (Elloitt & Umberson, 2008; Crawford & Popp, 2003; Espin, 1997) restricted women to enjoy or express sexual pleasure even within their marriage. It also replicates that merely having no prior sexual intercourse is not enough to elicit from negative evaluations, women also cannot allow herself to experience sexual pleasure (Espin, 1997; Crawford & Popp, 2003) otherwise, they would be doubted as unchaste. Such double standards of

sexuality lead women to sacrifice their sexual desire and autonomy to sacrifice in exchange for social desirability and further labelling or inserted such ideas becomes part of a continual attempt to limit their sense of sexuality and identity. It resulted that as a woman who only engages in sexual activity when her husband wants, became disconnected from her own sexual desires. It also reveals that because of the presence of such continuous resistance of women in their own sexual desire, the sexual intimacy between men and women within the institution of marriage can be one sided and in such cases it is the men, who enjoy the sexual pleasure.

On the contrary, the growing research on sex worker identities evidenced that the identity of a sex working woman facilitates at least some limited space both for earning by performing sexual labour and realising their sexual self. Many sex workers find sex work as one of the better income source or livelihood options compared to the other kind of work available to them (Kotiswaran, 2011; Menon, 2012: 180-181; Kotiswaran, 2012; Sahni & Shankar, 2011; Bhattacharya, 2011). Sex work offers women reasonably some kind of independent livelihood and further it may provide more income and more control over one's working conditions than many other jobs available for a woman, especially those who have nothing but only trained to be a good wife and good mother (Coumans, 2013; Kotiswaran, 2011; Menon, 2012; Kotiswaran, 2012). A number of sex workers have not only found sex work as a more lucrative, but also as a space to explore their socio-sexual self. As Carbonero and Garrido aptly claimed that the blossoming sex work industry has been offered diversity services to their clients, where sex workers also can reshape the boundaries of intimacies (Carbonero & Garrido, 2017), which are otherwise preserved for non-commodified space. They termed these services as 'girlfriend experience' (Carbonero & Garrido, 2017). Further, Elizabeth Megan Smith, in her research on sex workers in Victoria, Australia also shows that sex workers experience sexual pleasure and explore their sexual self at the workspace (Smith, 2017). The presence of such evidence shows that the emotional labour that is deployed by the sex workers in relation to their clients has been changing the boundaries of intimacies, care and affections, which are often regarded as non-commodified and preserved for the private sphere. Further, it also explored an emotional, cultural discourse, where sex workers shape their working space for their self realisation and happiness.

If one day every woman realises the value of their labour and wakes up and stops providing these reproductive services, then it will work as like

throwing a big piece of stone in the glass house of capitalism. Further, patriarchy and its obsequious is fearful that if we provide recognition to the sex workers and their sexual labour than it might be open the path when the married women, women in love-relationships, domestic helper, women in public services and in so many other role, where women provide the sexual and emotional services freely and unquestioningly; understand the value of their labour and raise their voice for their rights the existence of patriarchy would be shaken. Because of the threats posed by the identity and activities of sex workers to the distinctive patriarchal arrangements of socio-cultural, political and economic codes, the resistance or oppositions towards sex workers are more acute, severe or aggressive and often violent. Therefore, along with stigmatising sex work and sex workers, have more than one sexual partner or have male friends, talking about sexual activities or issues and many times pronouncing the therm 'sex' in public space are also been stigmatised.

Working as a sex worker for a woman in a patriarchal society, like India, is not as straightforward as it seems to be. Several researches showed the picture of heterogeneous threats, nuisance, violence and harassment experienced by sex workers, including police harassment, moral policing, surveillance and violence from customers, pimps and third parties (Barnard, 1993; Karandikar & Gezinski, 2012; Fick, 2006; Bungay & Guta, 2018; Deering, et al., 2014; Church, Henderson, Barnard, & Hart, 2001). Further, they have been stigmatised as whore, bitch, sluts, sinners and social misfits and that affects their both physical and psychological health. At the same time being born and grown up in a patriarchal family and society, female sex workers have also experienced or internalised the values and morality associated with their sexual identity; morality of chastity and virginity. After all, the whole life of a woman is a one long regulation to achieve the single goal that is to get married and become a good mother and wife and sex worker's life is not exceptional from it. Therefore, sex workers, while transgressing their socially desirable role, produced tremendous guilt, shame and fear among them (Sanders, 2008; Goffman, 1963). Such stigmatised nature of the sex work and the negative emotions associated with it further affected sex worker relations with their labour and their self identity. Indeed, this could be a reason behind that all the poor women did not choose sex work as an option for their livelihood.

Despite the moral panic surrounding sex work and the identity of sex workers, a large number of individuals engage in sex work globally, and

this number is increasing day by day (as shown in the survey conducted by the National Aids Control Organisation). It is also a bitter truth that many of them experience torture, exploitation, harassment, and various forms of discrimination based on factors such as caste, race, religion, widowhood, and unchastity, among others. Under such conditions, they are forced to live a derogatory or demeaning life and are either compelled or coerced to provide sexual services for their livelihood.

The patriarchal structure is aware that with the exploration of sexuality, individuals have the desire to be sexually active and have active sexual partners, fulfilling their need for "sex." Studies on sexual double standards show that men prefer active and experienced partners for hookups or short-term relationships. The structure reinforces male sexual desires by promoting the idea that having multiple sexual partners makes men "studs," while stigmatizing women for the same behavior. However, it is important to note that due to their circumstances, they are forced to engage in sexual and emotional labor at a very low cost, which prevents them from improving their financial conditions or fulfilling their basic requirements. This cycle continues, and the entire system is designed in a way that exploits women in one way or another. It is crucial to understand that the patriarchal mechanism does not deny male sexual needs like it does for women; instead, it allows men to fulfill their sexual desires through their wives and also through sex workers at a cheaper price. The double standard stigma associated with sexual activity is a fundamental mechanism that perpetuates the exploitation of generations of women.

Note: This work is a shorter and significantly revised version of my M.Phil Dissertation titled *Ecology, Identity and Politics of Sexual Labour: A Study among Non-Brothel Sex Workers, 2021* from Department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University.

