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- ❖ **COVID-19 & BRICS**
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# Salvaging Economy!

India, like other countries worldwide, is in the midst of a severe crisis – on the one hand, it is grappling with the human tragedy, and on the other, it is straining every nerve to bring its derailed economy back on track – in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. One is inclined to agree with the experts who have opined that India’s response to these twin crises of healthcare and economy is prone to determine India’s economic future in the short to medium term. In the realm of economy, India’s most critical challenge is to restore strong GDP growth with a view to generate plentiful gainful jobs for those who are already jobless and for those as well who will join the labour force between 2020 and 2030. If current dispensation at the helm is lucky enough to catapult India back to a fast growth trajectory that is certainly bound to envisage vast and expanded broad-based prosperity for 1.38 billion people of India. Nevertheless, inability of this dispensation to restore high growth entails risks ahead that can probably encompass at least a decade of economic stagnation and burgeoning joblessness. Currently, India is at the cusp of a critical juncture of its onwards march towards prosperity, and it is seemingly a high time for the policy-makers to provide further impetus to the pace of reforms. Worsening of the already deteriorating economy in the aftermath of the COVID-19 offers an opportunity of restoring the economy to a high trajectory of growth and generate gainful jobs for the people, otherwise missing this opportunity could risk ensuing decades of economic stagnation.

McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) in its recent report on India has made some suggestions that can help boost Indian economy. While espousing for the implementation of a reform agenda in coming couple of years to pave way for the economic growth in the ensuing decade, the MGI report is optimistic of fruitful results. The report suggests that by initiating right measures at this juncture, India can raise productivity and incomes for workers, small, mid-size and large firms in order to “keep India in the ranks of the world’s outperforming emerging economies.” While noting that in order to provide gainful jobs 90 million more workers in quest of nonfarm jobs by 2030, the report suggests that India is called upon to act decisively to resume its high-growth path. It emphasizes that Post-COVID-19 India requires an annual GDP growth of 8.0 to 8.5 per cent in tandem with continued strong productivity growth and faster employment growth than in the past to generate the 12 million gainful nonfarm jobs annually. Lamenting at the deteriorating economic situation in India owing to structural challenges and declining GDP growth rate even prior to the pandemic that has been further compounded in the aftermath of the pandemic, the MGI report calls for urgent remedial measures. It further suggests that while treading on the high-growth path, it is essential to accelerate manufacturing and construction sectors.

According to this report, manufacturing could contribute one-fifth of incremental GDP to 2030, whereas construction sector entails the potential of contributing one in four of labor the incremental nonfarm jobs needed. While emphasizing on the need for labour- and knowledge-intensive services sectors to maintain their past momentum of growth, the report is hopeful that across all sectors, three growth-booster themes spanning 43 frontier businesses entail the potential of generating \$2.5 trillion of economic value and 30 per cent of India’s nonfarm jobs by 2030. Given that India currently has approximately 600 large firms with more than \$500 million in revenue and engendering almost 40% of all exports, MGI report insists that India needs to triple its number of large firms, with more than 1, 000 midsize and 10, 000 small companies to achieve its potential of 70 per cent contribution to GDP. In order to ascend the ladder of scale and global competitiveness, India needs to improve access to capital and easing other business-related obstacles. Reforms in six following sectors – sector specific policies to improve productivity in manufacturing, real estate, agriculture, healthcare and retail; reduction in land costs; flexible labour market; efficient power distribution; privatization of some state-owned enterprises; and improving the ease of doing business – are suggested by the MGI report as key to provide fillip to economy. — BK

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# COVID-19: Challenging Times for BRICS Multilateralism

Surbhi Choudhary\*

*[With India, Brazil and Russia being the most affected countries by the COVID-19 pandemic that is believed to have started from China poses severe challenges to BRICS economies, its politics and its intra-organisational politics. This paper tries to assess whether BRICS can uphold the structural obligations as well as the values of multilateralism and bring to fore an adequate response to the economic strains and internal rifts within, to deal with the pandemic and emerge as a leading multilateral institution of the global South. The border clashes between India and China and the COVID-19 induced situation in BRICS countries have already exposed the internal fault lines of the organisation which makes further collaboration challenging. However, the future of BRICS is promising if it seizes this opportunity and plays a more active role in challenging the western institutional hegemony, as the Western liberal institution's efficacy is already under question. The BRICS can lead with example by bringing new ideas of global governance and institutional finance to the table. Towards this, the paper gives a few recommendations in the end.]*

Established in 2009, BRICS has become the first major non-Western, inter-continental multilateral organisation. It stands for the principles of non-intervention, upholding sovereignty and consensual decision-making with a larger goal of south-south cooperation and an alternative world economic order. These shared interests and goals have brought economically, culturally and politically diverse countries like Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa together under the umbrella of BRICS.

The on-going Corona pandemic has posed tremendous challenges to these countries and to BRICS as a multilateral organisation. Economic slowdown, healthcare failures, trade deficits and information warfare are some of the issues that pose challenge to BRICS as an organization and its individually constituent nations. These constraints have aggravated due to the pandemic, which in turn has led to exposing the intra-organisational rifts between the member countries of BRICS. However, what these extraordinary circumstances globally underscore is that the future of the BRICS depends on working in cohesion to address challenges.

## Challenges

The Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar underlined the adverse impact of the ongoing pandemic on the global economy and output by disruption of global trade and supply chains. Economic activity across sectors has been negatively impacted leading to loss of jobs and livelihoods along with a great risk to the

health and well-being of people. (Chaudhury, ET, 2020). In this backdrop, it is important to recall that the very basis of formation of the BRICS was the potential of the emerging economies. The economic slowdown and reduction in exports caused due to the Corona virus can paralyse the organizational effectiveness of BRICS as there is no robust economic plan in place till now.

As this global crisis continues, the situation should be turned into an economic opportunity by the BRICS nations. This indeed is an opportunity for BRICS nations as not only are the BRICS nations responsible for a combined nominal GDP of US\$18.6 trillion, about 23.2% of the world's combined GDP, but also because all the major economies of the world like US and many European countries are struggling to export due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The BRICS should use this as a window of opportunity to lead the world economy by bringing the group of largest middle powers together. In reality, this has so far been unachieved, especially given the lack of coordinated efforts among BRICS countries, inward-looking approach of respective member nations, falling revenues and exports, and more focus on dealing with the crisis at the national level.

The impact of COVID-19 poses a grave challenge to attaining the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the BRICS. As BRICS comprises among the fastest growing nations of the world in India, China and South Africa, slowing economies would pull down organizational growth of BRICS, impacting the whole world.

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The health crisis due to the pandemic presents an opportunity for BRICS nations through diplomacy to strengthen their association. Rather than collaborating with each other and keeping the global South as their priority, most of the member states like Russia, China and India have extended medical assistance to countries like US, Italy, etc. Such cooperation has shown that BRICS nations have prioritised their own bilateral ties and interests instead of working with organizational cohesion within BRICS. The BRICS countries have shown no appetite to pool resources and minds to develop an effective Corona vaccine, even though individual members like Russia, India and China are racing ahead to develop their own vaccines. In this effort, while Russia and China have been acting individually, India has extended pharmaceutical and other support to countries like US, UK, etc.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, instead of working together with BRICS members during a global crisis, China's unilateral actions in the South China Sea and the recent border aggression at LAC (Line of Actual Control) with India clearly shows China's true intentions of leading ahead of the pack with its hegemonic ambitions. China's aggression, especially during the pandemic, has undermined the solidarity of the organizational solidarity on which the unity of the global South rests. The border stand-off in the Galwan valley between India and China has sharpened the internal fault lines of the organisation and lowered expectations from BRICS. Moreover, the organization's image as a group which propounds norms of equality of states in global politics, has taken a beating.

In current circumstances, BRICS member states share a common suspicion towards China's expanding interests globally. However, all states haven't voiced their concerns due to fears of resentment in China. Russia is concerned about the sustenance of its influence in its post-Soviet space, which has been consistently challenged by China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). India is in a worrisome position, as it is geographically excluded from the Pacific theatre and surrounded by the BRI. The Sino-Indian geopolitical rivalry is certainly not new, but today it has multifaceted implications for developments in the South Asian region. Incidents like the India-China border standoff are likely to impact how the two countries cooperate within multilateral organizations like BIRCS. Earlier, the Chinese efforts of building a road in the Doklam area near the border created a tense situation in 2017.

The recent border spat of 2020 also pushes India closer to the West, especially the US-furthering the dream of South-South cooperation. India's trade with China has been clearly impacted because of the border standoff between the two countries, especially as the public in India is already boycotting Chinese goods. India has also limited FDIs from China in the country. And India has come up with a list of countries around the globe spanning across Latin America, South-East Asia and Africa to de-clutter its supply chains and reduce its dependence on China for imports in the long run.

In the recent past, Russia has stopped the supply of S-400 missile defence system to China without citing any reasons. Earlier, despite China's reservations, Russia promised S-400 delivery and other supplies of key defence platforms to India after India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visited Moscow in June 2020. India on the other hand, also supports Russia on the greater Eurasian stability and in turn expects Moscow's support for its all-encompassing Indo-Pacific vision. There is a social media backlash in Brazil against China. African nationals faced racial discrimination in China during the pandemic times and South Africa, among other nations, hasn't received it well.

### **Actions**

New Development Bank of BRICS approved Emergency Program Loans of \$1 billion to each country, Brazil, India, China and South Africa to combat COVID-19. In normal times, disbursement of loans at NDB takes several months but the COVID-19 related financial assistance was released within three to four weeks of loan approval, clearly stating the flexibility and efficiency on the part of BRICS in a crisis situation. The NDB will also be allocating \$15 billion during 2020 for the revival of the member state economies. In a statement the NDB has also declared the establishment of an Emergency Assistance Facility (NDB, 2020) in the wake of Covid-19 to provide help to the member countries. These are some major efforts in the right direction but are certainly not enough. The road to post-pandemic economic recovery is going to be a long and difficult one.

BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre were proposed to be set up in the summit of 2018. In the recent virtual meeting on April 28, 2020 it was decided by the member nations to set up the Centre. BRICS is also planning on coordinating with other agencies working on the Corona virus vaccine and epidemics in general.

BRICS countries have been active in holding multiple high-level meetings in recent times. The environment ministers of BRICS in a virtual meeting recently called for improving the environment and endorsing circular economy to be included in national plans as steps towards recovery and sustainable growth after COVID-19. (PIB, 2020). Russia is keen on hosting the SCO and BRICS summit at St. Petersburg in October 2020 with physical presence of the leaders under its presidency after it being postponed once due to the pandemic. One can put their hopes on these upcoming summits.

In the most recent BRICS meeting held virtually, S. Jaishankar emphasized that countries need to provide support to businesses, especially MSMEs, to tide over the crisis and ensure livelihoods are not lost and BRICS should support these efforts. The current challenge emanating out of COVID-19 pandemic underlines the need for reform of multilateral systems and that reformed multilateralism was the way forward. (Roy, 2020). India also reaffirmed its strong support for Russian BRICS Chairmanship in 2020 and the overall theme of “BRICS Partnership for Global Stability, Shared Security and Innovative Growth”.

### **Recommendations**

India, being the largest producer of Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), can lead a BRICS-driven pharma-alliance which can actively look into the production of Corona virus vaccine. Though it has exported the medication to SAARC nations and Russia, Brazil, and the US, such cooperation is still based on its bilateral ties and not prioritising BRICS or South-South cooperation.

BRICS nations through a coordinated attempt should also reactivate Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) mechanisms to combat COVID-19 as well as natural disasters that are transnational in nature. It should also take lead in reserving resources for the same with the focus on member states and the rising economies of the global South.

Cross-border challenges like climate change and global epidemics emphasises on the relevance and need of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs). These banks by their very nature are structured to provide cross-border solution in tackling situations like Covid-19. The NDB has proved itself to be a major source of finance for the BRICS countries during this pandemic. The NDB shall also chart a course for the economic recovery and growth of these countries and the global south at large. Action on an urgent

basis is required to deal with the economic disorder that the Corona virus pandemic has ushered.

The BRICS countries in a joint effort should coordinate their macro-economic policies in order to check recession and loss of jobs and to stabilise the global economy. Global industrial and supply chains should be protected by coordinated efforts for development on not only the BRICS countries but also for all other emerging markets and developing countries as suggested by Wang Yi, Foreign Minister of People’s Republic of China. (Kolkata-China Consulate, 2020).

The most immediate action for the BRICS must include the exchange /supply of medicines, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE’s) and test kits within the member nations. It should also formulate a plan for the economic revival of the BRICS nations as well as the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America (Kumar and Conti, 2020) for which NDB and Contingency Reserve Arrangement can act as useful tools.

Restrictions on trade must be eased for a speedy recovery of their economies. In a concerted manner, members should create an environment of interpersonal trust and transparency among the members to sort out their differences. One way to do this is the free flow of information. And most importantly, in the long run BRICS should develop a policy on cross-border threats like climate change and pandemics. China on the other hand, as a cofounder of the organisation should not be as aggressive in its security and economic policies and should take lead in helping other members in combating the virus. This will also help in limiting the distrust that BRICS nations share against China and to restore their confidence.

Border tensions at the LAC can affect the cooperative capacity of BRICS and could have grave impact on geopolitical influences in Asian region. Russia has always stressed on the need to preserve stability in Eurasia. In the backdrop of on-going Sino-Indian stand-off Russia can provide conducive environment for negotiation between the two countries to solve the border dispute. It is also important to Moscow to end this impasse ahead of the BRICS and SCO summits as this can weaken these two groupings. The upcoming BRICS and SCO summits under Russia’s presidency can provide a platform for India and China to discuss the issue at hand. The capacity of BRICS cannot be discarded as a political talk shop and it can in future come up with an amicable solution to these problems.

## Conclusion

The emerging powers like Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa have been at the centre of debates focused around the political and economic change in the world order. The rise of BRICS nations marks a new development model for the world based on public welfare and active state intervention in the economy as opposed to a Euro-American hegemonic world order. (Holdt and Nilsen, 2020). The pandemic has further deepened the existing problems within these countries triggering a negative impact on the image of BRICS as a viable alternative.

However, it is still early to judge the future of BRICS, as some high-level meetings are still in the pipeline and are supposed to take place this year along with the BRICS summit. The COVID-19 is a reminder that the interests and future of these countries are entwined. Thus, cooperation across borders and multilateral efforts are the need of the hour instead of fostering political divisions and unilateralism.

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**THIRD CONCEPT** *welcomes your valuable comments on articles published in each issue. Suggestion to further improve quality and get-up of your favourite magazine, which has a record of uninterrupted publication since 1987, are also solicited.*

# Nepal-China Relations: Implications for India

Rishi Gupta\*

*[In 65 years of formal diplomatic relations, Nepal and China have advanced their ties from the initial minimum interaction to strategic level cooperation at present. While Chinese interests in Nepal lie in safeguarding its interests in Tibet and minimising India's presence in Nepal to expand its regional presence for market and defence purposes, Nepal looks at China as a strong point in pushing India for its benefits. Meanwhile, Nepal's newfound love for China in recent years poses a significant challenge to Nepal's political autonomy and territorial integrity. Therefore, Nepal must engage with China carefully considering Beijing's expansionist outlook, and balance ties with India to counter any potential threats from China in future. Also, Nepal-China cooperation continues to overshadow India's goodwill in Nepal due to lack of timely changes in the traditional ties. Hence, India should revisit its Nepal policy based on stronger economic and development-oriented cooperation. The present paper critically analyses various dimensions of Nepal-China relations and their impact on India.]*

On August 01, 2020, Nepal and China celebrated 65 years of their diplomatic relations. It was on this day that the two countries agreed to establish diplomatic ties in 1955. The two countries trace their civilisational and cultural ties as old as from the fifth century. In the known records, Nepali Buddhist Monks were the ones who went to Tibet and then to China to spread the teachings of Buddhism. Over the centuries, these relations were developed in different fields, including art and trade but remained minimum due to rough road infrastructure.

Establishment of the present-day ties with China was an effort to diversify Nepal's diplomatic ties with the global community and minimise its dependence on India. Nepal had also understood its potential as a landlocked country between two emerging Asian powers and any future competition between India and China was supposed to benefit Nepal strategically and economically.

On the other hand, a worried China saw Nepal as a stabiliser in protecting its interests in Tibet, and it could use Nepalese court in quashing anti-China activities on the Nepalese soil and potential extradition of the fleeing Tibetans through Nepal-China border to take refuge in India. For the first fifty years of their modern-day relations, Nepal had hardly paid any heed to develop deeper ties with China for all practical reasons. An open border and the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship with India worked as a lifeline for the country, and it did not feel the

needs to deepen ties with China. However, on every occasion of dispute and tensions with India, Nepal has coercively used China to its benefits.

In the meantime, with the establishment of democracy in Nepal in 2006, Nepal has elevated ties from "Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation Featuring Ever-lasting Friendship to Strategic Partnership of Cooperation Featuring Ever-lasting Friendship for Development and Prosperity" (MOFA 2019). With Nepal's older attempts and newer found deep cooperation with China, the present study critically analyses its impact on India, which has been the traditional socio-cultural, economic and development partner of Nepal.

## An Overview

Bilateral relations between Nepal and China were established in the backdrop of the annexation of Tibet by China during 1950-51. Located on a similar geo-strategic front in the Himalaya as Tibet, the then King Tribhuvan Narayan Shah of Nepal had been wary of the Chinese intentions in Nepal. In an effort to counter a potential Chinese expedition to Nepal, the King had reached out to India in providing security to Nepal from any external aggression through a tacit security agreement under the purview of India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1950 (Sanjay 2008, 43). After King Tribhuvan's death, his son Mahendra became the new King in 1955. While late King had entrusted India in guiding Nepal's foreign and security relations, new King Mahendra envisioned the potential of using China as a pressure point in case of differences with India. In this process, a delegation from China led by Chinese Ambassador to India Yuan

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Zhongxian visited Nepal and signed an agreement to formalise diplomatic relations on August 01, 1955, based on the Principles of *Panchasheela*.

In the follow-up, Ambassador Zhongxian was given additional charge of Nepal and a high-ranking Lt. Gen. Daman Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana was appointed as Nepalese Ambassador to China (GoN, 2017). Further, Nepal and China settled their international border in 1961 by signing a Border Agreement followed by a Boundary Treaty in 1961. With relations formalised, China offered to construct Prithvi Highway from capital city Kathmandu to Lake city Pokhara in 1967 and completed in 1974 to mark the beginning of development cooperation between the two countries.