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THE NELLIE MASSACRE OF 1983: AN UNDERSTANDING OF ITS CONTESTING NARRATIVES

Minakshi Dutta

18th February 2022 marks 39 years of the Nellie massacre, which occurred in 1983 during the most extremist year of the anti-foreigner movement (1979-1985). Despite the large-scale killings in a span of few hours, indicating a high degree of organization (Begum & Patrick, n.d.), and having socio-political significance, the massacre received very little attention in academic and journalistic discussion. While the anti-foreigner movement has been documented well, the massacre has not been memorized or documented well. Many saw the incident as an act of self-defense. For many, the massacre resulted because of the historical loss of tribal lands to immigrant Muslims, the victims of the massacre (Hazarika, 2000, p. 45). A few saw it as a result of the culmination of politics, ethnic agendas, and grave violations of human rights (Uddin, 2015). The existing literatures on the massacre provide diverse interpretations, producing divergent meanings. Among all these contesting interpretations or narratives of the massacre, however, the 'land alienation' of the tribals by the victims of the massacre is the dominant one that received acceptability in Assamese society. In this paper, an attempt is made to analyze the contesting narratives of the massacre to find out how far they are based on empirical reality. To analyze the contesting narratives of the massacre, I have employed the theory of the Institutionalized Riot System (IRS) developed by Paul R. Brass. In this theory Brass mentioned three phases of riots: preparation, activation and explanation.

Brass discussed how in India people interpret riots after their occurrence. He argued that people in India try to construct the meaning of riot in a way that suits their interests the most. Acceptance of a particular narrative of a riot by the society determines the human relation and the power structure of the society (Brass, 2003, p. 10).

The first part of the paper provides the context of the Nellie massacre- the socio-political situation in which the incident occurred. The second part discusses the narratives of the massacre developed in academic and journalistic writings. This part also analyzed how some of the narratives

or interpretations are very dominant in Assamese society and how they subtly justify the massacre. In the last part, an attempt has been made to discuss how acceptance of a particular narrative of the massacre determined the power relations in the society and politics of the state in the post-movement period.

Anti-foreigner Movement and the Nellie Massacre:

The context in which the Nellie massacre took place was not very peaceful. Assam was undergoing an agitation known as the anti-foreigner movement based on the claim that indigenous people of the state were on the verge of losing their existence due to a good deal of foreigners living illegally in the state. Movement leaders claimed that these illegal foreigners had already legalized their stay by enlisting their names in the voter's list of different constituencies of the state, and no election could be organized in the state without deleting the names of foreigners from the electoral rolls. They demanded that the central government should deport all the people who entered the state after 1951 to protect the culture and identity of the indigenous people of the state. Leftist, however, argued that the anti-foreigner movement was a political scheme launched by upper caste Assamese who formed the state's middle class to regain their position of power in the politics of the state. The Assamese upper caste was dissatisfied with the populist agenda of Congress and the success of the left parties in the state (Hussain, 1993, pp. 96-101), and to contain the left parties in the state, they took the help of 'chauvinism,' targeted the immigrants who were responsible for the success of the left parties in the state (Gohain, 2007, p. 24).

Whatever the reason behind the origin of the anti-foreigner movement, there was a considerable gap between its ideology and the empirical reality. Though the movement was launched against the foreigners living illegally in the state, it turned out to be a movement directed against those who migrated to the state in the colonial period from East Bengal. The first two years of the movement were marked by several rounds of failed talks between the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) – the organizations leading the movement and the central government. The election in 1980 could not be organized in the state due to the movement. However, in 1983, the central government decided to organize the election without revising the electoral rolls. The state was under the president's rule since March 19, 1982, and the government said that it had a constitutional obligation to organize an election for the state before the end of the president's rule in March 1983.The very fact that constitutional

obligation exists and it is what government makes unpardonable. The government was aware that a fresh election was needed to be organized in the state before March 1983 since the date of declaration of the president's rule in the state. Therefore, the Election Commission of India had enough time to revise the electoral rolls of the state. The election faced a massive boycott in the state. Government imposed the election to challenge the authority of the movement. Rajesh Pilot, former MP of the Congress, told Shekhar Gupta that the election is necessary to finish the agitators politically. The election was like a referendum for organizations leading the movement. If the majority boycotts it, then the agitators are the winner. Bhrigu Kumar Phukan, the then general secretary of AASU, in an interview with Shekhar Gupta in Guwahati, said, 'If five percent people come out and vote, it would mean that ninety-five are with the movement' (Gupta S. , 1984, p. 38).

The differences in opinion on holding elections in February 1983 between the government of India and the leadership of the movement, various parties, and social groups associated with the movement and those who opposed the movement resulted in episodes of violence in the state. In many places, the election-related violence turned into group or communal clashes, and the Nellie massacre of 18th February 1983 was the biggest of all such incidents. The massacre occurred in a rural area of the then Nagaon district of Assam. In the massacre, Muslim villages of Nellie were attacked by people from the neighbouring villages who mostly belonged to caste Hindu Assamese, Tiwa, Koch community, and some low-caste Assamese Hindus. Victims of the massacre decided to participate in the election, which most of the people of the state boycotted. They chose to participate in the election as they wanted the movement to end. The movement's ideology challenged their citizenship, and in such a situation, they had no other option but to support Congress with the hope that the newly formed government after the election would protect them from the wrath of the movement. The attack stopped when CRPF arrived at the scene. All the cases registered in relation to the massacre were summarily closed after signing of the Assam Accord by the newly formed Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) government. The survivors did not even receive social acknowledgment of the wrong that happened to them. Apart from the denial of legal justice, the survivors were also blamed for whatever happened to them. This impunity for the perpetrators and the blaming of the victims left severe implications for the society and politics of the state. These implications will be discussed later in this paper. In the next section, an attempt will be made to understand contesting narratives or interpretations of the massacre. Most interpretations of the massacre portray it as unfortunate,

which should not have happened, but subtly justifies the massacre as a result of historical wrongs or provocation by the victims.

Narratives of Violence: An Understanding of Nellie

Narratives can be defined as spoken or written accounts of an event or a story. Narratives and storytelling are found in all cultures, and people, irrespective of their level of education, understand them very well. The stories and narratives are a mixture of fiction and reality and 'treads the borderline between fiction and non-fiction and create a 'fictionality of reality' which is difficult to decode or separate' (Rasheed, 2021). In social sciences, narratives are not simply considered as storytelling. Political science emphasizes how 'storytelling can shape fact and impact the understanding of reality' (Shenhav, 2006). Narratives are political as they are constructed to represent 'reality' which may benefit someone over another. Powerful narratives create myths and heroes, and help people develop collective identities (Rasheed, 2021). Highly developed political narratives can create an 'organizing framework of action' (cited in Rasheed, 2021). Powerful political narratives try to represent the reality, and acceptance of such realities by society has many implications.

In India, many scholars have attempted to study the narratives of the large-scale violence witnessed by the country. Paul R. Brass is one among them. The country has seen many cases of mass violence where many people lost their lives, people got displaced, which changed human relationships and left traumas for the people. Scholarships have questioned the categorization of some incidents of mass violence as riots where people from a particular group are targeted the most. This categorization of mass violence itself is a political process. Brass questions why in India, the incidents of violence where mostly Muslims have lost their lives are categorized as 'riots' but not as 'pogroms'. This categorization is a part of what he calls the construction of narratives of violence (Brass, 2003, p. 10). Pogroms are not just riots. They are much more than riots. Ashotosh Varshney, in his book *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*(2002)*'* writes that pogroms require two conditions-(a) the state looking on while the target group is attacked, and (b) the state ideologically condoning violence. He categorizes the 2002 Gujarat violence as a 'purer' form of a pogrom because the government, even after witnessing large-scale killings of Muslims in the state, adopted an anti-Muslim ideology(Krishnankutty, 2020).

The 1983 violence in Nellie was categorized differently by different scholars. However, the incident is popularly known as the Nellie massacre

of 1983. Jabeen Yashemeen argues that the incident should be called the Nellie genocide of 1983 instead of the Nellie massacre of 1983 due to the assailants' intention to wipe out a specific community(Yashmeen, 2020, p. 4). Similarly, Suraj Gogoi argues that 'the hatred with which over 2300 people were killed on the fateful day of 18 February 1983 fits every detail of a genocide'(Gogoi, 2022). Harsh Mander calls it a brutal and one-sided killing(Bhat, 2020, p. 161).

As the categorization of violence is a political process, so is the interpretation of it. These interpretations are not always based on facts, but they try to represent the 'reality' to shape the power relations of society. Therefore, it is essential to question the validity of an interpretation before accepting it. In the following section, some of the contesting narratives or interpretations of the Nellie massacre of 1983 have been discussed to analyze whether these are based on facts on not.

'Land' as the cause

This narrative considers the 'land alienation' of the perpetrators of the Nellie massacre by the victims as the most dominant and historical cause of the massacre. This narrative has been supported by renowned scholar Sanjoy Hazarika (Hazarika, 2000, pp. 45-46) and the Tiwary commission report also made an observation that land alienation was an important cause of hatred and rivalry among various groups during the election of 1983(Pisharoty, 2019, p. 92). This is the master narrative of the massacre, which has been accepted widely by Assamese society without question. To understand the narrative and why it has been accepted by Assamese society so easily, we have to go back to the colonial history of Assam. The victims of the massacre belonged to the Bengali Muslim community who migrated to the state at the beginning of the 19th century from certain overpopulated districts of the then East Bengal. During that time, land was abundant in Assam, and the state witnessed depopulation due to diseases like black fever, malaria, etc. To combat this, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, an Assamese intellectual partner of the British Empire, advised the colonial masters to bring people from 'some badly provided parts of Bengal' (Jana, 2009, p. 35). The colonial government also showed interest in bringing people from East Bengal to Assam to generate more land revenue.

The newly migrated Bengali Muslims were first settled in char areas that were flood-prone, erosion-prone, and unsuitable for living. This made them expand towards other areas of the state. A section of Assamese people

showed concern over the migration of new people and settlement in Assam's land. The colonial rulers, who patronized the migration of people from East Bengal, used this situation to create a division between Assamese people and newly migrated Bengali Muslims. The commissioner of the 1911 census asserted the danger of migration by stating '…a peaceful invasion of Assam by the advancing hordes of Mymenshinghia army' (Nath, 2020, p. 36). The colonial administration devised a new policy known as the 'Line-System' to prevent the newly migrated people to expand to the areas inhabited by the indigenous people. The 'Line -System' was first implemented in the Nagaon district and Barpeta sub-division of the Kamrup district of the state to prevent the migrants from acquiring lands (Nath, 2020, p. 34). However, the policy was only marginally effective, and the newly migrated people continued acquiring lands protected for the indigenous people. In 1924, the then-colonial administrator of Nagaon started using the word 'immigrants' for Bengali Muslims, transforming them into 'foreigners' (Saikia, 2021, p. 12). Since then, the Bengali Muslim people of the state have been described as 'Muslims of immigrant origin' or 'immigrant Muslims' in academic and political discussions. In 1928, the colonial administration adopted another scheme named 'Colonization Scheme.' Under this scheme, a family was required to be provided with about 20 bighas of land on payment of premium. This scheme and loosely implemented 'Line System' resulted in the growth of land revenue and the state's Muslim population. Up to March 1933, 47,636 acres of land in the Nagaon district alone was allotted to 1619 Muslims and 441 Hindu immigrant families (Nath, 2020, p. 34).

C.S Mulan, the census superintendent of the 1931 census, remarked the migration of Bengali Muslims as an 'invasion' and prophesied that the whole structure of Assamese culture and civilization was in danger because of the 'invasion of a vast horde of land-hungry Bengali Muslims' (Nath, 2020, p. 56). Guha argues that the intention behind 'such irresponsible and unfounded utterings of Mullan was clear, he wanted the Assamese and the immigrants to be set against each other' (Guha,1974, p. 350). Thus, the colonial administration continued showing concerns over the issue of migration of people, and their settlement in the lands of indigenous people on the one hand, and they continued encouraging the migration of people and their settlement in the state on the other.

Meanwhile, the colonial government invited Sir Sadullah to form the first coalition Ministry in the state without caring to consult with Congress. Sir Sadullah initially tried to prevent the violation of the 'Line System' (Jana, 2009, p. 37) but later openly patronized the migration of Bengali Muslims from East Bengal under the 'Grow more food' campaign.

The fear of Muslim 'invasion' intensified among the Congress leaders on the eve of the independence of the country as the Muslim population increased to 1.8 million, or 34 percent, just 4 percent less than the Hindu population (Saikia, 2021, p. 14). However, this fear declined when the Muslim majority Sylhet went to east Pakistan making the Assamese Hindus majority in the state for the first time. However, by that time, the immigrants had already acquired a huge amount of land in the state, which did not always result from the forceful transfer. On many occasions due to the leniency of the district administration, and needs of the both 'immigrants' and 'indigenous', lines became irrelevant in many areas(Jana, 2009, p. 37). In many places the tribals willingly sold their lands to the immigrants to earn easy money (Kalita, 2020, pp. 203-231).

It was during the anti-foreigner movement that the issue of 'land alienation' of locals by 'foreigners' was highlighted, and when the leaders and supporters of the movement failed to identify the 'foreigners', and also failed to come to a conclusion on the number of foreigners living illegally in the state in order to determine the extent of 'foreign invasion', they targeted those who has already settled in the state in the colonial period itself. It was not difficult for the movement leaders to bring up the issue of 'land' as it was in the colonial period that migration of the people from East- Bengal created divisive politics in the state. The movement leaders used the comment of C.S Mullan as a sacred thread to gain public support. There were also intellectual developments where the indigenous people of the state were asked to settle in the 'char' areas, traditionally inhabited by immigrant Muslims (Jana, 2001, p. 171). An image of lungi cladded, bearded 'Bangladeshi image' was constructed (Sharma C. K., 2009, p. 30), and the immigrant Muslims who shared the same ethnic and racial origin as the Bangladeshi people were targeted. The community was recognized as an existential threat to the people of Assam. Though the movement leaders claimed the movement as non-violent but when a community was recognized as an existential threat, it automatically gave people the license to exceed what was considered as non-violent (Begum & Patrick, n.d.).