### **Tacit Strategic Alliance**

After the demise of King Mahendra, his son Birendra was coronated as the new King in 1975. Birendra's approach towards China was more friendly than his father. He not only believed in strengthening ties with China but also attempted a formal departure from 'special ties' with India by proposing Nepal as a Zone of Peace (ZoP). It was a time when democracies in Europe were seeking global support in being recognised as a ZoP to safeguard their interests from either of the Blocks (Kacowicz 1995). However, such a proposal from Nepal was surprising as it had signed Peace treaties with both of its neighbours.

The proposal was endorsed by more than fifty countries including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Soviet Union, Japan and Switzerland. China was the first country to endorse the proposal. Still, it failed to materialise as India rejected it on the grounds that it was not in compliance with the mutual security arrangements between the two countries. The strategic thinkers in India saw ZoP as an attempt to appease China in order to receive assistance and forge a new strategic alliance.

To India's anticipation, ZoP was indeed a shifter from India to China after King bought 500 truckloads of arms and ammunition worth 20 million USD from China in 1989 (Garver 1991). It was a stark contradiction that for once Nepal wanted to be recognised as a ZoP and declared that it posed or received no threats from its neighbours, and at the same time, it was equipping itself with modern warfare material from China. Therefore, it was clear that Nepal desired to continuously benefit from India through trade and transit and ignore security concerns of New Delhi by forging strategic ties with China.

A similar pattern was observed in 2005 after Nepal had advocated China's membership for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation with the support of Pakistan in exchange of arms assistance from China to fight against the Maoists who were fighting to end monarchy to establish democracy (SJB Rana, 2013: 72).

For China, 1989 and 2005 provided numerous opportunities on the strategic and economic front in Nepal. The year 1989 significantly opened a new market for the Chinese principal arms manufacturer North China Industries Corporation across the border itself (Garver 1991). Secondly, China had been looking at South Asia as a potential market for Chinese goods and an opportunity to challenge India's regional leadership. With its entry into SAARC as an observer member,

China wished to alter South Asian centrality from India to itself considering its resources will help in leveraging South Asian countries. To an extent, China succeeded in its motives to weaken India's leadership in SAARC by aligning with Pakistan in derailing the prospects of South Asian regional cooperation.

### **Defence Ties**

For more than six decades, Nepal has relied on India for its security needs including training its security forces at India's National Defence Academy (NDA), receiving defence supplies and monetary assistance. India's Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) is also an honorary General of the Nepal army, and the same is granted to the COAS of Nepal in the Indian Army. Nepal Army also conducts yearly Joint Military exercises with the Indian Army. However, it was for the first time in 2017 that Nepal and China held Joint Military exercise "Sagarmatha Friendship 2017" and again in 2018. China was also pushing Nepal to grant the honour of honorary General to the COAS of their respective Armies on the reciprocal basis at par which was denied by the then Defence Minister of Nepal Bal Krishna Khand.<sup>1</sup>

The Joint Military exercises were aimed to train the Nepalese Army in counter-insurgency tactics by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). Till date, Nepal has not faced any terror attacks. Therefore, the training was seen at controlling the approximately 20,000 Tibetan refugees living in Nepal whom China allegedly recognises as Terrorists. China had rewarded Nepal with military assistance worth 2.6 million USD after it had successfully quashed an anti-China movement by the Tibetan refugees living in

Nepal in 2008 (Bhattarai, 2019). Over the past few years, Nepal and China have hosted high-level military delegations and discussed various aspects of security, including joint efforts in border management, counter-terrorism and disaster management. In 2017 alone, PLA had announced military assistance worth 32.3 million USD to Nepal Army followed by 21 million USD in October 2019 (Reuters, 2019).

#### Strategic Tibet

Nepal has conveyed its support for One China Policy (OCP) in all its official communiqués with China (GoN, 2017). OCP has become an important component of China's diplomatic relations across world and recognition from world community has given it an extra edge in its image makeover, especially in denying its brutalities in Tibet. Meanwhile, Nepal is more critical because it hosts a large number of Tibetan refugees, shares border with Tibet and refugees are monitored by the international agencies including United Nations, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, etc. Therefore, Nepal's recognition of OCP inadvertently projects Chinese interests in Tibet.

On the other hand, countries like Nepal see it as an opportunity for the inflow of investment and assistance from China. For instance, in 2008, Nepal had come heavily on the protestors as Tibetans across the world were commemorating 50 years of Dalai Lama's exile in India (HRW, 2008). A Wikileaks cable exposed that Beijing had commanded Nepal to step up patrols and provide "financial incentives to those who apprehended would-be exiles" (Time, 2015). In a similar act, Nepal had also refused Taiwan's offer of sending its disaster management forces during 2015 earthquake in Nepal as Taiwan is part of China's One China Policy (Time, 2015).

China has also been requesting Nepal to sign an extradition treaty (HRW, 2019) for decades. However, due to pressure from the international human rights agencies and political parties, it has not materialised. In case extradition treaty is signed, Nepal will be legally bound to extradite fleeing Tibetans through China-Nepal border into Nepal. Until now, Nepal is bound by the "Gentleman's agreement" with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide a safe passage to India for all those who flee Tibet (OHCHR, 2015).

Meanwhile, during Chinese President Xi's visit to Nepal in October 2019, the extradition treaty was almost signed, but due to the internal and international

pressure, the agreement was replaced with a Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (MLACM) (MOFA, 2019). Under the treaty mechanism of MLACM, China will partially be able to tighten its clout on Tibetan refugees in Nepal which marks a significant departure by Nepal in following India's approach towards providing refuge and safeguarding the human rights of the Tibetan refugees.

#### Belt and Road Initiative and FDI

In 2017, Nepal formally joined Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with China. The then Prime Minister of Nepal Pushpa Kamal Prachanda took a special interest in joining BRI despite Nepali Congress, a coalition partner in the Government, had objected to it.<sup>2</sup> While the global community has called BRI a 'debt-trap' strategy by China, the present Communist Government claims it as an opportunity to explore development opportunities for Nepal as well as an opportunity to explore trade and transit options away from India (Gerstel, 2017). At present, China is working on nine projects on priority including one cross border transmission line, one cross border railways, three roads, two hydroelectricity plants, and one technical institution out of initial 36 development projects signed under BRI (BRN, 2020).

The Trans-Himalayan railway will alone cost 2.75 billion USD, which will connect Lhasa and Kathmandu through railways. China has also agreed to grant access to Tianjin, Shenzhen, Lianyungang, and Zhanjiang and three other dry ports to Nepal, which will relieve Nepal from an over-dependence on India (Reuters, 2018).

On the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) front, China has changed its course from an occasional investor in Nepal until 2014 to becoming top Foreign Direct Investor with an estimated 90 per cent of the total FDI in Nepal. For a country like Nepal, FDI has become a key source for the economic development, income growth, employment and modernisation of technology and education. With China showing its interest in exploiting abundant natural resources including water in generating electricity and manufacturing industrial materials like cement, the Government of Nepal sees it as a source of employment, revenue, import-substitution, reverse migration and empowerment.

In the past three years alone, Chinese cement giant Hong Kong Red Lion Cement Co. Ltd in joint partnership with local Shivam cement has established a manufacturing base worth NPR 35.9 billion. Since

its arrival, the company is expanding its base in the new location to exploit Clinker to manufacture cement across Nepal. On the contrary, India's offers to provide technical assistance and investment in exploring its natural resources have met with political and public backlashes in Nepal (IBN, 2020).

### **Implications for India**

India's relations with Nepal are defined by a rich and shared history of socio-economic, political, and cultural ties. A 1751-km long open border between the two countries has facilitated cross country migration of people, culture and trade. In the mid-eighteenth century, Gorkha King Prithvi Narayan Shah had defined Nepal as a "Yam between two boulders". He had also guided Nepal to be wary of the British Raj but encouraged to forge deeper ties with the people of India. The relationship continued to flourish, and in 1950, an independent India played a vital role in ousting the Rana oligarchs at the request of King Tribhuvan Narayan Shah. Over the years, India has supported the democratic aspirations of the people of Nepal. In 2006, India had also successfully mediated a peace pact between the Maoists and the political parties which resulted in present-day democracy in Nepal.

### **Shifting the Cultural ties**

With their unique closeness, India and Nepal have/had their differences. However, the cultural and economic connect had worked in easing out the tensions. Meanwhile, the 2015 border blockade episode has created a wider thaw, and it continues to dominate India-Nepal relations. In the meantime, China has grown its influence in Nepal by luring the Himalayan nation through its economic assistance programmes. Also, knowing that political parties in Nepal would prefer to use anti-India manoeuvring in creating their political base as they did in 2017 local and national elections, China is advancing in Nepal to fill the vacuum left behind by India.

To minimise India's cultural impact on Nepal, China has also come up with a new term called 'blood ties' to challenge 'people to people' relations between Nepal and India. With public sentiments in Nepal turning hostile towards India post-2015, the very foundation of India-Nepal relationship is affected in the long run. Meaning, China will potentially capture Nepal on the cultural front through an artificially created blood ties to weaken India's traditional presence which stands as a worry to New Delhi.

### **Challenging India's Regional Leadership**

While analysing the cardinal factors in Chinese presence in Nepal, Tibet tops in the list. However, since 2005, China has also interested itself in strengthening its South Asian presence to help itself in exploiting regional resources, including hydropower potential of Nepal. Little success in the past, 2015 Nepal-India tensions provided an opportune time to China in opening itself new gateways of trade and transit in Nepal that had been limited through India only. The political forces in Nepal have equally reciprocated Beijing as they see a potential sponsor. At present, Nepal Communist Party affiliate Madan Bhandari Foundation, named after a late Communist leader in Nepal, receives financial assistance from China. While the fund is made available in the name of education and humanitarian causes, there are no audits on expenditure and funds are allegedly transferred to the Nepal Communist Party.

### **BRI and India**

Nepal is critically an important component for the safety and expansion of its mega ambitious Belt and Road Initiative worth 62 billion-dollar. Beijing is also aware of the fact that until India does not join BRI, it cannot build a trustworthy environment for BRI in South Asia amidst doubts raised by the United States and debt trap of some of the African countries. While India rejected it at the first place citing territorial violations by China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, China had to rely on smaller countries in the neighbourhood including Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan to secure a safe presence landing for BRI in South Asia. With these neighbours joining BRI, China has sent a symbolic message that challenges India's regional leadership.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, Nepal is geo-strategically an important country for China. In the past, it was Tibet that dominated its interests in Nepal, and presently, the interests are both economic and strategic. For Nepal, China has been looked as an alternative to India in terms of trade, transit and financial assistance. Meanwhile, Nepal did not intend to replace India with China as it could have affected employment and educational opportunities for its people in Nepal and uninterrupted trade from third countries through an open border with India.

However, under strained Nepal-India ties, China is executing its grand-strategy to safeguard its interests in Tibet and ensure the success of BRI in South Asia

through Nepal. While the first fifty years of Nepal-China relations were less than active, the last five years have given a significant boost. It is due to the leading regional developments including a downfall in India-Nepal relationship, increasing trust-deficit between India and its neighbours, China's economic rise and most importantly, increasing Chinese humanitarian presence and lack of strong alliance between India, the United States, Australia, and Japan to counter China's rise. Therefore, India needs to take each step with precaution in Nepal. Also, it is a high time for India to revisit its traditional ties based on culture and people with Nepal and place mutual development on priority to safeguard its strategic interests in Nepal.

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# Indo-Nepal Relations: Recent Phase

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*[The historical ties have always been strong with minor ups and downs in the relations between the two countries. India has stood by Nepal in its hours of need and crisis. India has always extended a helping hand in true spirit of friendship and in consonance with advocacies of Gujral doctrine which envisaged that India should play the role of an elder brother with its smaller neighbours rather than 'big brother'. Nevertheless, tensions have erupted in recent times and that are explored in this article.]*

Nepal witnessed radical changes in post-2006 phase of its Constitution writing process. It was India's mediation in bringing together eight parties including the insurgent Maoists and pro-federalism Madhesi groups that could smoothened the process of hammering out the constitution. It gave India an unprecedented popularity in Nepal. The then relationship between the two countries went to its zenith where Delhi became a regular and preferred pilgrimage for the political leadership of Nepal and all those leaders who were involved in the changeover.<sup>1</sup>

However, within a span of a decade things seem to be falling apart and all is not well between India and Nepal. This author explores the changing contours of relationship between Indian in Nepal in the recent past and different dynamics of the same to decipher the imperatives for India's foreign policy in the immediate neighbourhood.

## **Indo-Nepal Relations on a New Low**

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi visited Nepal twice to drive home his announced foreign-policy priorities i.e. 'Neighbourhood First'. This sent a strong signal across both the countries that good and healthy relations are ahead on account of convergence between the two countries. Nepal promulgated its new Constitution on September 20, 2015 and nation-states across the world heaved a sigh of relief that finally the tiny nation is going to be politically stable and peace and tranquility will prevail in this Himalayan state. However, the relations hit a rock bottom since September 2015 when Madhesi groups started agitating for their demands to be met in the new constitution articulating that they have not been given a fair share in the federal structure within the newly promulgated Constitution.

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India expressed its sympathy with the cause of Madhesi and Terai people, and tried to prevail on Nepali leadership that an amicable political solution to the same must be arrived at through negotiations across the table. Nepal accused India of a blockade, whereas India denied of any such blockade on the ground.<sup>2</sup> In spite of such bickering Oli visited India for six-days in February 2016 and called the visit a successful one.

The bonhomie that developed between the two countries in the post-2006 phase and continued till the year 2015 suddenly got disrupted and soon India lost its role and acceptability within Nepali political clique and many of the Nepali citizens. The relations touched the bottom as comment by India or its diplomats on Nepali politics raised hackles within Kathmandu and once Prime Minister Oli went public warning Indian Diplomats not to interfere in internal politics of Nepal. Even Maoist Chief and former Prime Minister Pushp Kamal Dahal commented in public that "India's micro-management will not be acceptable."<sup>3</sup>

Oli's left-dominated government survives on the support of the Maoists. However, in the first week of May 2016 Maoists moved a resolution to pull down the government with support mobilised by Sher Bahadur Deuba led Nepali Congress. However, within 24 hours, Prachanda did a U-turn, leaving Oli still in command of the government but bitter and very upset. This political development provided a pretext to Oli to play the victim card and blame India for attempting a change in government. However, Prachanda ditched Deuba and switched positions by striking a deal with Oli.

This was made possible through conclusion of a nine-point agreement between the Maoists and the UML—which commits the Oli government to granting clemency to Maoists cadres, providing compensation to the injured and others who lost their livelihoods,

facilitating land allotments, bringing in controversial transitional justice provisions pending for over a decade, and ensuring close consultation with regards to government appointments. Some newspapers also reported that Oli also promised of relinquishing the office of PM after the Budget and allowing the office under oath to Prachanda. The agreements also provided for accelerating reconstruction work and addressing Madhesi demands at the earliest though it is clear that the Oli government is in no mood to move forward in this regard.<sup>4</sup> However, the casualty to the Oli power was contained but it took its toll on India-Nepal relations.

### **Reasons for Sagging Relationship**

The most obvious reason was the attempt by Prachanda and Deuba to bring down the government of Oli and India's hands into it; as if the entire conspiracy was hatched in India. However, the developments that took place within Nepal and its relations with other neighbours require to be understood in right perspective.

First, the eight groups that India helped to come together ten years ago and arrive at consensus for evolution of Constitution; soon got fragmented and some have even turned into bitter rivals. Therefore, there has been complete realignment of the political forces within Nepal and seemingly India is not in a position to keep a hold on development within Nepal.

Secondly, India expressed its reservations on the new Constitution and supported the blockade by insurgent Madhesi groups that followed the promulgation of the Constitution, even though it was not involved directly or officially in the blockade. The blockade began on September 23, 2015 and led to frequent skirmishes. Right from beginning Oli smacked of India's hands into it and also went on telling people that while he has been trying his level best to reason with India that the inadequacies in Nepal's Constitution, if any, should best be left to the Nepalese to sort out.<sup>5</sup> Yet he also kept warning its people that they better be ready for facing scarcity of goods and services on account of the disturbance.

Thirdly, India issued statements, and on its part asked Nepal to deal with the agitating Madhesi leaders politically and address the issue of discrimination they have raised. India also assured Nepal of lifting the blockade soon after the agitating groups vacate the no-man's land along the border. India projected as if it is not interested in blockade, but is being forced or it is happening on account of the agitating groups.

### **China as a Factor**

According to several experts, China has always been looking for an opportunity to fill the vacuum created by India owing to suspicion and bitterness on one or the other count between India and Nepal. When allegedly India went for blockade in late 2015, China seems to have favourably responded to Nepal's request to open another six, in addition to the existing two check-posts, in order to address the situation that emerged on account of the blockade.<sup>6</sup> There is no doubt that Nepal needed goods for its citizens, but falling to China has more to it than mere requirement for consumable goods.

The growing engagement between Nepal and China in recent years is noticeable. Prime Minister Oli made a seven-day official visit to Beijing at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Li Keqiang in March 2016. Ten different bilateral agreements dealing with free trade, transport connectivity, financial cooperation, and transit facilities through China were signed. The 15-point Joint Statement issued at the end of the visit charts out a number of areas of cooperation that will greatly deepen engagements between the two countries. This visit took place against the backdrop of a four-month long unofficial Indian economic blockade as alleged by Nepal, and something that India denies that it ever orchestrated.<sup>7</sup>

Both the countries agreed to a Chinese train from Shigatse to Rasuwagadhi in the Nepal border. Nepal has also for the first time been given transit rights from China. The trade and transit agreement will give the landlocked nation a right to trade with third countries through Chinese ports. This arrangement will break Nepal's total dependence on India. However, the nearest Chinese port, Tianjin, is over 3,000 kilometers away from the Nepal-China border, while the distance to the nearest Indian port, Haldiya, is just 1,000 kilometers from the Indo-Nepal border.

The problem lies in the ever-changing maturity among the Nepali breed of political leaders. Some Nepali leaders were smart enough and understood the China's role and balanced their relations with both their giant neighbours. The fine art of balance seems to have been lost on the current generation of leaders, who, if they have an interest in foreign policy at all, seem too close to either the Indian or the Chinese side. The geographical and economic reality of Nepal is such that the country must necessarily be closer to India than to China.