The forceful election of 1983 was a curse for the minority people of the state. When they decided to participate in the election at the call of Congress, it became easier for the people to inflict harm on them. The Nellie

massacre occurred in such a situation when the repercussion of attacking the immigrant Muslims was non-existent. However, after the massacre, the movement leaders claimed that land alienation of the locals by the Muslims caused the massacre (Kimura, 2013, pp. 124-126). They also referred to some immediate causes of the massacre such as the abduction and rape of Tiwa girls by Muslims, etc. (Hazarika, 2000, p. 45). However, there was no formal record of such incidents in the form of any police complaint or FIR (Begum & Patrick, n.d.). Even the attackers held the circumstances leading to the election of 1983 responsible for the massacre. They did not mention land alienation as the cause of the massacre (Kimura, 2013, p. 97).

The site of the Nellie massacre was a part of the erstwhile undivided Nagaon district of Assam. With the reorganization of the district in 1989, the area came under the newly constituted Morigaon district of the state. The villages under attack during the massacre came into existence in the 1940s under Sadullah's 'Grow more Food' campaign (Kimura, 2013, p. 93). Sadullah and his associates advocated for the abolishment of the 'Line System' and opened up Professional Gazing Reserves (PGRs) to settle the immigrant Muslims. Under the Colonization scheme, as many as 59 grazing forests and village reserves were opened in Nagaon to settle the immigrants (Guha, 1977, p. 209). The villages attacked in the Nellie massacre were part of the Alichinga Gazing Reserve (cited in Kimura, 2013, p. 93), and according to the report of the Land Revenue Department of Assam, the reserve forest was partially opened for the immigrants in 1944 (Department: Revenue(1944-1955), p. 63). When the 'Line System' proved ineffective, the colonial authorities created 'Tribal Blocks' and 'Belts' in 1946 to prevent non-tribals from acquiring lands within the tribal area. The area in the north of the Alichinga Grazing Reserve in Tetelia Mauza was declared a 'tribal block' immediately after independence due to the large tribal concentration in the area. The

[1]Under the 'Line System', the colonial government classified lands into the following three categories -

(a) lands where only the 'immigrants' from East- Bengal could settle.
(b) lands where 'immigrants' from East Bengal could not settle.
(c) lands where both the 'immigrants' and the 'indigenous' people could settle with a line between two sides.

[2]According to Oxford Dictionary 'immigrants' are the people who comes to live permanently in a foreign country. Jyotirmoy Jana in his article 'Line System and the Socio-Economic Segregation of the 'Immigrant' Muslim Peasantry in Assam' questions the use of the word 'immigrants' for the people who migrated to Assam from East Bengal during the colonial period as the word 'immigrant' signifies a foreigner and the migration of people from East Bengal to Assam during the colonial period was an interstate migration.

existing laws made it illegal for the non-tribals to obtain land in the tribal block, but there was no strict application of laws, and the non-tribals continued acquiring land. In many cases, locals sold or mortgaged their lands to the non-tribals. According to the report of the 'Line System Committee,' the allegation of Muslims harassing the local population to grab their land was often exaggerated. Even in the 1980s, Tiwas used to sell their lands due to their indebtedness to the moneylenders who usually belonged to the immigrant communities (Kimura, 2013, pp. 93-96).

Although the transfer of lands from the locals to the immigrant Muslims was true, it did not necessarily constitute the motivating factor of the Nellie massacre. There was no evidence but only claims that such transfer of land took place by using force or threat. According to the report of the 'Line System Committee', the price of lands within the indigenous line was very low, and within the immigrants line it was very high. The immigrants wanted lands for settlement and the locals used the situation to earn easy money (Jana, 2009, pp. 34-39). Even a field study conducted in Juria, Nagaon by Pulin Kalita revealed how locals migrated to other places after selling all their lands to immigrants at a premium price (Kalita, 2020, pp. 220-221). Thus, the villages inhabited by the Assamese and tribal people became the village of immigrants. However, this willing transfer of land to earn money was categorized as a 'forceful' transfer during the anti-foreigner movement. The movement established the immigrants as the encroacher of the lands of indigenous people, and thus causing economic backwardness of the indigenous people of Assam. Therefore, all the attacks on them during the movement period were justified attacks resulting from the historical loss of lands. Interestingly, in her field study, Kimura found people saying that if Muslims could be killed, others would be able to capture their lands. Kimura mentioned a village called Gorjan, where the Tiwas fought against the Muslims a few days before the Nellie massacre and regained their 'lost land' (Kimura, 2013, p. 103). Thus, the 'land' might be a motivating factor in the attack but it does not necessarily mean that the immigrant Muslims encroached on the lands of the locals, and the massacre was an act of revenge by the locals for their 'historical loss'. In my field investigation, the Tiwas did not mention 'land alienation' as the cause of the massacre. Instead, they held the situation of 1983 responsible for the violence.

In the Nellie area, the villages of Muslims were mostly constituted near the river Kopili and were prone to frequent floods. Some of the inhabitants of the area came from the northern parts of the erstwhile Nagaon district, as

the north part was more prone to flood, and several villages were washed away in the erosion of the river Brahmaputra. One of the respondents I interviewed revealed that his family came from Kampur to Nellie in the 1960s. He bought lands there and settled. When the Line System became almost irrelevant, it became easier for everyone to buy and sell land. Thus, the Muslim population of Nellie was growing, but the threat of the Muslims was not felt in the area until the genesis of the movement (Kaushik, 2017, p. 152). However, in Nellie, the Muslims are still the minority in the population, and the Tiwas and other Assamese communities constitute the majority in the area.

Alankar Kaushik, in his Ph.D. thesis *'Violence and Assamese Print Media: A Study of Nellie Violence in 1983* (2017)' argues that the 'land alienation' as the cause of the massacre holds less substance because of two reasons: first, 'the tribal land is protected and non-tribals cannot own the land'. By this, Kaushik tries to establish that without the help of the tribals, the non-tribals, including the immigrants, cannot purchase/snatch their land as the laws prevent them from doing so. Thus, the allegations of forceful transfer of lands are nothing but a mere exaggeration. Secondly, Kaushik argues that 'land alienation' occurred 'not as agricultural land as such but in terms of so-called Bangladeshis moving to south Nagaon and other districts because of large-scale erosion caused by Brahmaputra River'. The people who have lost their land and habitat encroached upon also did not sit idle; they, too, occupied unoccupied lands within the tribal territory. 'It is a continuing phenomenon,' Kaushik argues, as still encroachment of the land because of recurring floods, and land erosion is happening in different parts of the state, including in the Kaziranga National Park (Kaushik, 2017, p. 152)

Surprisingly, clause six of the Assam Accord talks about constitutional measure to protect Assamese identity, but there was no mention of indigenous and tribal identity. Moreover, under clause 10 of the Accord, which is related to the protection of government land, the Accord puts indigenous people of the state at risk of being evicted from their forest homes (The Assam Accord , 1985, p. 3)**.** Thus, in the post-movement period, it became clear to the tribals that the movement leaders merely utilized the issue of ''land alienation' of tribals to mobilize them in support of the movement. However, the 'land alienation' as the narrative of the massacre remained dominant in the Assamese society. People, without analysing how land was actually transferred from the hands of the locals to the immigrants accepted that land was grabbed and encroached by the immigrants illegally. And these atrocities of immigrants

forced the locals to take the matter in their hand. The movement leaders popularised the 'land -hungry' image of the immigrant Muslims developed by C.S. Mulan, the census superintendent of 1931, and tried to make the movement relevant to the people. The movement ended, but the erroneous practice of blaming the immigrant Muslims for the loss of land of the indigenous people did not change.