China and many other countries may be of great help to Nepal, but they can never be a replacement for

India, rather they can help Nepal towards its endeavour of lessening its dependence on India. Today, the estimates of the number of Nepalese working in India range from over 800,000 to more than 1.7 million. Can China accommodate such huge numbers of Nepali workers? According to yet another estimate about 40 per cent of Nepalese migrants are in India.<sup>9</sup>

Sino-Nepal trade is not a match to Indo-Nepal trade, which is extremely unequal. China in a subtle way made it clear on number of occasions that it was not in competition over Nepal with India. China views Nepal as a bridge between his country and South Asia. China wants Nepal as an area of some influence, but not to the extent that it is in direct competition with India, so as to help it develop relations with the rest of South Asia. Considering the nature of the historical, cultural and economic linkages between the two countries, that would appear to be a pragmatic choice on the part of China.<sup>10</sup>

This is something Nepal needs to understand and accordingly balance its relations with both the giant neighbours; else in the process it is Nepal that shall have to suffer not its neighbours. Accordingly, China is not a considerable factor towards worsening of Indo-Nepal relations.

### **Oli's Mistakes**

PM Oli has been blamed for failing on three fronts: One is that the fault lies within the Constitution as it is being considered that it is not an equitable Constitution. Nepal Polity too is not an equitable one. This is because it has failed to accommodate the sensitivities of Madhesis, Janajatis and other marginalised groups.<sup>11</sup> Oli came to power after a new Constitution had been adopted but instead of using authority to push through the necessary amendments and get the alienated Madhesis on board, he dug in his heels. He blamed India for backing the Madhesi agitation and imposing an economic blockade on Nepal. His assurances to Mr. Modi during his visit to India remained unfulfilled. Madhesi agitation may have been called off but there is simmering discontent and unrest across the Terai.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, rather than introspecting, Nepali leaders choose to pass the buck on India. Fact remains that Madhesi people are Nepali citizen and Nepal government should have invited them on the negotiation table to resolve the conflict.

Second, failure of Oli is that he failed to manage his relations with Nepal and allowed it to worsen with

each passing day. Oli failed to read between the lines of Indian Prime Minister's statement and the statements of other diplomats. Oli did reach out to different groups, and invited the SLMM, or the Samyukta Loktantrik Madhesi Morcha, back for talks after a three-month hiatus. However, the strain in ties with India was prevented from worsening further owing to conciliatory statements from Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Thapa.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, his tenure witnessed a steep downturn in relations with India. Like his coalition partner Prachanda, he has sought to bolster legitimacy by deliberately stoking nationalist sentiment and blaming India for his problems, both political and economic, and flaunting the China card.

Third, and possibly the most pressing responsibility was that Nepal's government has failed its people entirely. Nepal needed to speed up reconstruction after 2015 earthquake that killed nearly 9,000 people. According an estimate by an NGO, only about one percent of the 7,70,000 destroyed houses have been properly reconstructed; and millions are living in damaged, unsafe homes or in temporary shanties.<sup>14</sup> The pace at which the reconstruction is taking place has made children to continue to miss their schools, and citizens may have to continue without hospitals.

It raises a pertinent question as to how a government could be so lethargic in planning for reconstruction and executing it when the world community is ready to commit billions of dollars to the effort.<sup>15</sup> There is thus a strong sense of frustration among the donor community because the Nepal government has been unable to put systems in place for disbursement of the pledges because of politics.

Therefore, it becomes obvious that it is lack of performance in governance on part of Oli which was compounded by ambitions of Prachanda and Deuba that perpetuated the May 2016 Crisis; rather the highhandedness of India.

### **Role and Contributions of India**

India too has committed mistakes and contributed towards worsening the ties between itself and Nepal. India kept criticising Nepal's New Constitution and went to the extent of banding with other countries at the UN Human Rights Council as well as with the European Union to rebuke Nepal's government. It also revealed India's weakening diplomacy and disappearance of the clout within Nepali leadership which could have allowed it to prevail. India is quick at revealing its displeasures at Nepal's overtures to

China. However, it always fails to introspect as to where exactly it has failed or created a vacuum that has provided grounds for both China and Nepal to converge.

This could have helped India weaning away the loyalty and confidence of the people of Nepal, and that could have also paid India politically towards commanding respect and honour within the Nepali political leadership.

Therefore, Indian government also needs to introspect about why Mr. Modi's 'neighbourhood first' policy has backfired in Nepal, after having gotten off to a splendid start when he visited Nepal in 2014 and laid out the contours of the relationship that he wanted to develop. Since, then relations have soured and perceptions have turned hostile.

### **Internal Power Struggle in Nepal**

Cracks seem to have already developed within ruling coalition of Nepal. It remains a matter of time as to when the alternative coalition is going to emerge. Parliamentary democracy is a number game. Number-seekers have already started working to cross the number Rubicon in Nepal's 601-member Parliament. There is a difference of only 24 seats between Prime Minister Oli's Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) and Nepali Congress (NC). Maoists are in the real King-Maker role with 83 seats.

Therefore, Prachanda has the capacity to tip the balance any time he feels like. The challenge thus was evident right from the beginning given the nature and ambitions of Prachanda. However, the early span of time in which the development took place need to be understood in right perspective and it is here that India need to devise its strategy.

It is true as reported in the media that NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba had assured Mr. Prachanda of NC support and had suggested that UDMF (Madhesi grouping) would be forthcoming. With 207 seats in a house of 601, the NC is the largest party with the UML and the Maoists following with 181 and 83 seats respectively. The Madhesi were expected to add another 30-plus seat, providing for a comfortable majority. Compared to Mr. Oli's unwieldy coalition with six Deputy Prime Ministers including those from both Maoists and pro-Monarchy parties, the NC's support could have ensured a more stable government under Prachanda.<sup>16</sup>

Ruling party of Oli and his trusted aids played up the Indian angle knowing that Prachanda's relations with India have never recovered since his ill-fated attempts

to undermine the Nepal Army which brought his tenure as Prime Minister to a rather abrupt and ignominious end. Like most Nepali leaders Mr. Prachanda continues to blame India for the collapse of his coalition and the subsequent breakup of his party.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, once again it is quite obvious that the political crisis that erupted in Nepal is more on account of vulnerability of political parties and their ambitions and immaturity; rather than external interference. Nepal first should put its own house in order, by enhancing its level of political and diplomatic maturity then think of blaming on external powers.

### **Conclusion**

Nepali citizens and politicians have always suffered from amnesia regarding role that India have been playing since independence. They hesitate to admit that it was India-brokered deal in November 2005 that brought about the key political changes in the country in early 2006 that catapulted them to power. Nepal's streets are more conducive to rumour on India's interference, even if it is without bases. Political parties also find it easier to blame it on India for any failure of their own, including the inter-party and intra-political party struggle for power. It is quite unfortunate that India-bashing by Nepali leaders and population alike have quite often been taken to heart without realising that the 21st century is no longer an age of empires.

A number of economists and businessmen who have been looking at investment opportunities in Nepal have been talking of 'connectivity' and the advantages that could accrue to Nepal from its 'bridge diplomacy'. Therefore, the fear psychosis that prevails within Nepali citizens is an uncalled for and is without any rhyme and reason. It is largely hypothetical and without any reality. However, India may be interested that Nepal must be loyal to India as far as possible given the kind of courtship that India has given to Nepal since independence.

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## Gandhi's views on Swaraj

Dr. Satarupa Pal\*

*[Gandhi's theories of Swaraj have been integral part his freedom struggle since beginning of the 20th Century, both in Africa and in India. The concept of Swaraj promoted by Gandhi, was based on idea of governance by an ideal state and regulated by elementary technology and subsistence economy whose base was destroyed by colonial capitalism.]*

Gandhi appreciated the traditional peasant world, which he believed was superior to the contemporary urban, industrialized and capitalist civilization, to which humanity must return for its blissful existence. This concept focused on collectiveness of society including small villages and cottages, and in 'good conduct'.

It is noteworthy that Gandhi's approach was neither a critique of the traditional civilization nor a glorification of it. On the contrary, his writings reflect a balanced account of its past existence –an appreciation of its traditional economy and a critique of its malpractices with regard to gender and caste. Gandhi believed in restoring Indian civilization along with the ideal of humanity and peace.

### Conceptualizing Swaraj

Swaraj as an idea and a strategy gained prominence remarkably in the context of nationalist articulation of the freedom struggle and the growing democratization of the political processes that already brought in hitherto socio-politically excluded sections of society. So, swaraj was a great leveler in the sense that it helped mobilize people despite obvious socio-

economic and cultural differences. This is what lay at the success of 'swaraj' as a political strategy. Underlining its role in a highly divided society like India, Swaraj was defined in the following ways: (a) nationalist independence (b) political freedom of the individual (c) economic freedom of the individual and (d) spiritual freedom of the individual or self-rule.

Although, these four aspects are about four different characteristics of "swaraj", they are not complementary to each other. Of these, the first three are negative in character while the fourth one is positive in its connotation. 'Swaraj' as 'national independence', 'individual', 'political', and 'economic' freedom involves discontinuity of alien rule, absence of exploitation by individuals and poverty, respectively. Spiritual freedom is positive character in the sense that it is being which everyone aspires for and articulates, once first three aspects are met.

As Gandhi said: "Under Swaraj of my dream there is no necessity for arms at all. But I do not expect that dream to materialize in its fullness as a result of the present effort, first because, the effort is not directed to that end as an immediate goal, and secondly because, I do not consider myself advanced enough

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to be able to prescribe a detailed course of conduct to the nation for such preparation. I am still myself too full of passion and other frailties of human nature to feel the call or the capacity” (Bandyopadhyay 1960:13).

Gandhi’s conception of Swaraj had evolved out of the combination of his Indian roots, his readings and his early experiences in London. His discussion with Savarkar and others in London prompted him to pen down his vision of Swaraj for India. Gandhi focused on ‘swaraj’ as a life of simplicity, opposed to the pursuit of wealth and power, where the individual could have control over things that were necessary for sustenance of life, the issue involved was the principle of renunciation.

According to Gandhi, high thinking was inconsistent with complicated material life. All the graces of life were possible only when one learnt the art of living nobly. Swaraj, for Gandhi, existed in village republics in organic proximity of nature. It was civilization that abandoned coercive power and functioned through moral persuasion. It was a true home-rule manifesting the people’s inner world.

Gandhi’s objective was to give inner strength in people, and encourage them to be active in godly pursuits. He dreamt of a state where people would learn from each other’s language and religion voluntarily.

They would be a society possessing assimilating spirit and living in peace. Thus, it was to be a ‘swaraj’ in which people were to be guided by the condition of nature, customary rights and duties, and belief in a god. To be traditional peasant society using elementary technology, full of valour inspired by one thought and similar mode of life. In brief, ‘Swaraj’ was an ideal state of social existence, ethical and simple in nature, situated amidst ideal; villages that existed only in Gandhi’s imagination and that was premised on the principle that worldly pursuits should give way to ethical living.

Politically, swaraj meant the ‘capacity to regulate national life through national representation. The national life, in course of time, was; however, to become so perfect that it would be self-regulated and not need any representation, leading to a state of enlightened environment where everyone would be his own ruler and would rule himself in such a manner that he would never become impediment to his

neighbour. In this ideal state, therefore, there would be no political power because there would be no state.

Men and women would be linked in freedom, prepared to face the whole world. There would be no pandemic like plague, cholera, pox etc. Nobody would be allowed to be idle or wallow in luxury. Everyone would do manual labour and follow the path of duty.

Gandhi’s corporate activity was guided towards parliamentary system like democracy. In the religious perspective, he believed that the religions would transcend Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity etc., and would be an ordered moral government of the universe. Religion and state, however, were to be kept separate. Religion was to be a personal concern of the citizen, with the state having no role to play in it. Caste has nothing to do with religion. It is harmful both to spiritual and national growth. Varna and Ashrama are institutions which have nothing to do with caste (Prabhu, 1964:10).

He focused on the all educational activities including university education was to be on the pattern of basic education that was to be perused on the requirement of the locality and universality of learning to be conducted through the mother tongue. English, despite the fact of international language, was to be only the second optional language and that too only at the university level, and not in school.

He also emphasized on village crafts for encouragement for the quick return for villagers to move forward to self-employment. The state was to care for secular welfare of its people and power was to be decentralized to the grass-roots level to be recomposed from the bottom to the top or particularly individual who was to be unit of development. The government officials were to be the true servants of the people, honest and incorruptible men capable in their work.

However, the entire focus of Swaraj was on self-reliance of the individual, village, taluka, district, province and nation in that order. Its soul was decentralization of power and economy leading to a gradual reduction of the role of the state in society and an increased role of the individual and of the local community in their praxis.

Gandhi linked swaraj to swadeshi in which his theory of swaraj was articulated. In other words, if swaraj was foundational theory of Gandhi’s social and political thought, Swadeshi was the empirical

demonstration of those relevant social, economic and political steps for a society, different from what existed.

As evident, it was not only political liberation but also it can be a process of human emancipation. In his words 'mere withdrawal of the English is not independence'. It means the consciousness, the average villager that he is the maker of his own destiny [that] he is his own legislator through his own representatives" (Gandhi, 1975:469).

Political freedom is the second important characteristic of Swaraj. In the view of the Moderates, political freedom meant autonomy within the overall control of the British administration. Even the most militant of the Moderates like Surendra Nath Banerji, always supported constitutional means to secure political rights for Indians within the Constitutional; framework of British India. The extremists did not care much about methods and insisted on complete independence, which meant a complete withdrawal of the British government from India.

Economic freedom of the individual is the third of swaraj, given the exploitive nature of colonialism, poverty etc. For the Moderates, like Gokhale and Naroji, with the guarantee of constitutional autonomy to India, poverty was likely to disappear, because Britain, the emerging industrial power, was expected to develop India's productive forces through the introduction of modern science and technology and capitalist economic organization. Gokhale's view on South Africa carried greater weight, threw light on his personal knowledge of the Indians in South Africa, and he understood himself and could explain as to India what steps the mother country ought to adopt (Desai, 1928: 270).

For Gandhi, India's economic future lay in *Charka* (spinning wheel) and *khadi*. 'If India's villages are to have and prosper, the charka must become universal'. Viewing the importance of khadi, it connotes the begging the economic freedom and equality of all in the country. It means a determination to find all the necessities of life in India and that too through the labour and intellect of villagers, the formula is every village to produce all its necessities and in addition, for the requirement of the citizens (Desai 1959:12). Ritual civilization, argued Gandhi, is impossible without charkha and it implies revival of village crafts.

However, Gandhi was thoroughly convinced that industrialization, as it manifested in the West, was simply devastating for India. His alternative revolved around his focus for providing profitable employment to all those who are capable. Not only does industrialization undermine the foundation of India's village economy, it will also lead to passive or active exploitation of the villages as the problems of competition and marketing come in. (Gandhi, 1936, in 1975: 241). Critical of J. L Nehru 's passion for industrialization as the most viable way of instantly improving India's economy, he reiterated his position with characteristics fairness by saying that 'no amount of socialization can eradicate... the evils, inherent in industrialism' (Gandhi, 1949, in 1976, 29-30).

Fourth: self-rule is probably unique dimension of 'swaraj' indicating its qualitative difference with political freedom. As a concept, it denotes a process of removing the internal obstacles to freedom. Unlike the first three characteristics, where swaraj is conceptualized in a negative sense, self-rule as an important ingredient clearly indicates the importance of moral value which is relative to society.

Gandhian idea swaraj as self-rule seems to be based on the philosophical notion of 'advaita' which is 'etymologically the kingdom or order or dispensation of 'sva'. Self, myself (or) the truth that you and I are not other than one another (Ramchandra Gandhi, 1984:461).

Viewing Gandhian Swaraj, Fred Dallmayr (2000:111) opined that 'the self-rule of a larger community, that is, into a synonym for national demonstrative self-government or home rule'. Swaraj is closely linked with the idea of 'swadeshi' and 'concentration of indigenous' (material and spiritual) resources of development.

Gandhi's view on Swaraj is closely connected with democracy which is relevant in recent times. Gandhi places greatest emphasis on the individual making his own decisions in the light of his own reason rather than his being guided by majority decision as in the care of liberal democracy. Gandhi believed that it is not only the developing world which has to become independent of the developed world but the developed world also has to become independent of the developing world, He advocated the maximum degree of decentralization without which the existing international problems like violence, poverty,

representation and environmental deterioration cannot be solved.

### Conclusion

Gandhi was not a complete theorist. But he has theories. His arguments on contemporary social, economic and political issues were couched in liberal terms whereby individuals were privileged over the collectivity. He was critical of the discriminatory practices of caste and gender which hampered the governance of any ideal state. He desired that individual must move towards good life and well-being. Gandhi sought to fill in some gaps in our conceptualization of modernity. He did so by continually applying ethical standards to contemporary aspects and institutions.

For him, the modern tendency to define and judge human beings in terms of economic criteria 'reduces' (then) to means, and with such an outlook, talk about their dignity is futile (Tarchek, 2000). The striking feature of Gandhism was a seriously argued case against modernity that was believed to have unleashed practices embodying progress, reason and liberation while being critical of this assumption of appreciating modernity without qualification.

Gandhi believed that participation of people in local governance is necessary and that could never be ignored. For example, his idea of 'Panchayati Raj' remained a distant dream till very recently, but his arguments for people's participation in local government also consolidated movements for what is empirically suggested 'deepening democracy' in India. "Self-government depends entirely upon our own internal strength, upon our ability to fight against the heartiest odds indeed, self-government which does not require that continuous striving to gain it to sustain it, is not worth the name" (Kriplani, 1958: 139).

His critique, therefore, laid the foundation of a theoretically meaningful concept of democracy in a large polity with the view of inclusiveness in terms

of caste, class sex, creed etc. He had also cited the dangers of concentration of powers and the urgent need for its devolution through a process of people's participation.

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# India's Digital Diplomacy in Covid-19 ERA

Dr. Moinuddin Khan\*

*[The Digital Diplomacy though is not a nascent idea as it has been applied in the past; however, its leverages have come to full flow in global Covid-19 pandemic era. As international tour and travel came to a grinding halt and physical interaction became restricted, New Delhi has given a big push to its diplomatic business digitally with strategic partners as well as at multilateral forums and in advancing its health diplomacy with nations across the world. In between, New Delhi also tried to resolve its first major standoff with China over 50 years by using digital diplomacy. At this moment, it seems that virtual diplomacy is not just assisting the traditional diplomacy, but also playing a solo role in diplomatic front. By seeing this new development, one can say that the digital diplomacy is just not kicking and thriving but also meeting unprecedented challenges posed during worldwide pandemic. In this paper, the researcher has tried to look into Indian digital diplomacy initiatives and its engagements in advancing the national interests in world arena.]*

Covid-19 has impacted every aspects of life on planet earth, be it health, economy, polity or diplomacy. In a rapidly advancing 21st century globalized world, it was quite unimaginable till February 2020 that global movement will come to standstill for such a long time and uncertainty will loom large that no one can safely predict when unhindered flights will be restored among comity of nations. No one had imagined that flights across borders will stop overnight and visitors will be forced to live an obscure life in foreign land. Lives of millions of moving professionals and executives came to an abrupt halt. Diplomatic sojourns and holding summits became quite impossible. However, as the survival and managing state of affairs became difficult, human being found its ingenuity to surpass the mounting challenges. Be it business travel, tourism or intergovernmental visits, all have become matter of past and virtuous digital world is in full play and it has occupied high pedestal in human endeavor for now!