Presence of Foreign Hand

As against the claim that 'land alienation' of the locals by the immigrant Muslims caused the Nellie massacre, some scholars claim that the massacre was plotted by some organizations directly or indirectly associated with the anti-foreigner movement. They believe that these organizations manipulated the locals to launch the attack. Monirul Hussain argues that the attackers were like hangmen; powerful forces from behind plotted the massacre (Hussain, 1993, p. 142). Arun Shourie and Swagata Sen also stated that AASU was believed to play a very active role in the massacre (Shourie & Sen, 2006). Similarly, Diganta Sharma holds the AASU responsible for the massacre (Sharma, pp. 28-29). A few scholars believe that the RSS, who tried to communally influence the movement, had a big hand in the Nellie massacre(Uddin, 2015).

Some scholars have refuted such claims on the involvement of foreign hands in the Nellie massacre. Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty argues that the leaders of the AASU cannot be held responsible for the massacre as most of them were behind bars when the massacre occurred (Pisharoty, 2019, p. 95). On the other hand, Makiko Kimura claims that the decision to attack the Muslims was a result of a discussion between local leaders of AASU and the attackers (Kimura, 2013, pp. 101-102).

To solve this contestation on the presence of the foreign hand in the Nellie massacre, we can take the help of Raheel Dhattiwala's claim that the decision making before an attack is always strategic. The perpetrators of an attack are not robots. They are aware of protecting themselves from any counter-attack from their targets. They are not puppets of emotion. They behave in a very calculative way. At the same time, they do not attack without a structural environment (Dhattiwala, 2019, pp. 90-95).

The perpetrators of the Nellie massacre were not puppets of any organization associated with the movement. That is why some people decided not to participate in the attack, and some even warned the Muslims to stay

careful (Mazumder, 2019). Moreover, the geography of the Muslim villages attacked in the massacre also made the massacre possible. The Muslim villages were surrounded by the villages of Tiwas and other Assamese people, and the river Kopili in the North was also a natural barrier. This made it easy for the attackers to launch the attack and flee the area easily after finishing their task. However, their decision to attack the Muslims were influenced by the then socio-political environment of the state. During the movement period, there was a political mandate espousing violence against immigrant Muslims. The structural framework of the Nellie massacre was the anti-foreigner movement. The leadership and the members of the AASU might not have directly participated in the killings of the Muslims but they definitely had a big hand in creating a situation where violence became a way to show patriotism. Beginning with the North-Kamrup pogrom, the first case of violence of civilians against civilian, the organization always avoided discussion on secular lines. They did not condemn the attack as the attacked were religious and linguistic minorities. The killers of the North Kamrup went unpunished. This encouraged people to 'go on for a greater offensive at a later stage, as they were successful in their first attempt' (Hussain, 1993, p. 120). The state can also be held responsible for the massacre. Without the enabling role of the state violence cannot go beyond an initial level (Bhat, 2020, pp. 167-168). The state after forcefully imposing the election ignored the security of the common people and engaged all the security personnel for the protection of the polling booths.

Apart from these two above mentioned narratives of the Nellie massacre, there are some other narratives of the massacre found in different literatures. Some scholars argue that the massacre was an act of self-defense (Kimura, 2013, p. 106). According to this narrative the perpetrators were provoked by the victims to take the decision to attack. However, this narrative too seems to be unacceptable as during that time it was the immigrant Muslims community that was in trouble because of the anti-foreigner movement. Their failure to retaliate or defend themselves proves that they were not preparing for any attack. The geography of the Nellie area also makes it highly unlikely for the Muslims villagers to launch an attack on their Assamese neighbours. Moreover, Muslims are a minority in that area. Therefore, it is doubtful that the Muslims were a threat to the Assamese.

Four months after the massacre, the Lalung Darbar – a traditional organization of the Tiwas having the power of social control (Kimura, 2013, p. 113), submitted a six-page memorandum to the Prime Minister of India. The memorandum included a 'note' about the Nellie massacre that 'a group

clash took place near Nellie in Morigaon circle for which several hundred people had to lose their lives'. The Darbar considered the incident unfortunate but restrained from identifying the miscreants. Most importantly, in the memorandum, Darbar mentioned the 'illegal Bangladeshis' taking the lands of tribals away. It mentioned several incidents of atrocities and killings of Lalung (Tiwa) by the 'Illegal Bangladeshi' in several circles of the Nagaon district (Narayan, 2008). Thus, through this memorandum, Darbar wanted to establish that if any tribal was involved in any attack on the 'Bangladeshi,' it was indeed for self-defense. Thus, Darbar was in 'denial' of the crimes committed by the perpetrators. In 1996, Prof. Gregory Stanton proposed a formula to identify different elements which can lead to genocide. In his ten-stage formula, the genocide is not the final stage, but the 'denial' of genocide is. 'Denial of the crime by the perpetrators by taking active steps to cover the act or through their words' (Ochab, 2019). The blame on the victims for whatever happened is a form of 'denial'. Thus, in the case of the Nellie massacre, the 'self-defense' as the cause of the incident is a form of 'denial' of the crime committed.

The implications

'The correct answer will never be known – not atleast in our lifetime'- this is what Tribhuvan Prasad Tiwary, who headed the official commission of inquiry into Assam's disturbances during the election period of 1983, said, when he was asked by a journalist, about the 'truth' of the Nellie massacre (Begum & Patrick, n.d.). What caused the Nellie massacre is debatable. But as discussed above, 'land alienation' of locals by the immigrant Muslims as the cause of the massacre holds less substance. The victims and the perpetrators of the violence mostly referred to the situation of the state during the election of 1983 responsible for the massacre. Thus, the narrative of 'land alienation' does not represent the voices of those who directly participated or those who were directly affected by the massacre. However, since the issue of 'land alienation' fits into the existing discourse about East Bengal origin Muslims or immigrant Muslims, Assamese society accepted it without questioning its objectivity. The 'land hungry' image of the immigrant Muslims which was a colonial construct, deepened in the psyche of Assamese people during the anti-foreigner movement. The 'land-hungry' image of the immigrant Muslims made them 'other' in Assamese society, so much so that the massacre did not even receive a social acknowledgement. The AGP government granted wholesale impunity to the perpetrators of Nellie massacre, and it became possible because the social and political values of

Assamese society and the 'mass sentiment' that supported it. The wholesale impunity could not create any outrage in the society because the majority of the society considered the massacre an act of revenge by the indigenous people on the immigrants who encroached on their lands. The impunity to the perpetrators of Nellie massacre was an example of state sanctioned, officially brooked impunity for the people committing heinous mass crime against the state's immigrant Muslim community. Anjuman Ara Begum and Patrick Hoening argue that 'rather than being portrayed as an accident or beat on the history of communal harmony in Assam, Nellie needs to be referred to as a symbol of impunity for the persecution of those who have come to be identified as the 'other' in Assamese society' (Begum & Patrick, n.d.). The state failed to do anything when immigrant Muslims were killed again in 2012 and 2014 in Kokrajhar (Ahmed, 2020, p. 230). After the 2012 Kokrajhar riot, people claimed that the attack was perpetrated by the illegal Bangladeshi Muslims. However, state investigation could not find evidence supporting such claim (Johari, 2014). The perpetrators, who commit any crime against the immigrant Muslim community, are not always unaware of the citizenship of the members of the community. The perpetrators of the Nellie massacre were also aware that the victims were not Bangladeshi nationals, in fact they knew that the people they decided to attack migrated to the state during the colonial period, much before the creation of Bangladesh. However, the concretization of the immigrant Muslim community as 'Bangladeshi', the 'common enemy' of Assamese and the tribal groups of the state set the ground for the massacre.

In the present-day Assamese society, the immigrant Muslim community holds the position of the important 'other'. Every time there is a heightened emotion on 'illegal immigrants' the immigrant Muslim community face the public wrath. The Gorukhuti incident is an example of this. In the incident Bijay Shankar Baniya, a photographer employed to capture the images of Gorukhuti eviction drive jumped on the motionless body of an immigrant Muslim named Moinul Hoque lying on the ground. He was accompanied by a group of policemen with arms in their hands. Although the sequence of the incident is not yet known, in the first part of the video, Hoque was seen rushing toward a group of policemen with a stick in his hand and the police shot him dead (Chakravarty, 2021).

The Gorukhuti incident is not an isolated one (Chakravarty, 2021), incidents of the such kind occur at a regular interval. This wrath towards the immigrant Muslim community is rooted in the colonial scheme of divide and rule, which still has an impact in the society and politics of the state.

Concluding remark

In this article an attempt is made to see the Nellie massacre through the lenses of its contesting narratives. It is very difficult to specify the cause/ causes of the massacre as it is very difficult to know what was going on the minds of the perpetrators when they took the decision to attack. However, we can argue that without the Assam movement no Nellie massacre would have happened. It happened during the movement. One must also see the role of the state in that context. After forcefully imposing the election, the state diverted the security forces to protect the polling booths. Common people's security was not a concern of the state. Thus, we can say that Nellie massacre was a result of interplay between multiplicity of factors. The contesting narratives of the massacre however do not represent this reality. This paper also shows that violence is not spontaneous, it happens when certain conditions are met. Massacre like Nellie happens when existing socio-political environment supports such crimes.

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"OH, MY BELOVED FOREST! FORGIVE ME, FORGIVE ME": READING AND REFLECTING ON *IYAT EKHAN AARONYO ASIL* (THERE WAS A FOREST HERE)

Bijaya Sarmah

Whose life is worth more- human lives or that of an animal or a tree? Is human-suffering or well-being given more weight over all other living entities? Are humans part of nature or against it? How do we relate to the natural world- as a means to escape the civilizational odds, our loneliness, to experience bewilderment and ecstasy or to reciprocate? Do our imaginaries or desires to create beautiful, lush, exotic landscapes affect the lives of people already live in those spaces? Are we, by accepting the established definitions of nature that apparently keeps humans out of the frame, giving tacit allegiance to the mainstream conservation strategies or are we becoming complacent about the consequences of development shenanigans and the power politics? Human and nature relationship has been complex, often challenged and redefined in environment and ecological history. Constructing an adequate theory of intrinsic value for nonhuman natural entities is the most recalcitrant problem for environmental ethics (Callicott, 1985). The cosmological perception of nature perceives all living entities as part of nature, nested with kinship and affinity. Reproducing the thoughts of Plato, Aristotle and other Greek philosophers, this attitude believes human beings and other living creatures are a part of a totality or a cosmic world (Morris, 1991). It is in this way, Black Elk, the Oglala Lakota holy man found some sort of kin relationship with the sacred Indian pines, connecting through four spirits and established the holy pine as both spiritual and animate; in the same way that the Mishmi in Indo-China border believes that both Mishmi and tigers were born to the same mother, perceives tigers as the most revered and feared animal for whom killing tigers was prohibited unless they became a threat (Aiyadurai, 2020). Like Bomman and Bellie from the *Elephant Whisperers*, who believe forests as their home where they belong, where they raise two elephant calves- Raghu and Ammu, where Bellie cure the pain of losing her daughter; all unitedly conceive spirits, humans and natural phenomena as an interrelated totality and negates separation of humans from nature. Kohn believes that seeing, representing, perhaps knowing even thinking are not exclusively human

affairs, reaffirms that non-human life-forms also represent the world. (Kohn, 2013). With the emergence of science, individualism and capitalism, a shift occurred in the human perception of nature and also how human relates himself to the natural world. (Cronon, 1992; Neumann, 1998; McAfee, 1999; Brockignton, 2008). Cronon explains, "there is nothing natural about wilderness. It is entirely creation of the culture that hold it dear, the product of the history it seeks to deny." (Cronon, 1992). Accordingly, the ideas of nature without humans, pristine spaces for wild animals were enrooted and imposed (Neuman, 1998). Cronon traces environmental movement to Romanticism where the European scholars considered "sublime landscapes were those rare places on earth where one had more chance than elsewhere to glimpse the face of God. Eighteenth century literature such as Edmund Burke's Origins of our ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful 1757, Immanuel Kant's Observations on the feelings of the Beautiful and the Sublime 1764 sketched nature, waterfalls, mountains and forests as beautiful places, to be gazed in reverence and awe. These contributed towards the imagination of sublime spaces and formal construction of many wild beauty sites in the West such as Yosemite, Yellowstone in USA. Brockington asserts, the global institutions emerged from this ideology and western elites justify the displacement of people by protected areas globally (Brockigton, 2008). Wilderness, once considered as barren land-where Adams and Eves were sent as part of punishment to toil, turned into landscapes to be trammelled by "man who is a visitor but does not remain." Wilderness thus was defined as devoid of human presence, and therefore giving human the control over nature to manage, to subdue it, placing man against nature in centre (Cronon, 1992).