## **Idea of Digital Diplomacy**

Diplomacy is an instrument or channel through which a nation secures and optimizes its foreign policy objectives at bilateral level, multilateral and at international forum. It is a means to influence “the decisions and behaviour of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiation, and other

measures, short of war or violence”, informs the Encyclopedia Britannica. It also reminds that “diplomacy is the chief, but not the only, instrument of foreign policy”.<sup>1</sup> A representative of a nation pursues diplomacy, be it envoy, minister, head of government or head of state. With the invention of telegraph, telephone, establishment of hotline and finally internet age, diplomacy became quite convenient.

Digital diplomacy involves virtual engagements rather in person interaction with foreign nationals, government, entity or diaspora to achieve foreign policy goals. Besides engaging with foreign government officials, digital diplomacy provides an opportunity to influence public of foreign soil and attracting people of diaspora. In crisis situation, responding on e-mail, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp or other such user, foreign ministry not just respond with alacrity but also give a humane face of a nation, which generates goodwill in cyber world. Fergus Hanson defined digital diplomacy as foreign ministries carrying out “their jobs more effectively and efficiently” by using internet and new information communication technologies to help achieve diplomatic objectives.<sup>2</sup>

Functioning of foreign ministry at social media and digital public platforms makes it responsive as well as transparent. It cultivates in exchange of information and keeping tab on functioning of individual, entity or foreign government.

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The idea of digital diplomacy germinated with invention of Internet in 1983. It was no wonder that Allen C. Hansen discussed evolution of diplomacy in a computerized world in his books “Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age” (1984), though ‘the first fully functioning electronic digital computer was built in the United States in 1945.’<sup>3</sup>

### **Indian Digital Diplomacy**

In India, even though the Ministry of External Affairs’ Annual Report 2019-2020 does not contain the term Digital Diplomacy, it has been pursuing this practice since over a decade. The MEA first launched its website in 2003 and post its first tweet in 2010. It was initiated and led by Ambassador Navdeep Suri, then joint secretary and head of the newly-created public diplomacy division.<sup>4</sup> MEA’s first twitter handle was also created in 2010 under the username @IndianDiplomacy, which has 1.4 million followers. After it, another twitter account @MEAIndia, which has 2.1 million followers, was opened in 2011. The official Facebook page of the Ministry came into digital world in 2012. Now, more than 172 Indian missions and posts have verified Twitter and Facebook accounts<sup>5</sup>.

New Delhi’s diplomatic engagements has increased manifold at bilateral, regional and multilateral level during last decade. Earlier, it was mostly political engagement among nations or bilateral relations, but now economic ties demand often engagements even with business entities for investments. Considering the huge cost and logistic involved in the foreign visits of leaders across the world, this is a good alternative, if not a substitute. As foreign visits from the Foreign Minister to the President of India is high cost proposition, it is better to devise a new form of digital diplomacy. They are adopting digital tools for their interactions in day today life. It has led big boost to Digital Diplomacy. The National Informatics Centre, established in 1976 is giving a helping hand to the government in this endeavor<sup>6</sup>.

### **PM’s digital diplomacy**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has interacted with many heads of government or head of state, besides addressing at many multilateral virtual summits after COVID-19. He has used this opportunity to connect with world leaders digitally; held telephonic conversations with foreign leaders as well as conducted virtual summits, be it with Australian Prime

Minister or 20th India-European Union Summit. From 11<sup>th</sup> March to end of July this year, the Prime Minister held 70 interactions with foreign leaders and conducted virtual summits, addressed international conferences sitting in New Delhi.

On 11<sup>th</sup> March, Mr. Modi held his first virtual meeting during Covid-19 pandemic with Israeli leadership, followed by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on 12<sup>th</sup> March. Mr. Modi convened first Covid-19 related virtual SAARC summit on 15<sup>th</sup> March. He proposed setting up of the Covid -19 Emergency Fund for SAARC countries, based on voluntary contributions from all the countries, with India making an initial offering of 10 million US dollar<sup>7</sup>. Later, he addressed the Extraordinary G-20 Leaders’ Summit in Saudi Arabia via video link on March 26. The Summit was convened to discuss the challenges posed by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and to forge a global coordinated response. Earlier, Mr. Modi had a telephonic conversation with Saudi Crown Prince<sup>8</sup>.

It was a pleasant surprise for the Non-Aligned Movement leaders when Prime Minister Modi made his maiden appearance at the NAM virtual summit on 4<sup>th</sup> May. Addressing an online meeting of the NAM Contact Group, Mr. Modi said that some countries were fomenting terrorism in the midst of the global coronavirus pandemic. He also called for a more representative post-Covid-19 world order, as India has been demanding reform in the UN system but no great power is heeding to this since last several years.

Prime Minister Modi also addressed the virtual Global Vaccine Summit on 4<sup>th</sup> June hosted by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson in which over 50 countries - business leaders, UN agencies, civil society, government ministers, Heads of State and country leaders participated. India pledged 15 Million US Dollars to Gavi, the international vaccine alliance. He underlined the fact that India is also the World’s foremost producer of vaccines and that it is fortunate to contribute to the immunization of about 60 percent of the World’s children. On the same day,

Mr. Modi held the India-Australia first virtual summit with his Australian counterpart Scott Morrison focusing on the positive trajectory in bilateral relations on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020. As many as nine agreements were made including a Mutual Logistics Support Agreement

(MLSA) and issued a joint declaration on a “Shared Vision for Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.” Suhasini Haidar of the Hindu revealed that the ‘two leaders spoke for more than an hour over a video link, a first for a bilateral summit for India’.<sup>9</sup> In a lighter vein, both the leaders exchanged pleasantries on Samosa, Khichdi” and Litti-chokha. Mr. Morrison said he missed the “famous Modi hug” during the virtual summit. Similarly, there was no food and other such protocol to follow. On 10<sup>th</sup> June, Mr. Modi held talks with Japanese and Israeli counterparts and held discussions issues of mutual interests. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu telephoned Mr. Modi and expressed the solidarity of the Israeli people with the Indians as the latter deals with the coronavirus. Both the leaders ‘agreed on ways to increase and expand cooperation in various spheres’<sup>10</sup>.

The border standoff between India and China, which was brewing since mid-April this year, resulted into killing of 20 Indian soldiers on late evening and night of 15<sup>th</sup> June in Galwan Valley. It was first bloody border clash between the two neighbours since end of 1967 war. News agency ANI, which has quite good rapport with the present BJP establishment, quoting unnamed sources reported on 16<sup>th</sup> of night that China’s Vice Foreign Minister Luo Zhaohui and Indian Ambassador to China Vikram Misri met in Beijing.<sup>11</sup> Both the countries held the Commander level conference to diffuse the tension. External Affairs Minister Jaishankar held negotiations with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on 17<sup>th</sup> June.

The Economic Times quoting unnamed sources said “Russia played a low-key, but useful, role in reducing tensions after the 15<sup>th</sup> June episode”. It recalled that ahead of the RIC meet on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, intense negotiations through diplomatic and military channels led to the release of 10 Indian soldiers<sup>12</sup>. Though there have been more expectations with all these diplomatic engagements and commander level conference to resolve the issue amicably soon, the statement of Mr. Rajnath Singh made during his Ladakh visit that the “progress made in talks” between the two countries “should resolve the matter” but “I cannot guarantee” the extent to which it will be resolved”.<sup>13</sup>

Next big calendar digital event came on 15<sup>th</sup> July when Mr. Modi held summit with European Union leaders. However, the India-EU summit also shown

the limitations of digital diplomacy as no progress was made on a free trade deal that India and the European Union have been planning since 2007. Two days later, in virtual address to the United Nations’ Economic and Social Council on the topic of the ‘Multilateralism after Covid-19: What kind of UN do we need at the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary?’, Mr. Modi said only reformed multilateralism with a reformed United Nations at its centre can meet the aspirations of humanity.

Delivering the key note address at the India Ideas Summit on the occasion of 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the US-India Business Council (USIBC) on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, the Prime Minister underlined that New Delhi has garnered foreign investment more than 20 billion US dollar from April to and July this year. During the financial 2019-20 Indian economy secured 74 billion-dollar foreign investments. He recalled that there has never been a better time to invest in India. It is worth to point out no one can say with the certainty that Mr. Modi would have addressed these conferences in person, if the pandemic not had made such impact globally. However, one, who follows his communication preferences and knows his penchant for digital world, can certainly argue that he at least would have addressed issues digitally.

The Prime Minister held a video conference with the Heads of all of India’s Embassies and High Commissions worldwide on 30<sup>th</sup> March. This conference—the first such event for Indian Missions worldwide—was convened to discuss responses to the global Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>14</sup>

In between, the Prime Minister also held meetings with three techno giants of information technology—Bill Gates, the Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Google CEO Sundar Pichai; and IBM CEO Arvind Krishna.

### **Indian Medical diplomacy**

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on 14<sup>th</sup> May that India has supplied paracetamol and hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) to over 120 countries. He said that more than 40 of them (countries) received both the medicines as grant/free of charge. The Minister claimed that “We also tied the seat belts of over 3-4 billion people across the globe with the supply of these medicines to over 120 countries”.<sup>15</sup>

India Today reported on 22nd June that India supplied the HCQ tablets to 133 countries in the past two and half months. New Delhi is now trying to export even those medical items, for which she has been completely dependent on imports such as Personal Protective Equipment to Covid-19 testing kits. In days to come, India companies will export such items in big way. Medical tourism, which has been gaining momentum during last few decades, is reality now. The earning from this sector is not just filling the national exchequer but also enhancing Indian stature in comity of nations.

### Conclusion

No doubt physical diplomatic engagement with its own optics and vibes has special significance in international diplomacy and it is not going to lose most of its charm in foreseeable future but one should not lose the sight that digital diplomacy can be used any time anywhere and without much logistics and expenses, as the pandemic has proved it. It just not helps in neck of time intervention but also assists in quick decision as it is cheap and quick decision-making process. A perceptive journalist of *the Week*, Mandira Nayar noted that in India “the virtual has replaced the real. Diplomats have learnt to adapt to zero physical interaction to enhance cooperation”. “Virtual diplomacy will be the new normal in post Covid times”<sup>16</sup>, she has quoted a MEA official as saying. No doubt, Indian diplomacy has adopted digital diplomacy in a big way in critical phase of human history and a big stride has been made in promoting the national Indian interests in world arena.

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# Of Multilateralism and Future to Europe Recalibration

Honourable Donald J. Johnston\*

Is there any alternative to universal and pan-European multilateralism? For the purpose of my remarks I am interpreting ‘universal and pan-European multilateralism’ as moving forward with achieving more EU integration supported by institutions appropriate to a kind of federal structure in line with the thinking of the Spinelli Group. But it also raises the question of global free trade which I promoted as Secretary General of the OECD and continue to believe must be the world’s future in addressing poverty and opportunity, especially for the world’s developing countries. But it has to be managed in a way sensitive to the challenges of both.

In these brief comments I intend to offer my view on the answer to this fundamental question about the future of Europe. To begin, I would amend the question by adding the word “good” before “alternative”. There certainly are alternatives some of which could set Europe on a path back to a collection of independent sovereign states and undo the remarkable progress in building a secure European Union in the post WWII period.

Many years ago, when looking at the extraordinary work and vision of statesmen like Jean Monet trying to build a lasting and prosperous European Union, I came across a comment of British Historian H.A.L. Fisher in the preface to his 1936 book, *A History of Europe*. In part it read as follows: “[No] question [would be] more pertinent to the future welfare of the world than how the nations of Europe ... may best be combined into some stable organization for the pursuit of their common interests and the avoidance of strife.”

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Although we appreciate the Marshall Plan’s amazing contribution to the Europe of today, it contributed more to restoring Europe physically while providing humanitarian assistance. Of course, the OEEC which evolved into the OECD in 1961 did provide an important framework and mechanism for economic and social development which continues to this day.

Fisher’s vision of a strong, unified Europe remains very much work in progress and that work really began with Jean Monnet’s initiative to create the European Coal and Steel Commission. I will comment on that in a moment but I remain convinced that Fisher was right, and the great rebuilding of Europe and the EU after the Second World War must and will endure notwithstanding the barrage of criticisms from euroskeptics, now emboldened by the United Kingdom’s Brexit vote of June 2016. Admittedly my conviction is based on the EU having strong, visionary leadership, which has not yet fully materialized.

Think of this. Although Greece represents less than 3 per cent of the Euro zone economy, euroskeptics used its financial crisis as ammunition to predict its withdrawal from the eurozone and the possible unravelling of the entire EU. The Greeks rejected that option: there was no Grexit. Austrians also rejected right-wing populist nationalism in the 2016 Presidential election of Van der Bellen, a strong supporter of the EU.

The support for Brexit in the UK referendum was an unexpected shock for some, but it pleased others who wish to see the EU unravel and claim that the UK attitude reflects views held in other major European countries. I keep hearing and reading that the United Kingdom has rejected the EU, as if it were an overwhelming victory. Bolstered by misrepresentations and downright lies it was a very slim referendum victory but Brexiters will argue that it was validated by Boris Johnson’s subsequent margin of electoral victory.

There are also others, especially President Trump who appear to be hostile to the emerging global role that the European Union is likely to play as it completes its evolution to a unified international force.

This has become even more important as the United States under Trump becomes increasingly isolationist and opposed to international multilateralism constructed by visionaries over the past 75 years.

In a stunning commentary in *Foreign Affairs* (summer 2016), Professor Jakub Grygiel of the Catholic University of America, implies that the upside to the EU crisis will be a return to independent sovereign nation-states across Europe. Indeed, that would be an upside for American isolationists. It would remove from US competition the largest unified single market in history and reinstate the possibility of future wars on the continent that this great European experiment was designed to prevent – as it has.

Some of Grygiel's comments appear designed to create a false impression of the views of Europeans. Here is a cheerful observation to support his thesis: "a Europe of newly assertive nation-states would be preferable to the disjointed, ineffectual, and unpopular EU of today. There's good reason to believe that European countries would do a better job of checking Russia, managing the migrant crisis, and combating terrorism on their own than they have done under the auspices of the EU."

Really? What is that "good reason" that escaped the attention of the statesmen and nation builders like Jean Monnet in post-war Europe? Grygiel also says that the EU is ineffectual, which is true in some cases, as it is with many, if not most supranational bodies, including much of the United Nations (UN) activities. And what of the United States itself?

Sadly, the world is watching that formerly great republic floundering in the face of numerous serious challenges both social, economic, even racial, not even capable of effectively addressing the Covid-19 crisis through what is becoming a dysfunctional government under a Commander in Chief who proudly presents himself as a narcissistic ignorant bully.

And non-Europeans, especially Americans, systematically ignore the EU's successes. One good example being the collective research of 28 networked European countries that produce one-third of the world research's output – 34 per cent more than the United States and more than China. This was documented at the time of the Brexit debate in *New Scientist*. (June 2016). These are the kind of synergies that could be sacrificed should the EU dissolve, and it may already be compromised by the withdrawal of the UK which has much world first class research.

Hopefully the; United Kingdom will stay united and prosper in the post Brexit period. However, there is good reason for concern as the Financial Times Martin Wolfe wrote at the time (June 24,2016). He said: "David Cameron took a huge gamble and lost. The fear mongering and outright lies of Boris Johnson, Michael Gove, Nigel Farage, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* have won. The UK, Europe, the West and the world are damaged. The UK is diminished and seems likely soon to be divided. Europe has lost its second-biggest and most outward-looking power. The hinge between the EU and the English-speaking powers has been snapped. This is probably the most disastrous single event in British history since the Second World War. Yet the UK might not be the last country to suffer such an earthquake. Similar movements of the enraged exist elsewhere – most notably in the US and France. Britain has led the way over the cliff. Others might follow."

Will others follow the United Kingdom over the cliff? Alina Polyakova and Neil Fligstein, writing in the *International New York Times at the time of the Brexit vote* (July 2016), relied on polls that suggest that will not happen. They say, "Britain is not, and never has been, a typical member of the European Union, and in no country but Britain do populists and other euroskeptic forces have the 51 percent of votes needed to pull their countries from the union."

Obviously, those in the UK who wanted Brexit must have believed it is good for them and presumably for the United Kingdom, even if it means losing Scotland and perhaps Northern Ireland. The City of London will also suffer, but no one can estimate what the damage will be until all the terms of exiting are known.

Jacques Delors, who has dedicated much of his life to the European dream both in public office and after retirement through his Paris-based foundation, made the following observation in an interview in 2012 with the *Handelsblatt* newspaper: "If the British cannot support the trend towards more integration in Europe, we can nevertheless remain friends, but on a different basis. I could imagine a form such as a European economic area or a free-trade agreement."

That might be the happiest outcome in the wake of Brexit. The real beneficiaries of Brexit are the remaining EU members inspired by people of the experience and quality of Jacques Delors and members of the Spinelli Group. The latter founded in 2010 as a network of thousands of politicians, individuals, writers, and think tanks looking to revive the momentum toward a federalist structure for the EU."

In fact, the Brexit vote and Johnson's arrival as Prime Minister may have strengthened the resolve of many EU countries and prominent Europeans to accelerate the integration process in line with federalist thinking.

Obviously those having the foresight to realize the importance of greater integration and an emerging federalist model, such as the Spinelli Group, would be blocked by a United Kingdom, were it a member, to have reforms move in the opposite direction, consistent with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's famous Bruges speech in 1988 where she said,

"We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels. Certainly, we want to see Europe more united and with a greater sense of common purpose. But it must be in a way which preserves the different traditions, parliamentary powers and sense of national pride in one's own country; for these have been the source of Europe's vitality through the centuries."

This could hardly be seen as an endorsement of a federalist system of any kind, because decentralization, especially with the preservation of parliamentary powers, meaning full sovereignty, is incompatible with federalism. She could have added that the elements she wished to see preserved have also been the source of bloody European conflicts throughout the last millennium, including three wars between France and Germany in the 70 years between 1870 and 1939!

Consideration should be given to some steps that must be taken to realize the collective potential of the EU as a major global player, which it could never be if its members revert to sovereign nation-state status. Indeed, as other major countries grow in economic clout, it has been pointed out that not even Germany would be in a new G8. Only a united EU could have influence on the global stage.

Skeptics like Professor Grygiel, many of them American, seem blinded by the headlines and glare of current events, failing to place them in a broader historical context. Reviewing the remarkable evolution of Europe since the Second World War, I hope that the long-term success of Europe is inevitable. But as the great American judge Oliver Wendell Holmes once noted, "the mode by which the inevitable comes to pass is effort." European leadership must now make that effort. It is critical not only for Europe, but for the world today.

A strong, unified Europe is also important for the emergence of global multilateralism and the further evolution of globalization. Since the end of the Cold War we have been living in a world dominated by just one superpower: The United States. Fortunately, that superpower has been a very open market and largely, but not entirely, militarily non-aggressive. Sometimes referred to as the "importer of last resort," it continued to run current account deficits opposite many trading partners, especially China.

The American economy had enough strength and resilience to emerge slowly but with growing confidence from the global financial crisis of 2007–08. To become a companion economic locomotive, Europe must continue to open its markets, eliminate distorting trade subsidies, and undergo substantial structural reforms in labour, services, and manufacturing markets to stimulate European economic growth. I hope that the results of the Europe 2020 exercise and its follow up will help in that regard.

If that does not happen, the United States might use its economic muscle to focus increasingly on bilateral agreements that are becoming a serious impediment to global free trade.

If Europe had successfully moved to a more centralized and coherent federal model of government it could have reached the objectives adopted by the EU in 2000 (often referred to as the Lisbon Agenda), which was stated in the Lisbon Declaration (24 March 2000) as follows: "The Union has today set itself a new strategic goal for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion."

Well, that failed. A review of progress chaired by the former Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok reported in 2004 that the strategy had fallen well short of its objectives. The diagnosis of the problems of broad structural reform was good, but implementation of reforms was seriously lacking. Kok's review carried much credibility as he had overseen the continuation and completion of the major Dutch structural reforms originally introduced by his more conservative predecessor, Ruud Lubbers. Kok was also a regular participant in many international conferences, and during our discussions it was apparent to me that he was a talented consensus builder.

There is much to be said for such consensus builders, who enable intellectual and political opponents to

better understand competing views. Strengthening such relations between European political leaders will be important in bringing cohesion and stronger integration to the EU in line with the objectives of the Spinelli Group.

The Lisbon Declaration, now replaced by the Europe 2020 strategy, has five ambitious objectives related to employment, innovation, education, social inclusion, and climate/energy. The world would benefit greatly from Europe attaining those objectives.

Today only the EU and Japan might to come close to matching the United States in per capita GDP in the coming years. Demographic projections show Japan's population in serious decline, but an expanded EU which should evolve with Turkey as a major player, would have a much greater population and a much larger market than the United States.

The objectives listed above can only be realized when the peoples of Europe achieve a consensus on what kind of legal community they truly wish to be, and so far, progress to that end has been in fits and starts. The failure of the Lisbon Agenda, the rejection of the proposed constitution in both French and Dutch referenda, and now the exit of the United Kingdom underscore the difficulty of moving toward a flexible federal structure.

The use of the word *federal* seems to be an anathema for many Europeans. It is worth remembering that with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community inspired by Jean Monnet in 1951, the French government declared that it would "provide for the setting up of common foundations for economic development as a first step in the Federation of Europe."

Today there does not appear to be any coordinated and broad-based visionary leadership like that of Jean Monnet that led Europe out of the destruction and chaos of the Second World War.

Perhaps the Greek crisis, the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, and continuing economic performance under potential will awaken Europeans to the need for a truly federal-type European Union, with strong central government institutions where appropriate, accompanied by the protection of individual nations' precious linguistic and cultural identities. The genius of federalism is that it can accommodate great diversity in many areas.

What is the way forward? Where is the higher vision to achieve what is imaginable but not yet within reach? I suggest that the answer is to reconcile the various goals of Europeans, what I call the three Ms: minimizing frictions, maximizing synergies, and maintaining sovereignty.

Some believe they can achieve the first two without a dilution of sovereignty. That is not possible. From my Canadian experience with Quebec, however, I know that it is possible to minimize frictions and maximize synergies while maintaining cultures and national identities. In the case of Quebec, the French language, civil law, religion, and culture have been protected since the Quebec Act of 1774, which is one reason why separatist movements have never succeeded.

I see this kind of flexible federal structure, with necessary variations, in Europe's future. Loss of Europe's various languages and cultures would alter the character of the continent, moving it in the direction of the United States. The historical evolution and the nature of the "self-willed" peoples of Europe, as Fisher described them, make that path neither feasible nor desirable.

I finish these comments with a quote from a recent letter distributed by Thierry de Montbrial, the founder and head of the prestigious French public policy think tank IFRI: "But it stands to reason that we in Europe in particular should capitalise on building the Union in order to prove the viability of a third way between the United States, that great democracy which still claims to be a liberal one, and the People's Republic of China, which still claims to be communist. Most of us want to remain close to American democracy, but we refuse to become its vassals, notably as part of an Atlantic Alliance retrofitted to that end. There is an urgent need to clarify NATO's truly shared objectives. As for the European Union, despite all the whining in recent weeks, it continues to sail ahead in stormy seas, as it always has..."

If there is one part of the world where multilateralism is making headway despite countless hurdles, it is the European Union. There is still a very long way to go in Europe and, even more so, on a planetary scale. But history is moving in that direction, for the alternative is collective suicide. There is no doubt that global warming, pandemics and more or less intense wars are foreseeable in the world's near-term future. At least we can hope to limit the damage, which, after all, was the case during the Cold War. Let us be convinced of the European Union's responsibility in that regard." ◆◆

# The Bodo Movement for Roman Script (1975-2000)

D. L. Haokip\* & Redion Narzary\*\*

*[The Bodos Sahitya Sabha demanded Roman script based-Bodo language and literature in school textbooks and institutions. Many lost their lives, thousands were imprisoned while, women were raped and the police raided many more villagers. It also sowed the seeds of intra sectionalism, antagonism and patricidal killing and came to an end following the introduction of Devanagari scripts by the central Government and inclusion of Bodo language in the Eight Scheduled to the Constitution of India. This paper argued that the Roman script movement was a springboard for the Bodo language development and connects the regional and national aspects.]*

The origin of Bodo script issue goes back to the colonial period. Colonial administrators and Christian missionaries used the Roman script for writing the Bodo language and literature. Sidney Endle used Roman script in his work called “Outline Grammar of the Kachari language” in 1884, a language is spoken in the District of Darrang. Another work ‘The Kachari’ published in 1911 includes few Bodo folk-tales written in Roman script. Both the missionaries and colonial administrators used the modified Roman script to suit their writing (Bhattacharya, 1977: 14). Of 26 alphabets only 19 was used with some modification to meet the Bodo pronunciation like a, b, d, e, f, g, h, I, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u. Subsequently, the Roman script has been Bodonised by the Bodo writers in writing their language.

Subsequently, in 1904 the Assam Government introduced “Cacari Reader” as a textbook for teaching Bodo children in the school and until 1963 about 40 Lower Primary Schools used ‘Roman script’ based Bodo medium textbook. Though Roman script-based Bodo medium was introduced in many schools, a section of Bodos, who were educated using the Assamese-Bengali script were inclined to the scripts they have used in learning.

From 1920, the Bodo writers were largely under the influence of the Assamese script. Bodo writing in pure Bengali script came into existence in 1928 known as ‘Boroni Gudi Sibsa Arw Aroj’ by Modaram Brahma. The Bodo language was thus written in three scripts within the early part of the 20th century. The use of three scripts among the Bodos paved the way

for politicizing the movement and its failure. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha could not integrate the Bodo Society. To get rid of from the Assamese language dominance was not easy.

## ***The course of the Movement***

The Bodo elites now realized that the use of multiple scripts is detrimental to the growth of their language and literature and use of a single script for writing the Bodo language came to light. With this intention, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS hereafter) was formed in 1952. In the same year, there was BSS conference at the Basugaon on November 15. The delegates decided to use Assamese script in this conference and after a decade, the Bodo medium was introduced in 1963, replacing the ‘Cacari Reader’, a Roman script-based textbook. ‘Mokhojennai’ a Bodo Primer written in Assamese-Bengali script authored by Rajendra Lal Narzary of Shillong had replaced the Roman script. The debates went on. The people were under the influence of three scripts: Roman, Devanagari and the Bengali-Assamese.

As a result, both the Roman and Assamese scripts’ versions were used in the school education. Politically motivated and ethnic consciousness driven leadership argued that ‘the use of Assamese script in writing the Bodo language would not properly develop language’ and stated that it is a less developed script perhaps to justify their claims. In reality, it was an apprehension of linguistic domination on the Bodo language when the Assamese language was declared as the sole official language of Assam in 1960.

The Language policy of Assam government was perhaps, the major contributing factors for the Bodos to think separation from the Assamese language and script. Without any hesitation, it can be said that the Roman script movement originated partly in search

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of more developed script and preservation of Bodo identity from the Assamese dominance.

Having felt the Assamese dominance, the young Bodo educated at Shillong put pressure to the Sabha to discontinue Assamese script. After series of debates, the Sabha, formed the Bodo Script Sub-Committee in the 11th session, 1968. The committee's report clearly shows that the Bodo intellectual group sharply divided into two scripts: the Assamese script and the Roman script. This was so because the elderly Bodos educated in Assamese script wanted to continue it and argued that Assamese is a state language (Sonowal, 2013: 77). However, the Script Sub-Committee recommended the adoption of the Roman script with some consideration.

Accordingly, on February 24-26, 1970 session, the Sabha accepted the recommendation and appointed 'Implementation Sub-Committee' headed by Thaneswar Boro. The committee considered that the Roman Script is easy and quick to learn. One can write the Roman script without lifting one's hand which is not possible in Assamese, Bengali and Devanagari scripts. They did observe that Roman script is easy in mechanical manipulation i.e. typing, printing, sending message etc. Their aspiration towards the eradication of illiteracy or spreading education amongst the Bodo people was high. Their hope in linking up all the Bodos through Roman script was not secondary. This is because; the Roman script was more adjustable phonetically after using for more than a century.

The Roman script book 'Bithorai' was formally released on April the 22, 1974 for Class-I. But the Assam government refused to accept the Roman script for the Bodo language on the ground that it is a foreign script. The introduction of the Bodo Primer "Bithorai", without the prior approval of the authority concerned, now provoked the Assam Government. The state views the action of the BSS as revolutionary. To exhibit its dissatisfaction, the Government of Assam stopped the salaries of the Bodo medium primary school teachers where the Roman script was found introduced. Consequently, the salary and grants-in-aid of those teachers and schools stopped in June 1974. The standoff between the BSS and the Assam Government now sparked off the Roman script movement. The BSS and the Bodo people retaliated the action of the government in a large-scale manner.

### ***Mass Movement: Action and reaction***

To insist the government, the BSS launched a democratic movement which commanded wide support of the Bodo community. Their agitation programme included mass rally, class boycott, picketing and mass demonstration etc. led by 'Central Action Committee' of the Sabha. The Sabha demanded from the state government to withdraw with-holding salaries of the Bodo medium primary school teachers. In response to the call of the Sabha, the Bodo students were found abstaining from their classes and demonstrating in front of the Sub-division and District Offices.

Undoubtedly, the Roman script movement became a mass movement from September 12, 1974 (Basumatary, 2006:19). The agitations in the forms of bandhs, mass rally and picketing of schools and colleges continued till September 24, 1974, in the Bodo-dominated areas. Consequently, the movement turned violent and 16 Bodo agitators died in police firing across the state of Assam and loss of property in the form of arson and other types of violent attacks were reported (Roy, 1995:60). The Bodo villages under Sidli police station faced atrocities and were raided by the Assam Police and Central Para Military Forces (CPMF). Thousands of agitators and the Bodo villagers were arrested and imprisoned. All the jails of the Assam were overcrowded with the demonstrators of the movement.

It is told that several young Bodo girls were forcibly raped and money was taken by the CRPF on November in 19, 1974 (Mahesh Islary, 1994: 1). Police were given free hand to control the grim situation. In his work "Autonomy movement in Assam" P.S. Datta also noted excessive police atrocities, indiscriminate mass arrest and heavy torture during this time (Datta, 1993: 290). These incidents were taking place due to the Assam Government's poor response to Roman script demand and adamant stand of the Sabha.

In the meantime, the BSS called off the movement temporarily in response to the appeal made by the Bodo Ministers and MLAs. To resolve the imbroglio the Bodo Ministers, MLA and BSS delegates submitted a joint memorandum to the Government. Accordingly, the issue was discussed with the state Chief Minister, Sarat Chandra Sinha on September 24, 1974 but bore no fruits. As a result, the Bodo volunteers were again coming out in thousands and demonstrating in front of the Sub- Divisional and District head offices. The disturbances spread to Kokrajhar and Gossaigaon Township of the district

when about 15,000 tribal armed with lethal weapons demonstrated in front of the office of the Sub-Deputy Collectors and Block Development Offices”(See the Statesmen November 20, 1974).

At Tangla, Rowta and other adjoining areas the situation remained tense. At Rangia police resorted to lathi-charge (Dainik Asom, November 27, 1974). Thus, Roman script movement witnessed a violent form of movement. Police firing, killing, raids, and demonstration of the Bodo agitators marked the days.

Bijoy Kumar Daimary claims that the accounts of the Sabha contradict to the report made by the official agencies (Daimary, 1984: 213). The official agencies claim that the Bodo volunteers were equipped with lethal weapons. This contradicts the press statement of the Sabha on November 18, 1974. It claims that while 3000 Bodo volunteers demonstrated peacefully in front of the Sidli Sub-Deputy Collector Office, a band of Paramilitary personnel chased them and also opened fired at them.

Narrating the incident of Bijni which took place on November 19, 1974, the BSS president says that around 10,000, demonstrators gathered in front of the Sub-Deputy Collector’s office. The BSS also stated that picketers mostly womenfolk did not carry any lethal weapons except posters and placards. They further argued that if 10,000 (Ten thousand) volunteers were equipped with lethal weapons only seven CRPF would have not been injured. It appears that the security forces made blank fire on a crowd of ten thousand picketers resulting stamped in which seven CRPF personnel were injured, three volunteers were killed in police firing and more than ten were injured.

The movement was at its zenith. The Assam Government appealed the BSS for a negotiation. Talks between the Education Minister, Harendra Nath Talukdar and ten representatives of the Sabha were held on November 28, 1974, but without any positive result. Consequently, the adamant attitude of the Bodo people had invited the repressive measures of the Assam government. The State Government referred the issue to the Central Government. The Sabha fell between the unyielding attitudes of the State and Central Government. Ultimately, the Central Government succeeded in persuading the president of the Sabha at the negotiating table to accept Devanagari in place of Roman script.

To justify his action, the president said that this shift in their stand from the Roman to Devanagari script

had been taken in broader national perspective and a step forward for the integration of the Bodo people with the national mainstream. Acharya Vinoba Bhave, who advocated the spread of Devanagari script for all languages of India, had congratulated the BSS for its recognition (The Assam Tribune, 26 April 1975).

On April 12, 1975, at a joint meeting of the Central Action Committee (CAC) and the Central Working Committee (CWC) of the BSS including the All Bodo Student Union and the Bodo leaders held at Barama decided to adopt Devanagari script provided the central government implemented the same sincerely and wholeheartedly. In this meeting, the Sabha reserved the right to continue its original stand for the Roman script, if the government failed to implement it properly. In its Dhing session held on May 25-27, 1975, the Sabha made the Roman script as an associate script in journals and official purposes. The Roman script movement, though vigorous, was short-lived and ended in 1975 with acceptance of Devanagari Script on an experimental basis.

There was a mixed reaction on the decision to accept the Devanagari script. Not all the members of the Sabha and common people who had participated in the agitation accepted the Devanagari script. The Assam Sahitya Sabha (ASS) was alarmed of possible repercussion among the other section of tribal people in the state. ASS was very much apprehensive about the adoption of Devanagari script by the Bodos. They perceived it as a treat to state integrity (The Assam Tribune, April 22, 1975).

The Assamese medium educated Bodos still preferred Assamese and opposed Devanagari and Roman scripts. While those who preferred the Roman scripts continued to oppose both the Assamese and Devanagari script. In the meantime, the general public who risked their lives during the movement raised the voice of protest against the decision of the Sabha. They argued, that the Bodo students were unfamiliar to the Devanagari script, and for the second, will find much more difficult to master than the Assamese script. The BSS leaders Ramdas Basumatary and Thaneswar Boro considered it as a treachery. The Vice-President of the Sabha Bihuram Boro alleged its president Ramdas Basumatary for submission of an alternative memorandum to adopt Devanagari script for the Bodo language on April 9, 1975.

The Sabha’s president was accused by the vice-president for not making it clear about the decision to accept Devanagari script and the same was not properly conveyed to the members of the Sabha.

The reasons for accepting Devanagari script will remain confined to them. Ranendra Basumatari, the then chairman of the state integration council, Assam, observed that the decision of the Sabha to adopt Devanagari script for the Bodo language will create more problems than it seeks to solve (The Assam Tribune, April 24, 1975). A section of the Assamese intellectuals also spoke out against the acceptance of the Devanagari and advised to go back to the Assamese script. Other workers of the BSS also expressed their views, not to continue agitation. They objected it and came out with an argument to stop agitation stating ‘if we derail the line of action from our demand why should we continue agitation’ (Narzary, 1993: 30).

### ***Causes for the failure of the Roman script movement***

The movement for Roman script had victimized the Bodos. Looking at the systematic programmes and the intensity of the movement, lack of leadership appears to be the main cause behind its failure. It was reported that proposal submitted to the Prime Minister for Devanagari script was not prepared by the Central Executive Committee of the BSS and the two representatives were also not authorized to do so. This shows that BSS leadership was to get rid of the Assamese dominance. It is also true that BSS was placed in a disgraceful condition, with the state government unwilling to solve the issue. However, had there been able leadership, the BSS could have succeeded in their mission despite such situations.

It was reported that Ramdas Basumatary vehemently opposed Roman script in 1970 at the Mahakalguri session of the Sabha. and Bodo P.M. Dharanidhar Basumatary too had advocated for Devanagari script and asked Sarat Chandra Sinha to do so on March 2, 1974 (Daimary, 1984:214). The Bodos who favoured the Assamese script too had complicated the situation. The Bodo themselves split into two: The Roman and Assamese scripts. It was reported that the fear of losing jobs among the Bodo medium teacher and the fears of arrest by the Bodo leaders due to National Emergency in 1975 also clamped the speed of movement. It was also reported that the Assamese intellectuals who favoured the Bodos to continue in Assamese script persuaded the Government of Assam to deny the Roman script. Moreover, the unyielding attitude of the Assam Government mostly contributed to the failure of the Roman script movement of the Bodos.