How nature is imagined has a direct influence on how nature is protected. Are we reflecting on what Baviskar (2012) calls as 'bourgeoisie environmentalism' which is preoccupied with the concerns health and safety, order and aesthetics over the 'environmentalism of poor'; that is over the question of livelihoods and social justice? *Iyat Ekhan Aronya Asil*[1] reflects on how this mechanistic, anthropocentric image of nature has been penetrated into the urban spaces of the city, Guwahati where people are mostly driven by green fantasies, where flowers, birds and butterflies have lost their space, bonsai become common in many apartments, whereterrace mini Edenic gardens almost replace big trees in boundaries. The book *Iyat Ekhan Aronya Asil* has been set against the backdrop of humongous transformation of the city Guwahati, taking over every inch of space, swallowing up surrounding forests, farm lands, rivers, ponds, birds and mammals. The diversion of rural resources for infrastructure projects that serve urban populations has now

accelerated, with the government easing the transfer of forests, water and land for catering to urban consumers (Baviskar, 2012). The author finds herself in an indistinct position (between conservationists and people rights' activists to fight for social exclusion); whom to believe, whom to blame for this unabated devastation. She can't deny people occupying animals' space, herself being a witness to the increasing numbers of homeless tigers and elephants; frequently spotted in the busy roads of the city in search of food and shelter. But she cannot see eviction, displacement of people who are tired of struggling with everyday life-challenges, either. The story develops with Madhuri, a part-timer worker at writer's place saying, "I cannot come for a few days. We have been ordered to vacate our houses." The author asked in disbelief, "Who asked you to leave. Isn't this your own house?" Madhuri responded, "We have been staying here for 22 years. Now the government has sent people and said, it's a court order, they will demolish our houses, hence, we've been asked to pack our stuffs. Police and men from forest department came and said this last evening." The writer interrogates "Now, the government can't wash their hands by evicting them from their home." She continues, "If these people are the illegal settlers, then who gave them the electricity? How did they get access to cooking gas and all? Why do then politicians, leaders come here during elections and ask for votes? Why do they count these people while they distribute blankets and mosquito nets? Where will they go now? And what exactly the government and administration wish to do?,,,," These questions were an attempt to address the complex politics, power-dynamics behind eviction, behind government decisions.

Lives around eviction notice, police and bulldozer

Of lately, instances of eviction drive and upsetting scenes from eviction-protest sites in Assam have been on news or social media feeds as well as at the peak of academic debates. From a kid pleading a police officer for not dismantling his house until he got his stuff packed in Silsako eviction to death of Moinul Haque in the protest site of Dhalpur eviction, from the loss of Anjuma and Fakhruddin's lives in Kaziranga to the loss of heavily pregnant Kulsuma's life who had left her newly born son homeless, motherless in central Assam's Hojai district, it makes forced or induced displacement in Assam the new normal. Eviction whether a consequence of city beautification,

[1]Iyat Ekhan Aronyo Asil, Assamese fiction written by Anuradha SarmaPuzari in December, 2018. The novel bagged Sahitya Akademi Award in 2021.

urban development projects or forest and wildlife conservation policies, is accompanied by certain negative consequences – loss of lives, land and livelihoods, loss of memory and belongingness and other socio-economic insecurities. One evictee from Massai Mau eviction of 2005 voiced her pain, "Where I live now is unfit for human habitation. People who had relatives when they were evicted are ok, but others are living in temporary structures by the side of the road. They are like poultry houses. Children have dropped out of school and youth have gone astray. My husband is gone, and my daughter has gone into prostitution" (Vangen, 2009). One can get familiar with the eviction-induced consequences, as the story furthers. The lives of people in Panjabari hills seemed to be revolved around - "*eviction kept on hold, eviction to be started again*." After receiving notice verbally last night, people had started packing their essential stuffs. Madhuri already kept all important documents, temporary land-holdings, ration card and voter ID safely at writer's place. Demolition started on the next day morning with the help of deployed army-police personnel and hired elephants and bulldozers. A few houses were dismantled; Madhuri, Piklu's historical museum was in line. Mansoor broke down his own house as he couldn't wait to see it getting bulldozed. "Cannot see crashing down of the house painstakingly built by my father and the trees planted by mother." Rituraj moaned before leaving. Madhuri along with many were constantly ringing the bell tied on an old holy fig tree so that their houses got saved. She was holding on to hope, at the same time also witnessing other's houses getting bulldozed and counting her house in line. One can sense the pain, level of anxiety and relief when she assured her family, "we can stay here at our home for one more night. It'll take time to reach their house. There were two-three concrete houses". On the second day of eviction, after a few houses were already demolished, eviction had been put on hold. A sight of relief could be seen on the face of Karishma, the daughter of Madhuri who was a HSLC candidate and had already packed all her books reluctantly. Like Karishma, many felt a sense of relief that there houses got saved this time. As if their prayers were heard.

Madhuri, Mansoor, Babla and Bishnu all were living a dubious life. At any moment, their houses could be dismantled. The news of eviction putting on hold could bring them only momentarily relief and hope. Army, police had not left their area, elephants and bulldozers were also not being removed. Madhuri kept on asking the author, "Why there are still police, army and bulldozers. Is it going to be happened again?" The uncertainties, the fear doubled their hardship as they had to keep working amidst eviction chaos. They couldn't bear to take break from their work, in pain or in stress.

Even in the morning of the eviction day, Madhuri could not help but to go for work, after finishing regular household chores. Babla with the constant fear of becoming homeless was seen making a home for a couple of pigeons who had taken shelter at writer's rooftop. It seemed as if they were forced to run a regular life amidst chaos. The stories, the scenes reassert the power that the state, the police and the courts, on deciding the fate of the commons living in the hills. Eviction is a state prerogative, where states entitled to dislocate people in the name of public utility, apparently getting intense with the onset of neo-liberal economy. The sight of police everywhere, bulldozer action in the recent eviction drives in Assam restate the narrative.