Pitsing Konwar, an MLA, placed the Roman script issue in the Assam Assembly and urged the state government not to allow the Central Government to interfere in the matter of language which was a state subject (The Assam Tribune, 2 April 1975). Had the state government been bold and courageous to handle the situation, the interference of Central Government could have been avoided and either the Assamese or Roman script could be the chosen script for writing the Bodo language. This is because, among the Bodos Roman script, Devanagari and Assamese scripts were in use before the move.

### ***Reiteration of Bodo script issue***

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that the aspiration for the Roman script of the Bodo masses did not die altogether. There was every chance for a movement. However, the political situation of India became unfavourable for any agitation programme in the wake of declaration of ‘National Emergency’ from the last part of June 1975 up to last week of January 1977. In this situation, the issue of the Roman script remained dormant, and Bodo society faced confusion, feeling of betrayal, distrust, nervous, and economic depletion.

In the post-Emergency, the Bodo youth and student leaders who had not given up the idea of the Roman script got organized themselves under the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (Progressive) and United Tribal National Liberation Front (UTNLF). On the other hand, Hiteswar Saikia, the chief minister of Assam had recognised Roman script for the Mishing language on October 30, 1985. This recognition of the then Assam government had awakened the Bodo people to reiterate the demand of the Roman script.

In 1987, the ABSU submitted 92-Charter of Demand to the Governor of Assam under the leadership of Upendra Nath Brahma for the creation of a separate state of Bodoland, including the demand of the Roman script. The charter No.75 specifically mentioned the introduction of Roman script Bodo medium in West Bengal. Meantime ABSU signed the Bodo Accord which came to be known as “Bodoland Autonomous Council” (BAC) on February 20, 1993. With the formation of the BAC in 1993, the council authority decided to implement Roman script for the Bodo language and literature (Chaudhuri, 2004:63).

Under these circumstances, the issue of the Roman script was again raised during the thirty-two-delegates session of the Sabha at Tangla Conference in 1993. Once again, the Sabha session resolved to form “Roman Script Implementation Expert Committee”

to examine the previous records and to find out ways and means to re-implement it (see Presidential Address, 34th Session of the BSS 1995: 6). Reportedly it was found that 98% opinions were in favour of the implementation of Roman script in place of Devanagari script. Thereby the Sabha submitted a memorandum to H.D. Deve Gowda, the then PM of India, for recognition of Roman script (see Memorandum to H.D. Deve Gowda, 1997: 44). They also submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister and Governor of Assam respectively.

Subsequently, the then CM of Assam Prafulla Kumar Mahanta recognized Roman Script for Bodo language. The Governor of Assam through an ordinance granted Roman script for Bodo language vide order no. A (1) E.316/97/99 dated March 9, 1998. The Sabha decided to enforce the Roman script from the academic year of 1998.

In the Baganpara session, the Devanagari-background-educated Bodo students and a section of Bodo intellectuals appealed to the Sabha to switch over from the Roman script. The Sabha accepted their argument and tried to resolve the issue through a seminar that would explore the feasibility of Roman, Assamese and Devanagari script. The seminars were concluded in favour of the Roman script. But the Sabha could not take the final decision based on seminar report and invited opinion from the ABSU (The Assam Tribune, February 22, 2000). The sturdy decision of the Sabha became a gloomy precedent in the history of the Bodo script movement.

Finally, they decided to continue Devanagari script on the suggestion of the ABSU. The annual conference of the Sabha held during February 25-27, 2000 at Simborgami Mainao Nwgr Fwthar, Kokrajhar resolved to continue Devanagari Script (see Bodo Sahitya Sabha Ni Jarimin, Kokrajhar: 2016:542). Bineswar Brahma, president of the Sabha declared that the script issue of the Bodos had been unanimously resolved and no further debate on this issue will be admitted. He also said that the Bodo cannot afford to change to a new script now (see Mungklong Bineswar Brahma's deeds and philosophy, 2003:161).

Whereas, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) which asked Bineswar Brahma to accept Roman script for the Bodo language in a meeting held at Shillong on May 30, 1999 (Sonowal, 2013:91-92) was shot dead on August 19, 2000. They could not come to consensus on the move to continue the Devanagari script by the interference of ABSU and

BLTF (Ram Baro, 2007: 41). But the killing of Bineswar Brahma cannot be justified by such means and the incident was widely protested. Patricidal killing, suspicion and confusion was an order of the day. Sailen Debnath observed that the acceptance of Devanagari script was politically motivated and confined to political purposes (Debnath, 2010:89). Hence, it can be observed that the Roman script issue was turned into a political issue rather than of academic interest.

### *Impact of the Script Movement*

The Roman script movement had a lasting impact on society. All over the state of Assam, there was a massive police operation in all the Bodo-dominated areas. Untold miseries and loss of properties were common. Some Bodos were injured and remained handicapped for the rest of their life. Many prominent Bodo leaders of the movement were reported joining underground to evade repressive police actions. The state forces arrested many of the BSS, ABSU and the PTCA leaders and put them behind the bars. A reign of terror was let loose by the state Home Minister, Hiteswar Saikia and much more lives were lost in the police firings (Narzary, 2011: 82). The movement that had begun as a peaceful democratic and non-violent yet became violent.

Perhaps, the agitators were compelled to think that might and violence were better options to achieve desired goals (Daimary, 2009:374). The movement for Roman script and its reaction (anti-Roman script attitudes) during the movement had widened the gulf in Assamese-Bodo relationship. The consciousness for identity grew more and more and the idea of separating from the Assamese mainstream became more acute. The younger sections were politically-oriented for a separate identity. It also stopped the entry of Bodo into the lower ranks of the Hindu caste system (Mittal and Sharma, 1998:322-323).

On the other hand, the stagnation of the development of Bodo literature is an important impact of the movement. The older intellectuals and writers who accessed their education in the Assamese script had no command over Devanagari script. Many options are thrown open to the Bodo writers. They could publish either in Assamese, Bengali, Devanagari or Roman (Basumatary, 2013:97). One of the purposes of writing was indeed the promotion of language and scripts. Their literary creativity, taste and enthusiasm had to remain dormant to many of them. Nevertheless, an important aspect of the movement can be seen in terms of Bodo ethnic consciousness,

particularly among youngsters and students. One can see a sort of renaissance or cultural upheaval in terms of creative writings, literature, poetry and cultural research. Delving into the history of the Bodo people was not uncommon (for detail sees Baruah, 1999:185).

### Conclusion

Structurally, it was a well-organized one. The whole Bodo community had participated in the movement. Though some individuals and agency colours religions, it was a concerted effort from all sections of the Bodo society and viewing from the religious point of view only will be unfair. It was a joint movement irrespective of religious faith they belonged to. The nature and composition of the protestors show that it was a socio-cultural expression of the Bodos who felt insecure against the Assamese chauvinism. The democratic style of agitation led by the BSS turned into violence when the government deployed the police and Para-military to subdue the movement. Many Bodos were arrested. Women were raped and 16 volunteers lost their lives.

Disturbances, suspicion, confusion and patricidal killing peeped into the Bodo society. However, the lack of committed leadership among Bodos, persistent opposition from Assamese intellectuals, and the adamant attitude of government were the primary reasons for its failure. In this regard, Sanjib Baruah's expression is very logical. He said, 'the Bodo leaders admitted that Assamese script is easier to use than the Devanagari script, but they could not swallow their pride as the movement was basically against the Assamese script. They accepted Devanagari script to keep the distinct Bodo identity by separating from the Assamese and to sustain their own culture within the framework of national cultural integration policy of India'.

The movement aroused Bodo ethnic consciousness, among the younger generation and motivated them politically to support demand for a separate political setup. The long agitation spearheaded by the BSS could not integrate the common people to use a single script but induced them to demand more political autonomy and scripts' issue remained the same as before. The Roman script movement failed but Bodo language is perhaps, more secured. It was included into the eight scheduled to the Constitution of India.

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## China's Intellectual Development in Modern Times

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*[Modernity arrived in China, as in other parts of the world, at its own time and pace, against the backdrop of China's very own indigenous social, political and cultural conditions. Yet, modern China, owing to its own distinctive traits, inherited elements from its distant ancient past. This study proceeds from an understanding that modernity is fluid by nature, and in turn determines the evolved character of any particular geo-political, socio-cultural space, with its general populace at any given point of time. The study also underscores the fact that modernity can neither be perceived, nor thus treated, as an insulated concept, both in theory and practice, fixed within specific axes of space and time. The research paper here proposes that contemporary China has been shaped closely by its systems of thought, some indigenous and traditional, while others imported, most of which fundamentally from the time of their origin in late antiquity, through the course of several millennia have metamorphosed through continued responses and reactions to feature as their present selves. The aim of this study is to retrace the trajectory of China's intellectual development through the modern and contemporary times, and the prime objective here remains to be the mapping of conflicts and contradictions that might have risen at certain crucial junctures.]*

With the overthrowing of the three thousand year-long imperial dynastic rule, marked by the collapse of the last ruling Qing dynasty (1644-1911, and the founding of the Republic of China in 1911, modern Chinese society stood at the threshold of a defining moment in the intellectual history of China, wherein the intelligentsia, standing in direct opposition to the twin evils of foreign imperialism and domestic feudalism, responded to their inner call for national salvation, and unanimously decided to overthrow what appeared as decadent remnants of a once rich and prosperous national culture.

Against the political backdrop of the First World War (1914-1918), followed by the success of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution (1917) and the signing of the humiliating Treaty of Versailles (1919), the Chinese intellectual space was already found reverberating with voices of dissent, demanding a major overhaul of the existing Chinese political, social and cultural machinery. Philosophers like Tu Weiming have attributed the rising fervour of nationalism to the

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unprecedented exogenous forces that were threatening to reduce China to a mere geographic expression, and thus nationalism, in his opinion, emerged as the strongest Chinese revolutionary ideology of the twentieth century. Motivated by the desire to "save the nation" (*jiuguo*), passionate patriotic sentiments were seen to capture the hearts of the working class people, the military, the peasantry, and the merchants alike (Tu 1991; vii).

Political ideals of equality, liberty, fraternity were gradually making inroads into the modern Chinese system of thought, as rapidly as were the political and economic theories of Marxism and Leninism. Intellectuals unanimously agreed upon the urgent need to uproot the age old Chinese traditional Confucian ideological foundation, and to weed out all feudal elements both intimately and distantly related to it. The New Culture Movement of 1915 and the Literary Revolution of 1917 cast the first blow on China's traditional culture by advocating the promotion of vernacular language up against classical Chinese language, demanding an end to the patriarchal family system in favour of individualism and women's liberation, projecting China as a modern nation rather

than a Confucian Middle Kingdom, and highlighting the values of democracy and equality as corner stones for a newly emerging Chinese political and social order.

Following this, within a span of another two years arrived the first large scale intellectual movement of modern China, the May Fourth Movement (*wusi yundong*) of 1919 (4 May). Although emerging out of a political crisis, primarily triggered by the cowardly act of Chinese representatives at the Paris Peace Conference, willing to transfer German rights over Chinese territory in Shandong to Japan, the effects of the mass movement spilled over and touched upon every possible aspect of engagement and negotiation in the national life of modern China, ranging from the socio-cultural realm through the political and economic landscape to the literary domain.

Amidst cries of solidarity, the movement emerged amidst the university students and professors of Peking University, and eventually spread to other cities like Shanghai, Nanjing and Tianjin (Chen, 2011: 13) amongst the common people from all walks of life. It is important to note here that the Chinese intelligentsia (*zhishi jieji*) during this early twentieth century was a rather new born group, comprising of educated elites of considerable social standing, who consciously involved themselves in the political affairs of the country, and envisioned to reorient the existing social order in a way they thought proper.

Not only was there activism in the intellectual scene responsible for effecting a massive social, political and cultural change of unprecedented scale, but it equally contributed to the complex process of state formation in twentieth century China (Rahav, 2015: 2) There has been, till date, intense academic research on the inner dynamics of the making of this movement, resulting in some scholars calling it a mass movement (Vera Schwarcz, 1986), while others resting their case in favour of perceiving it as a popular movement (Joseph T. Chen, 1971).

The chief target of intellectual criticism during the May Fourth Era was Confucianism (*rujia*), the foundational ideological framework upon which rested traditional Chinese civilizational ethics, and one which bore distinctive traits of feudal tendencies, ingrained deep within the Chinese psyche, and virtually visible through the Chinese feudal habits of the mind. In the literary front, writers of the May Fourth era, like Lu Xun, Ba Jin, Mao Dun and Lao she with a vision of

mass mobilization and an objective of mass awakening since the New Culture movement of 1915 and 1917, poured out their literary talent in convincing the masses for the need of a radical transformation through their innovative writings.

In 1942, Mao Zedong, then the emerging leader of the Chinese Communist Revolution in his speech at Yan'an, a revolutionary communist base in central China, was seen and heard of politically motivating the cause of literary creation. This was a time when intellectual capacity was intentionally being equated with political consciousness, when personal creative traits of artists and writers were being forcibly subordinated to the political aims of the Chinese Communist Party, and when Mao Zedong's dicta on art and letters were demanding of artists and writers to take up responsibility and accountability to assure success of the socialist construction through a communist revolution under his leadership.

Sinologist T. A. Hsia, in his *History of Modern Chinese Fiction, 1917-1957*, maintains that after the Yan'an speech, fault lines did appear within the Chinese Marxist circle (Hsia, year: 311-312) and that not all writers were willing to comply to Mao Zedong's orders. In his opinion, the Yan'an talks became the basis of a harsh literary policy, and that the freedom of intellectuals was curbed like never before. For Merle Goldman, the Chinese Communist Party's attitude towards literature around the Yan'an years was correlated with the parallel development of its power.

### **Era of Ideological Control: 1949-1976**

The new China born in 1949, built upon the success of the Mao Zedong-led communist revolution, was an extraordinary blend of ancient China and contemporary Marxism, a complex feature that occupied the heart of this enigmatic state (Salisbury, 1992: 4). This new China was supposed to be a complete new and advanced version of a communist state, based upon socialist ideals that had purposefully broken its former linkages with anything related to its cultural and political past, and yet unique to the ground reality of the time and space concerned.

A war-torn economy, an unstable social structure, and a yet-to-be set up political framework gave this new China a slow start, despite the grandiose celebration at the Gate of Heavenly Peace at Tiananmen on 1 October, 1949 with the proclamation of the founding of the People's Republic of China

and the cheering of hundreds and thousands of Chinese people, 'Long live the People's Republic' (*wan sui, wan sui*). The series of political strategies that were adopted thereafter, including China's military intervention in the Korean War (1950) and China's annexation of Tibet (1951), or for that matter economic policies, including the land reform and collectivization of agriculture or the later day communization were all the handiwork of one person, the supreme leader of the Communist Party of China and the Head of the Chinese State, Chairman Mao Zedong.

There was hardly any discernible sign of unanimous participation of party members in political discussion and deliberation, and even much less of a chance of disobedience and dissent by intellectuals with regard to the policies that were being undertaken. What appeared to be the first possible occasion for intellectual engagement in the post liberation period, revolving around Mao Zedong's call for open criticism of the party and its policies by its own people during the Hundred Flowers Campaign (*bai hua qi fang, bai jia zheng ming*) of 1956 was crushed with an iron fist following the launch of a brutal anti-rightist campaign in 1957, witnessing a mass scale crackdown on intellectuals. All voices of dissent, thereafter, continued to be silenced for decades to come.

Two catastrophic incidents during the reign of Chairman Mao Zedong are known to stand out as classic examples of his authoritarian dictatorship, and as witness to large scale suppression of intellectual activity in contemporary China; the first, being the Great Leap Forward (1958), which due to Mao Zedong's unpractical ambition to surpass Britain's steel production in fifteen years converted rural farm houses into backyard steel smelting furnaces, resulting in the world's worst man made famine, and the second, being the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) which witnessed the indiscriminate torture and mass executions of hundreds and thousands of intellectuals, party cadres, writers, painters, administrative officers, government officials, most of who were perceived as potential threat to Mao Zedong's unchallenged leadership.

### **Phase of China's Intellectual Rejuvenation: 1978-2019**

With the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1977, there dawned a new phase upon the history of contemporary China.

The Mao cult which had developed around his charismatic persona was too strong to be demolished, or forgotten, or overlooked. However, there was widespread acknowledgement amongst almost all of the Chinese Communist Party members that grave wrongs had been done against China's own peoples, against her very own intellectuals, against her own thinkers. Post 1977, a potential vacuum was created within the emotional, psychological and intellectual space of China's common populace.

With the ushering in of a new era of openness at the turn of the new millennium, marked by gradual and continuous seeping in of the influences of globalization and modernization, and orthodox Marxist ideology receding to the background, post-Mao China's common masses were found seeking refuge in the country's own indigenous schools and systems of philosophy in order to address their emotional and psychological needs (Roy, 2019: 71).

**John Makeham in his *New Confucianism: A Critical Examination*** attests to the revival of Confucianism in contemporary China, both as a cultural phenomenon and also as a philosophical movement. Tze Ki Hon on the other hand, is of the opinion that Confucianism has been an indispensable cultural force operative during China's transition into the twenty first century. He also calls it a benign cultural phenomenon that marked the end of iconoclasm and revolutionary ethos, which previously dominated the Chinese cultural field since the 1920s (Tse-Ki-Hon, 2009: 531).

As a matter of fact, even the Chinese Communist leadership, post 1980s, have been seen to be popularizing Confucianism and Confucian studies in order to address the issue of a proposed homogeneous Chinese national identity amongst its diverse ethnic groups of citizens. Song Xianlin views the revival of Confucianism as nothing short of a 'cultural craze' (*wenhua re*) with an initiative to redefine China's cultural territory under the influence of freshly imported 'isms' which eventually crystallized into the 'national learning craze' (*guoxue re*) (Song, 2003: 81; Peng, 2010: 228).

Whether it be in the curriculum of Chinese higher education system or within the premises of corporate business houses or hospitality management sectors, the Confucian Classics have begun to exhibit their growing relevance. Owing to the fact that Confucian ethics were foundational to the maintenance of complex social equations and human relations at all

levels of society, adherence to Confucian values in contemporary China is now seen to keep alive the spirit of filial piety amongst the young generation for their parents and elders in family, promote benevolence and compassion for other members of society, and ensure worker loyalty and corporate responsibility, all of these being essential features of a harmonious society.

### Epilogue

New millennium China today does not talk about revolution, nor does it engage in class struggle. New millennium China believes in building harmonious social relations, emphasizes upon strengthening economic ties with the rest of the world, strives to help the rural poor and alleviate poverty, and envisions to promote stability and long-lasting national peace (Xi, 397). Despite strict and uncompromising adherence to traditional Marxist ideology in governing the Chinese Communist Party and the present Chinese Communist State, and upgrading it to suit the realities of the modern times (Xi, 69), the current generation of Chinese leadership acknowledges the fact that political cause cannot and should not engulf individual intellectual pursuits, should not stifle individual creative imagination, as forcible detachment of its citizens from traditional Chinese social values could prove detrimental to their psychological health and emotional wellbeing.

From the time since this demarcation between political ideology on the one hand, and social and familial ethics, and philosophical pursuit on the other hand, has been laid down with clarity, conflicts and contradictions have noticeably reduced, and frictions in contemporary Chinese society have been less acute. In 2020, with Star Bucks and McDonalds lining up its central market square, and old-style Chinese tea houses dotting the *hutongs* of the old city complex, the Chinese capital Beijing, exhibits its own emerging image of modernity, one which has been created through its living historical experiences.

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# Women in Crime and Their Family Environment

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*[Crime among women is growing fast all over the world in recent times. Women also take part in criminal activities like their counterparts. In this research paper a humble attempt is made to understand the psyche of the women criminals and their family environment. A close observation is made on the basis of their family backgrounds- social, economic and educational. It is found that there is no direct connection of the crimes to their childhood days. Most of them have enjoyed a cordial, carefree and happy life in their childhood. But the striking point is that the women who belong to the nuclear families, they are more vulnerable in comparison to the women belonging to the joint families. On the other hand, it is found that due to lack of education most of them have failed to live a happy family life. It is also pertinent to say that they cannot prosper economically due to lack of education. As a result of it they resort petty crimes to brutal crimes because of utter despaired, anguish and so on.]*

Crime among women is increasing faster in most countries though it constitutes only a small portion of the total number of crimes recorded. All over the world until recently, women were perhaps seen more as victims than perpetrators of crime. But the entire scenario is now getting changed and female criminality has reached an alarming proportion. More or less equal or near total participation of women with men in walks of life and the resultant changes in the economic circumstances have resulted in a new dimension of female criminality (Crime and Criminology, Vol-I, Shah. G. Chap-24, P- 203).

Regarding female criminality a critic (Ahuja 2000:133) has this to say "...study of female criminality was more or less neglected up to the 50's of last century. It was only in the late 60's and early 70's that the need for a new perspective for understanding women's deviant behaviour and theorizing about their criminal acts was realized". In India, the first research on women crime was undertaken in 1967-68 and a book in 1969 was published titled "Female Offenders in India" presenting a new theoretical paradigm on the causation of female crime. Gradually newer studies came to be undertaken in this field.

## **Significance of the study**

Women are indispensable in the development process of any society. The development of society is complementary to the progress of women in that society. When the women become involved in crime, the development of the society will severely suffer.

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In recent years, the involvement of women in crime has increased manifold. In this connection it becomes pertinent to examine the possible causes behind their involvement in crime; the socio-economic background to which they belong; and also, the types of crime they commit. So far, only limited studies have been conducted on women criminality in the context of Assam. Therefore, it is worthwhile to undertake the present study which is expected to throw more light on this particular problem of women criminality and their family conditions.

The family is the first important primary group in which an individual begins his or her life. Family influences on every human being as it is the basic agent of socialization. Attitudes to one's own life, to group in which one interacts and to the society at large are basically formed in the family. In the formative stage of a child the environment of family at home and activities in the family life play a vital role. Thus, childhood experiences and acquired qualities shape the organized life of an individual.

Automatically family background becomes closely attached to criminal behavior as well of individual for which the criminological study gains impetus. In an environment conducive to criminal activity, an individual is vulnerable to developing a criminal psyche. Similarly, children brought up and trained in a crime friendly ambience may easily get attracted to crimes. The role of the family in the inculcation of criminal behavior has been the area of exploration and investigation since the beginning of empirical study of criminology. Not to speak of the remote

past, even in the recent past quite a number of seminal studies have revealed beyond doubt that the family and its internal environment have a profound bearing upon criminal behavior.

These prominent criminological studies, which include those of Lowell (1950), Heely (1951), Lander (1954), Rose (1954) and Shukla (1979) revealed that troubled family environments breed criminal psyche. Most of the criminals were found to hail from unhealthy, disturbed families and their day to day lives were marred by frequent internal tensions. In 1960 another seminal study was conducted by Abrahamsen to critique the role of family tension in criminal behavior. Following his findings, he asserted that constant family tension might lead to serious emotional disorders, which might well culminate in serious crimes. The present study took cognizance of family tensions as a possible stimulant of criminal behavior.

### **Objective of the Study**

The main objective of the present study is to ascertain the familial environment and socio-economic background of the women criminals. Here emphasis has been to understand the psyche of the women criminals and its impact on their families in particular and society in general.

### **Design of the study**

It has been mentioned earlier that the one of the main objectives of the present empirical study is to explore the typology and nature and also the propelling forces which have contributed to committing different types of crime by women. Accordingly, an exploratory type of research design was adopted for the study. This type of research design requires a systematic procedure of collecting primary data and depends upon official sources for secondary data.

### **Sources of Data**

Both primary and secondary data have been used in the present study. As there is constraint in the collection of secondary data, more input from primary data is used. The primary data were collected from the convicted women criminals lodged in the seven prominent districts of Upper Assam. Statistical hand books of Government of Assam, Economic Survey of Assam, Govt of Assam, Statistical Abstract; Assam were used for collecting secondary data. (during the period of study)

### **Technique of data collection**

For the purpose of collecting the primary data a set of structured interview schedule were prepared. Questions were asked keeping in view the objectives of the present study. Interview schedule was prepared with the combination of both structured and open-ended questions and arranged under following heads-

- a) Personal background of the respondents.
- b) Social background of the respondents.
- c) Educational background of the respondents.
- d) Economic background of the respondents.
- e) Nature of offence committed in past and present.

### **Childhood experiences and crime**

An attempt has been made to discover the role of childhood experiences in inculcation of criminal psyche as proved in many important criminological studies, it also brought under scrutiny the formative experiences of the childhood in the family as well as friends and associates of the respondents to see if their childhood experiences had any role in moulding any criminal temperament. But no remarkable evidence had been found to attribute their criminal psyche to their childhood experiences. Majority of the respondents disclosed that they had a trouble-free, easy-going and smooth-sailing childhood and only 4.37 percent had a quarrelsome experience in their childhood. This implies that their criminal temperament was surely the outcome of their experiences and specific situations that they encountered in their mature years.

### **Nature of family and typology of crime**

During the present study family structure of the respondents was divided into two types of family structures- joint and nuclear. Furthermore, in case of married, widow and divorcees, their husbands' family structures were also studied. Parental family structures of the entire respondent were observed and it was found that women convict that belonged to nuclear families were involved in almost all categories of crime. 52.50 percent convicts who were sentenced for murder belonged to nuclear families. The sizable section of the respondents i.e. 8.12 percent out of total respondents who were convicted of theft were also from the nuclear families.

Though it is believed that the family heads controlled their family structure, yet the study reveals that 16.87

percent were convicted of murder that belonged to joint family which is not scanty in number. It also becomes pertinent that the respondents from nuclear families were greater in number than those from joint families. The reason behind this fact may be the nuclear family lacks control and supervision over its members than in case of joint families.

### **Respondent's position in the family**

Every individual deserves a position or status in his or her own family which in turn builds his or her self-esteem and self-confidence with a solid identity. It is true that the status of women is gradually changing in our society after the awareness of women empowerment and equal work participation. Though the dominance of women as hegemony is prevalent in most parts of our Indian society yet in modern times, a good number of women are in a position to assert their identity not only by holding high positions but also by taking active part in decision making.

Almost in all fields of the society women are playing vital roles. But still women empowerment is a topic of hot debate. In this present empirical study on women criminality, these issues concerning women criminal vis. a vis. their positions were focused on. It was attempted to learn if the respondents were gaining prestigious freedom of decision making in their respective families. The findings are substantial. The major part i.e. 56.25 percent respondents were getting partial freedom in decision making and 25 percent did not enjoy freedom at all in their families. Only 18.75 percent respondents had full freedom as they recalled. Therefore, it can be asserted that the greater are the suppression and oppression in the family on women the greater is the possibility of involvement in criminal activity.

### **Familial relationship of the respondents**

A well contrived initiative is taken to know whether the respondents have close-knit or emotional bonds with the family members to testify hypothesis. In the present study respondents were asked whether they had cordial relations with their family members or not. The attempt was to have a clear-cut picture of the issue. Family relation was judged in four yardsticks—very cordial, cordial, indifferent and unhappy. The findings were remarkable. It was found that petty 3.12 percent respondents had maintained very cordial relationship and 16.25 percent had

maintained cordial relationship with their family members. It is interesting that 34.37 percent were indifferent in familial relationship, and 46.25 percent had their unhappy relations with their kith and kin.

It indicates that most of the respondents come from disorganized families and family disorganization leads to criminality. It proves the authenticity of the important hypothesis of the present study. The crime rate, especially women crime rate varied directly to dysfunctional family situations. Family feuds, troubled homes, dysfunctional family relationships induced causation of crimes.

### **Summary and findings of the study**

The family is always looked upon as a crucial factor of causation of crime in any criminological study. When it refers to female criminality the family assumes still more significant primacy for the fact that the women are traditionally synonymous with the family with their conventionally associated peculiarities such as rearing children, emotional attachment with the family members, preparing food and other physical and mental comforts and imparting a sense of security. While the man generally assumes the role of a provider in a conventional family set up and procurer of livelihood, the women on the other hand turns out to be the upholder of family values. Many remarkable criminological studies have already given precedence to the family as a major factor in the causation of crime and come up with enlightening results.

In this empirical study, no remarkable evidence had been found to attribute their criminal psyche to their childhood experiences. It ended up by discovering another startling fact that almost 83.75 percent of the respondents disclosed that they had a trouble free, easy going and smooth-sailing childhood. They had maintained cordial and caring relationship with their family members. 11.88 percent had indifferent nature of relations in their past. 50 percent of the respondents have cordial relationship with the family members in their childhood.

Negligibly only 4.37 percent had a quarrelsome experience in their childhood. This is a finding which is somewhat startling in that it is not in concordance with the established criminological theory that traumatic and disturbing childhood experiences and not normal and cordial childhood experiences

contribute to criminal psyche. 76.25 percent came from nuclear family structure and rest 23.75 percent from joint family structure. From the evidence of the present study it is seen that the nuclear family has certain direct or indirect bearing in relation to involvement of women in crime. It may be because the nuclear family lacks better control and supervision over its members than in case of joint families. It is however worth mentionable that even the joint family structure is susceptible to criminality as it is evident from the findings. It drives another popular psyche home that the joint family structure too lacks of management of better discipline, monitoring and supervision. It has been found that there is an indelible link between problems in marital life and criminal behavior among women.

In quite a number of cases, criminal motives were generated by lapses in marital life such as-conjugal disturbance, mental and physical atrocities in husband's house, extra-marital affairs, dowry claims, economic insecurity etc. Thus, the marriage and disturbances in its subsequent eventualities have a lot to do with women criminality. More or less the same pattern can be traced among the women criminals belonging to the socio-economically and educationally backward tea garden communities. Lack of proper parental control and guidance gave rise to an internal environment of a misconceived sense of freedom that provoked them to get involve in various types of criminal activities.

Domestic quarrels emerged as a major stimulant of criminal psyche in the present study. It was found that domestic quarrels were the major contributing factor for the involvement in criminal activities among women. 69 per cent of the total respondents were found to have committed crime due to domestic quarrels. In terms of causation behind the crimes committed by the women in the present study, it has come into focus that crimes were committed due to persistent conflicts developed out of husbands and in-laws, gross negligence and ill-treatment to them. The internal dynamics of a disturbed family set up were found to be instrumental in the causation of women criminality.

The freedom of decision-making in the family affairs in case of the women criminals in question shows an interesting picture while the role of freedom or

lack of it among the woman criminals could not be determined with certainty. However, the patterns that have emerged are worth mentionable in the close study. Only a few women get their right to exercise their freedom in decision making in their house hold chores. While childhood experiences of most of the women convicts were found to be quite normal and smooth sailing, hardly contributing to development of any criminal psyche, their experiences as grownups with the fellow family members are not normal and smooth sailing. Most of them had troubled dealing with their closed people within the family leading to upsetting and unsettling of their minds. In this study only 3.12 percent respondents were found who had very cordial relationship among the family members. 46.25 percent of respondents were unhappy with their kith and kin.

The present study reveals that the family and its internal affairs have a lot to do with criminal behavior among women. While family tensions, marital discords, lack of parental control etc. were found to be stimulants of criminal behavior, the study did not find any substantial evidence to the role of traumatic childhood experiences.

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# Problems of Pardhi Tribes in Civil Society

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*[India is inhabited by many of the tribes and of which, some of the tribes are nomadic. Before independence, the British branded few of these tribes as criminals and grouped them under the Criminal Tribes Act and till now, these tribes are facing social stigma due to such Act. Pardhi or Haran Shikari are few of such tribes, which are most backward in society. Pardhis were hunters and forest product gatherers and after their displacement due to impact of strict forest laws, they are now unemployed. They are illiterate, poor and no source of livelihood of their own. Due to their unique tribal culture, they are backward and away from mainstream of the society. Few of these tribal groups are nomadic and they are wandering from place to place, which has barred them from possessing their own house, education of children, healthcare, etc. The present paper focuses on the problems faced by Pardhi tribe in India and Karnataka.]*

The tribes traditionally lived in remote and far-flung areas within or near forests and natural resources. Most of the tribes were living in the areas, which were inaccessible. The areas in which tribes are living are most backward and living conditions are also poor. Though, migrated to other areas, they are compelled to backward areas as they feel shy and hesitation due to their tribal culture. When the social development in terms of community and tribal development is analysed, it is found that, the tribes were living with lower status and this is due to their physical and social isolation from mainstream Hindu population. The impact of their social isolation has resulted in illiteracy, alienation from society, poverty, lower social status, negligence, etc.

Even the tribal women are facing many of the of the problems such as domestic violence, depression, suppression, gender inequality, etc. Tribes have retained their unique culture, social practices, traditions, language, etc., which have also become isolating factors from modernization and civilisation. Poverty and economic status of tribes are most backward as they were living in forests and their occupations were based on forests. The tribal occupations include hunting, collection, gathering and selling forest produces, etc. With passing of the Criminal Tribes Act by the British and after independence, due to strict forest laws, many of the tribes have lost their habitation, displaced and forced to migrate to civilised areas, such as villages and towns.

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As they are illiterates, they are compelled to work in unorganized sector.

There are more than 400 tribal groups among the scheduled tribe population, each with their distinct cultures, social practices, religions, dialects, and occupations. Thus, the different tribal groups are highly heterogeneous, and their differences are a function of the environment in which they live, the degree of exposure to the mainstream Hindu population, government involvement in their daily lives, their economic status, and past history. The tribes are scattered in all States and Union Territories in India except for the states of Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, and Chandigarh. The tribes are heavily concentrated in the north-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland although they constitute a small percentage of the total tribal population in India.

The British had grouped some of the tribes in India as Criminal Tribes and classify them into six categories: incorrigible, the habitual, the ordinary, the hereditary, juvenile criminal and habitual offenders. The Criminal Tribes Act was passed by the British in 1871 to cover and control many of these tribes. It is said that, many of these tribes were revolted against the British rule and consequent to the same, the Act was passed to suppress them. The rules under the Act were very vague and cruel. Under the Act they were faced with constant surveillance, vigilance, search and arrest without warrant, if any of the person of the group become suspected.

Police were given absolute, rather sweeping powers to arrest them and watch over their movements. In this way, some of the tribes were branded as criminal tribes and become convenient scapegoats.

Consequently, many of these tribes were increased fear and hesitation from the public and society and isolated themselves from other castes and tribes at different places. Pardhi or PhasseParadhi or Haran Shikari is one of the tribes identified as criminal tribe by the British.

### **Pardhi Tribe**

The word “Pardhi” which is derived from the Marathi term “paradh” indicates a livelihood activity –hunting. Colonial accounts of Pardhis describe them as wanderers and hunters (Russell and Hiralal, 1997). Phase Paradhi or PhasseParadhi is a tribe in India. The tribe often faces harassment by Indian law enforcement agencies. The tribe is found mostly in Maharashtra, parts of Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. The Phasse are a sub-tribe of the Paradhi caste which includes sub-castes like Gav-ParadhiBerad-Paradhi, Gay-Paradhi, Haran Shikari, Chita Paradhi. Paradhi is the term for “hunter”. There are only three surnames among them, Chauhan, Pawar and Solunkhe.

Pardhis were either engaged in nomadism or were settled at the periphery of rural areas in clusters of households bound by kinship relations. While supplementing the village economy, they remained outside the balutedari and jajmani systems that sustained self-sufficiency of the village and reflected its social order (Bokil, 2002). Markers of cultural and social distinctiveness of Pardhis from the local Hindu caste societies include their unique language which is a unique mix of Guja-rati and Hindi, a unique pantheon of totemic deities, with each totemic clan representing an exogamous group and sharing a unique cognomen, and prevalence of Nyaya Panchayat (Council of Justice) whose membership is accorded by birth in the community.

Volume XII of the 1880 Bombay Presidency Gazette has these remarks about pardhis, group of whom this author has been spending time with in rural Maharashtra state: “They are still fond of hunting and poaching and have not got rid of their turn for thieving...The phase-pardhi (a sub-tribe) is nearly al-ways ragged and dirty, walking with a sneaking gait”. Hence, few of the Pardhis were involved in robbery, theft and dacoity before independence. Phase-Pardhi as their name signifies, are bird and animal trappers and Haran Shikaris are hunters of deer. They are nomads and for generations have profitably used their tracking and stalking skill to commute theft and dacoits also for which they are shunned by they settled people are of Dravidian nary origin.

Alike Korvis and Ghisadis; Pardhis also call themselves of Rajput descent and claim that they left reputed on Maharana Pratap’s demise. During millennium wandering may Pardhis and Haran Shikaris had arrived into the jungles in the western part of Kolhapur region. There is also considerable population of Pardhis in Karnataka state as the statistics reveals the following.

The statistics reveal that, there are total 2316 households of Pardhis in Karnataka with total 10746 population spread across mainly in Bagalkot, Hubli, Kalaburagi and such other cities. The Pardhi are a rather unusual peoples in comparison the surrounding Bhil tribes. Because of their refusal to become a part of the caste system, they are a predominantly isolated group.