Land loss, forest loss and the capital expansion

The question of land and indigeneity seem to be central to eviction practices in Assam where the pledge has been undertaken to save the land and rights of *khilonjias*. For them, it's an everyday struggle for permanent land-holdings, either they are manipulated or betrayed. As if their lives revolve around permanent settlement promises. "Candidates keep people in hope of getting permanent land holdings, setting up of electricity transformer and subsidised rice, kerosene and mustard oil during election period" writer said in distrust. The hill where Madhuri, Mansoor, Babla were living in, was claimed to be a part of the Amchang forest. In 2004, Amchang reserved forest, South Amchang and Khanapara reserved forest were combined and formed Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary. Dileep's grandfather Ronghang-koka recalled how the forest of Amchang got its name. There were plenty of mango trees. In winter, the children used to ask the guard, "Uncle, can we pluck mangoes?" The guard answered, "pluck, pluck mangoes" (ching, aam, ching). Later, the white guards started calling it Amching forest after hearing aam-ching many times; this is what we call today as Amchang wildlife sanctuary. Ronghang-koka sighed at the lost connectivity with the roots, at the loss of abundance of mango trees then, and how it got lost in the administrative mishandling of the state. Ronghang-koka then revealed how his father lost his lands to a few forest and revenue officers in fraud. His father was made to sell his plot, advised by the officers, "since this plot has been into court-cases and all, it will be better to sell it off. Customers are ready to pay a decent amount." It's about sixty years ago. Now, a factory is opened there. Ronghang-kokarightly asked "how is this justified to open a factory by destroying a large acre of lands planted with fruits and trees?" Ronghang-koka reaffirmed the loss of many forest and farm lands to outsiders, to private businessmen. They have now opened Dhaba and restaurants there. He added, "ministers,

politicians have their shares too……".This reiterates how the state under neo-liberal conservation, is regulating its land, commoditising resources of the commons, and territorialising it through creation of protected areas (Brockington, 2007). The land from where these people are being evicted, getting opened for private industries and market now. This resort-oriented development around protected area has been part of neo-liberal conservation, ostensibly work in collaboration with other international conservation agencies and global capitalist market. McAfee explains how conservation and capitalism endorse re-categorisation of landscape where every aspect of nature from molecules to mountains, from human tissues to the earth's atmosphere are commoditized. In this post-neoliberal environment-economic paradigm, advanced capitalist states and transnational corporations bring market in nature as a solution to growing environmental problems where nature has to earn its own opportunity to survive. It is a testimony of cooperating with powers to protect nature (brockinton, 2008) or selling nature to save it (McAfee, 1999).

Out of pain, anger and fear, Ronghang-koka kept alerting his grandson Dileep, "Dileep, if you want to keep me in memory, do not sell land. Even if you're dying out of food, do not sell land. Our brothers became beggars, became homeless, land will leave you if you sell it. Keep your land, grow plants, grow vegetables, but; do not make the mistake of selling your land in order to become rich." Ronghang-koka further adds, "Today, indigenous people are homeless just like the elephants, tigers, deer, buffaloes and foxes." Dileep lost his father just after moving to Sonapur. He couldn't live for six months in fact. Perhaps his father could not take the pain of losing his land where he laboured, cultivated. This accentuates non-material loss, loss of culture, loss of affinity and belongingness to one's lived place, their symbolic obliteration from their land, which deletes their history, memory and representation, also power and control over their environment eventually (Schama, 1996).

Concluding annotations

"Perhaps we don't know what we want, how much we want. Without realising, we have started walking towards an aimless, reckless end- in the name of a guaranteed security. How insignificant is this security in front of nature? One earthquake, a flash flood can collapse big houses, can fracture high brick walls, iron grills, gates and fences." Author sighed in despair where the war between man and nature would come to an end. This book is a vindication of man as part of nature that we often forget in exuding ourselves as the protector, guardian of nature. The writer seemed disturbed by the continuing decline of forests in and around the city Guwahati, disappearance

of birds, at the loss of butterflies, crane and vultures. The huge buildings, apartments and roadside showrooms are incapable of providing shelter to birds, humans and to animals. To the contrary, the narrative of *the hill that veiled a girl* shows how the hill gave shelter to a couple after fleeing, as if nature accepts their love, it did not do any harm. The couple was asked to stay for days in an elevated house; they did not have fear to stay there amidst wild animals. As if it was to test their love, the girl told, "if the guy could keep me safe in the middle of wild animals, his love can be trusted." The book seems to be a witness of how humans build relationship, kinship with nature. The author considers man as an inalienable part of nature. If forest ceases to exist, we'll cease to exist as well. It reiterates what Cronon, Adams, Brockington and Neuman say as human beings to be placed within nature, not above it. "How can I express in front of these helpless people that trees are more valuable? Nature is powerful; we are just a part of it." The writer admitted. The writer finds it hard to make Madhuri, Babla, Ranu understand the complex web of politics, the nexus between politician, forest and revenue officers, police administration, businessmen, and ministers who have already pledged to rob surrounding forests, to make poor people's lives worse. On being asked whether the evicted people would be rehabilitated or not, Ranjan, a lower rank officer in the forest department answered with a closed-mouth smile, "where the government do has places to rehabilitate such large numbers of people? Once again, this put the motives behind eviction decisions and subsequent consequences into question. The book further foregrounds the helplessness, the anger of forest-guards like Ranjan and Rajbanshi whose hands are tied, cannot help but to be a mere spectator of the destruction of forests and the expansion of five-star hotels, resorts, private nursing homes and residential schools. They can only repent on why they had joined in the forest department. This indeed raises question on the worth of fortress conservation. To what extent, fortress conservation under which the forests are protected through fences and armed forest guards, has been successful to provide safeguards against its demise or destruction? Has it been able to save the demise of thousands of trees that Rajbanshi witnessed in Khanapara hills, was it able to save the forests, the mango trees that Rohnhang Koka was remembering? Can it provide protection against unabated rhino-poaching in Kaziranga even after increase in deployment of more forest armies? The fences, the wires cannot eliminate the politics around protected areas, the selling of nature and natural resources; it cannot eliminate corrupted forest officials per se. On the one hand, helpless and life-struggler people are being evicted in the name of protecting forests. On the other hand, illegal mining, resorts and hotels are growing uninterruptedly.

Both Raghu and Chanda, members of Mother Nature foundation, brought new hopefor whom trees were more valuable than skyscrapers, river, birds and butterflies were more valuable than luxury cars. They believe, they hope-it's not too late, our hills, rivers and wetlands can be saved. In the same sense, the author could see Madhuri bought plants of margosa and black plum to plant so that others also started planting and perhaps this way, the forest, the hills could be saved. Even though, uncertainty is there about where the direction of city transformation, urbanity and youth is heading. How the future generations will perceive nature and forest? "I am afraid if my child thinks trees as burden, of no profit, if they prefer buildings in place of big trees" or they can weep like Madhuri's month-old niece cried for a second life of a dead butterfly. The author who cannot help but to silently observe the politics behind eviction that is causing more ecological mayhem; prays in silence "oh my beloved hill, hey forest…. forgive me, forgive me." Unlike, Manbar Doley shouted at an elephant who had come down to plains in search of food, "baba! Don't panic. I am with you. Come, come, let's drive out them the way they're driving us out" ushering a sight of protest, a protest against forest loss, against politics of eviction and capital expansion.

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Editor