The social customs peculiar to the tribe tend to vary from time to time and from place to place. They wander in gangs, numbering even a hundred and more. During the fair weather, Pardhis wander from place to place in bands of three to six families. The men walk ahead carrying nets and baskets, followed by the women with wooden cots and children with earthen pots. Occasionally they own a bullock or a buffalo, on which loaded blankets, baskets, are bamboo sticks and mats. While on the move they live in makeshift tents, moving from place to place.

They make tents outside of villages, under bamboos covered with matting or under the shade of trees. If overtaken by rain, they take shelter in the nearest village. They have patrilineal and patrilocal culture and majority of them live in nuclear families. Generally, elder son succeeds in family property matters and family decision making.

They prefer hunting, begging, or even stealing for a living, rather than submitting to a social system that they consider demeaning and degrading. Those who make a living by thievery steal items that they can trade or sell as well as standing crops for food. Hunting was their occupation and consequent to the Criminal Tribes Act and also restrictions under forest laws, they were displaced from forests and compelled to shift their habitations to villages, towns and cities.

Even today, they practice the traditional primary economic activities like hunting of small games like rabbit, deer, mongoose and trapping of birds like pigeon, peacock and partridge. Adavichencher, Pardhis and Shikari were occasionally employed as village watchmen. The nomadic Pardhis beg, snare game, sell herbs, prepare and sell herbal medicines from plants, etc. They are experts in knitting nets

so as to catch birds and animals. Few of the Pardhis are also engaged in making of black stone vessels or jars of different sizes, which are used for making and storing pickles.

In the modern period, their occupations are under decline. Presently, they have no source of livelihood of their own and are illiterates, they are depending on unorganized sector including self-employment. Pardhis have social culture similar to Maratha culture. Many Pardhi groups make and sell baskets, while others make black stone vessels.

### **Problems of Pardhis**

The different problems faced by Pardhis are discussed under the following heads:

#### ***Occupation and Source of Livelihood***

Hunting was main occupation of Pardhis and even collecting forest products such as herbs and honey were their occupations. But due to strict forest legislations, now they are restricted to live in forests and even many of them were dislocated from forests. In this way, they have no occupation or source of livelihood. As such, majority of the Pardhis are engaged in unorganized sector or even begging. Only few of them are selling different products such as herbs.

#### ***Illiteracy***

Majority of the Pardhis were displaced from forests and due to their unique backward culture, they are isolated from mainstream of the society. Consequently, they are shy and hesitated to live in civilized society. Many of these tribal groups are nomadic and wander from place to place. As a result, they are unable to educate their children. Hence, almost Pardhi tribes are illiterates.

#### ***Poverty***

Due to lack of source of livelihood and education, Pardhis are poor. They are unable to build their own houses and settle at single place. To settle, they are making tents or temporary settlements usually at the outskirts of villages, towns and villages.

#### ***Social Isolation and Alienation***

As the British were included the Pardhi tribe under the Criminal Tribes Act, still these tribes are branded as thieves or criminals. Hence, the society views them with suspicious and kept them out of society. Due to their unique backward culture and poverty, they are feeling shy and hesitation to joining to mainstream of the civilized society. Therefore, they are living as isolated tribes in society.

### ***Problems of Pardhi Women***

Women have subjugated and have secondary status in the tribe. Due to illiteracy and secondary status, they are facing problems from their own family and tribal members such as domestic violence, gender inequality, suppression, depression, atrocities, etc. As these groups are still branded as criminal tribes, there are also atrocities from the people of other castes on these tribal women.

### ***Poor Healthcare***

Many of the pardhi families are nomadic and wandering from place to place. They live in temporary settlements or tents at the outskirts of the villages, towns and cities. It has affected their health adversely. They are negligent and unaware about modern healthcare facilities. Even many of them still believe in godmen, miracles and witchcraft with regard to healthcare. Hence, they are not conscious about their healthcare. Though a few of them are visiting health centres, they are neglected in such health centres. Hence, healthcare of Pardhi is also neglected and become problem.

### ***Attacks from Civil Society***

Nomadic group of Pardhis are frequently wandering from place to place. Generally, they live temporarily at the outskirts of villages, towns and cities. As they were branded as criminals, in case of any theft and robbery in such places, police suspect them and even there are frequent attacks from villages or people of local place on the suspicion that, they are thieves. In this way, they are facing atrocities from civil society.

### ***Suggestions for Development of Pardhi Tribe***

Based on the above discussion, following suggestions are made so as to improve and develop the Pardhi tribes.

- Housing conditions of Pardhi tribes should be assured by providing them houses under various Government schemes such as Ashraya, Dr. Ambedkar Housing Scheme, Indira Awas Yojana, etc., so that they can settle at single place.
- It is needed to arrange for the livelihood of the tribe. It should be made by providing self-employment training to them along with financial assistance to start their own self-employment. It is preferred to provide self-employment in herbal medicine as they are experts in the same.
- There is need to educate the children of Pardhi tribe. For this purpose, mass awareness should be

organized by the NGOs and more educational schemes are necessary for Pardhi children.

- It is suggested to NGOs to organize awareness on the gender equality and importance of women in tribal society.
- It is suggested to Pardhi tribes to give up their orthodox culture and join to mainstream of the society. For this purpose, they have to mingle with people of other castes and tribes.

### Conclusion

To conclude, many of the tribes, which were living in forest and remote areas are most backward and even away from civilized society. Pardhi is one of such tribe not only backward, but also fear from civilization as they were branded as criminals and robbers. It is essential to bring such tribes to mainstream of the society. To achieve this purpose, there is need for education and source of livelihood for Pardhis. More and more employment and self-employment schemes are needed for Pardhi tribes from the Government so as to assure for their livelihoods. As they don't have fixed place to settle and own house, it is essential to provide housing to these tribes. In this way, these are most essential so as to empower Pardhi tribes.

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## Women and Political Participation

Dr. Dipen Saikia\*

**D**emocracy implies equality for all human persons, men and women. As against this basic notion of democracy what is normally seen is that women are excluded from different walks of life, more visibly in Politics. The U.N. observes that women constitute "world's largest excluded category". For the attainment of true democratic spirit shall be ensured better political participation. "In the struggle for gender justice", Usha Narayanan argues, "Political participation constitutes the first and foremost step in that direction."

The Constitution of India is based on the principles of equality and guarantees equality before law and equal protection to all its citizens. It not only guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, but also prohibits discrimination on the basis of caste, class, sex, religion and place of birth. However, these rights have remained rhetoric and have not been converted

into pragmatic rights. An important area where women have been inadequately represented is in the political sphere. Articles 325 and 326 of the Constitution of India guarantee political equality-equal right to participation in political activities and right to vote respectively (Pylee, 2007).

In any political system, right from the developed to the developing countries, presence of the percentage of women is very low compared to men. In many countries, women had to fight a long battle to get their right to vote. Today the percentage of women as voters has increased noticeably, but their political participation is not equal to men and therefore women are unable to get an equal share that require in decision making processes. Conventionally, Women have not been regarded as significant part of the political arena. Politics at every level of participation is dominated by men (Singh, 2000).

The confined nature of female participation and representation in national decision-making institutions

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has important consequences for women and for the legitimacy of the institutions. Where women constitute half the population, in a political system which supports equality and where both women and men are legally eligible for political office, women's participation should be equal to that of men (Subramanian, 2002).

### **Women's Participation in Political Activities**

The emergence of women's participation in politics can be traced back to the nineteenth century reform movement. Raja Ram Mohan Roy focused on two issues, namely women's education and abolition of sati. Several eminent women reformers participated in this movement as well as in the religious reform movement of this period. Pandit Ramabai, Manorama Majumdar, Sarala Debi Goshal who started Bharata Stree Mahamandal for the education of women, Swarna Kumari Debi who started the women's organisation Sakhi Samiti in 1886 for widows, are few examples (Georgekutty, 2010).

The struggle for the emancipation of women took place mainly in three directions - (1) to make necessary laws for social reforms; (2) to provide maximum opportunities for their education; and (3) provide them with the fundamental political rights. Attention was focused on the first two in the 19th and early 20th centuries whereas political rights of women got attention only during the last phase of the independence movement

### **Women in National Movement**

The entire history of the freedom movement is replete with the saga of bravery, sacrifice and political sagacity of hundreds and thousands of women of our country (Dash, 2011). While on the one hand women's organizations were fighting for the political and economic rights women's and trying to succeed their position by education and social reform. Women's struggle entered a new phase with the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian political scene. Women had already been associated with the freedom struggle before it. They had attended sessions of the Indian National Congress and taken part in the swadeshi movement in Bengal, 1905-11 and in the Home Rule Movement.

But the involvement of really large number of women in the national movement began when Gandhi launched the first Non-Cooperation Movement and gave a special role to women (Gandhi, 1982). Peasant women played an important role in the rural satyagraha of Borsad and Bardoli. Women

participated in the Salt satyagraha, in the Civil Disobedience Movement, in the Quit India Movement and in all the Gandhian satyagraha (Basu, 2003).

### **Women in Independent India**

It is mainly after Independence that the Indian women gained considerable importance within the social and political spheres. The goals were getting equality based on gender, job opportunities, reforming the existing laws which gave women only partial justice, and creating a society which did not oppress women intellectually, physically and emotionally. Many women's organizations like National Federation of Indian Women (1954) the Samajwadi Mahila Sabha (1959) were formed to work for championing the cause of Indian women (Nair, 2010). Since the country was facing a social, political crisis after the British rule many demands of the women activists were not supported by the Government. But during this period from 1945, the Indian women got an opportunity to participate in confrontational politics.

By 1970 the political atmosphere began to change and many leading political parties realized the importance of women. Thus, the efforts of the early leaders like Jotibha Phule, B.R. Ambedkar, E.V. Ramaswami and the leaders of the later period like Sharat Patil, Sharat Joshi and Vandana Shiva not only fuelled the women's movement but also intensely motivated the Indian women by touching their inner core of consciousness (Nair, 2010).

Women of India are highly active today in this area. Sarojini Naidu, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, Sucheta Kriplani were the torch bearer for the women of India. Mrs Vijay Lakshmi Pandit was the first Indian woman to hold a position in the cabinet and paved the way for other women. The most important name in the category of women politicians is Mrs Indira Gandhi. He was the first women Prime Minister of independent India. Today her daughter-in-law Ms Sonia Gandhi is following her foot steps and leading the Indian National Congress. Other women who have played a pivotal role in politics of India are Sheila Dixit, Uma Bharti, Jayalalitha, Vasundhara Raje, Mamata Banerjee and Mayawati (Chhibber, 2004).

### **Representation through Reservation**

Various strategies have been proposed to furnish the political representation of women in India. From a reservation of 33% seats at various levels including the Parliament, it has also been suggested that political parties reserve 33% of their seats for women in the elections (Mahesh, 2011). As a result of a vibrant

women's movement in the last 50 years, policies to advance human rights for women in India are substantial and forward-thinking, such as the Domestic Violence Act (2005), and the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution that provide reservations for women to enter politics at the Panchayat level.

There are several national and state level governmental and non-governmental mechanisms to improve the vulnerable condition of women such as the Women's Commission to advance these policies, and the implementation of these policies is decentralized to state and district level authorities and organizations that include local non-governmental organizations (Upadhyay, 2013).

It is argued, that democracy and representation will merely be strengthened with compulsorily more presence of women through reservation. This is evident from the impact of the implementation of 33% reservation of seats for women in the local bodies (Panchayats) in India by the 73rd Constitutional Amendments. As result of which the representation of women in the formal structures of governance at the local level has recorded a steady increase (Subramanian, 2002). Women's presence at the decision-making levels will not only ensure the status of women but will also strengthen democratic traditions and make democracy more dynamic and meaningful in fighting injustice and oppression. Important women issues can never be tackled with the seriousness unless women are brought into the decision-making levels directly.

### Conclusion

Even after more than 70 years of democratic governance, it is discouraging that the government and the policy makers are indecisive, by not translating de jure rights to de facto rights to effect changes in the society. Their numbers have not increased over the years in the decision-making bodies. The number of women parliamentarians has never exceeded 15 per cent of all seats. Articles 325 and 326 of the Indian Constitution guarantee political equality to all, yet women have not benefited from this right. The political climate as it exists today continues to be male centred and is therefore perceived to be conducive to male participation.

The 33 per cent reservation quota provided for women in the local self-governing bodies has enabled several women, who had never been in power and

even those illiterate, to enter politics. It is also true that powerful women leaders in our politics have failed to do much for the women in India. The 73rd and 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India with 33.33% reservation for women have given ample opportunity for the entry of large number of socially backward category such as women to enter into the domain of local institution and their performance is very encouraging. It would provide a path to bring a sense of equality in gender.

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# Appraising Extra-Judicial Killings in Manipur

Hoineilhing Sithhou\*

*[In July of 2017, the Supreme Court of India ordered the investigation of the 1528 cases of alleged extra-judicial killings in Manipur. It no longer permits the armed forces to use excessive force or retaliatory force even if allowed by the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA).]*

This was a landmark judgement and reflected the years of ongoing debacle, conflict and dissent in Manipur due to state violence. Besides the role played by Human Rights activists and NGOs, women activism has played a gigantic role in continually reminding the state of the negative ramifications of AFSPA.

## The Correlations between EJKs and AFSPA

Extra Judicial Killing refers to a killing committed by an agent of the state without the sanction of a judicial proceeding. The United States Torture Victim Protection Act in its Section 3A has defined EJK as “a deliberate killing not authorized by a previous judgement pronounced by a regular constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.”<sup>1</sup>

In the context of Manipur, Human rights activists advocated the existence of a strong correlation between AFSPA and EJKs. They alleged that AFSPA buoyed the Army and the Manipur Commandoes to kill with impunity. AFSPA is an Act to enable certain powers to be conferred upon members of the armed forces in disturbed areas in the State of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura and parts of Arunachal Pradesh.<sup>2</sup>

Manipur was declared as a “disturbed area” on 8th September of 1980. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 1958 gives the army special powers and liberties to the Indian armed forces in the so-called “disturbed areas”: Arrest and search warrants are not required for any operation; Army officers can fire upon and use lethal force on an unlawful assembly of five or more people and for the illegal possession of firearms, if they feel the need; and No criminal prosecution is possible against army personnel who have taken action under this act, unless sanctioned by the central government.

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Hence, the misuse of AFSPA is seen to have varied ramifications, often causing issues of human right violations like “enforced disappearances”, “fake-encounters”, and “extra-judicial killings” which involved arbitrary killings, torture and cruel inhuman degrading treatment.

## Perpetrators of Violence

In the name of fighting insurgency in Manipur, violence, legitimized by the state, is committed by the Army personnel, Paramilitary forces and Manipur Commandoes under AFSPA. Interestingly, in Manipur, although most counter-insurgency work has been carried out by the Indian Army and the Assam Rifles in collaboration with the Manipur police, it is the Manipur commando who has taken the most active role in these operations.<sup>3</sup> A small force of commandos was set up in the 1980s from among the armed police wing of the Manipur Police to strengthen counter-insurgency operations.

They were given special training in weaponry, strategies, unarmed combat, cordon and search etc. They are also given special financial assistance by the state.<sup>4</sup> The armed forces personnel occupation in Manipur brought in the possibility of an inter-racial discourse between the mainland troops with darker-skin and moustache and the local population with face and skin-tone resembling those of South East Asians.<sup>5</sup> The visible differences in features and easier access to the community could be the core reason for the recruitment of locals to do the counter-insurgency work.

In Manipur, while the armed forces are accused of EJKs and the misuse of AFSPA, the various insurgent groups are known to engage in operations of extortions, kidnapping, killing, looting and ambushing the security forces. On the 24th of February 2014, the then Governor V.K. Duggal declared that there were 60 insurgent groups operating in Manipur.<sup>6</sup> Hence, the people of Manipur are sandwiched between two types of violence, that perpetrated by

the armed forces on one side, and by the various non-state actors including the insurgents on the other side.

### **Formation of EEVFAM by Survivors of EJKs**

The Extra Judicial Execution Victim Families Association (EEVFAM) is "... a registered trust having as its members the wives and mothers of persons whom they say have been extra-judicially executed by the Manipur Police and the security forces (mainly the Assam Rifles and the Army)".<sup>7</sup> They formed an association both to convince the state government for justice as also to act as a support group for widows and mothers who have lost their husbands and sons to state violence. As an association, they were able to channelize their anguish into something positive and constructive like voicing their collective dissent to demand justice to the state or central government.

For example, the killings of the spouses of most of the members of EEVFAM had a regular pattern besides being posthumously branded by the police as terrorists. "The arrests usually take place without issuance of an arrest memo, executions almost always happen in secluded locations, and there are never any casualties on the police side. In most cases, a 9mm pistol, a Chinese hand grenade, or both are found on or near the body of the 'terrorist'".<sup>8</sup>

The Extra Judicial Victim Families Association, in cooperation with Human Rights Alert and the Human Rights Law Network, was instrumental in filling a petition in 2012 to the supreme court resulting in the latter's directives to investigate on extra-judicial killings in Manipur. In the petition filled by them, they pointed out, while several complaints have been made in respect of the alleged extra-judicial executions, not a single first information report has been registered by the Manipur police against the police or security forces.

### **Diverging discourses on EJKs**

Besides EEVFAM, there are women collectives like the *Meira Paibis* (women torchbearers) who are actively playing a role in highlighting the dangers of AFSPA to a democratic society. Ever since the 1980s, the *Meira Paibis* as a collective force have obstructed the army or paramilitary forces from acts of atrocities, extra-judicial arrests and enforced disappearances. The counter tactics used by the women group is agitation with a goal to save their innocent sons from the army and consequently, 29th December is observed as '*paari kanba numeet*' (son saving day) in Manipur.

The advocacy of the *Meira Paibis* received international recognition when twelve women members stripped themselves naked outside the gates of Assam Rifles headquarters at Kangla Fort in Imphal on July 15, 2004. This was in protest against the alleged rape and murder of Thangjam Manorama Devi during the process of interrogation by the paramilitary Assam Rifles. The outcome of the dissent was that the army vacated Kangla Fort and AFSPA was withdrawn from seven assembly constituencies within the Imphal Municipal area in the same year. Kangla Fort was the ancient capital of the Meitei rulers of Manipur. It was taken over by the state and used as the headquarters of the Assam Rifles, India's oldest paramilitary force.<sup>9</sup>

At the other side of the spectrum or discourse are the Manipur police, security forces or the armed forces of the Union, including the Army. In the counter affidavit filed by the Union of India on 15th December, 2012 in W.P. (C) No. 445 of 2012, emphasis was made on the security situation and potential militancy levels of North East India in general and Manipur in particular. It was documented that an estimation of, "...5000 militants were holding a population of about 23 lakhs in Manipur to ransom and keeping the people in constant fear."<sup>10</sup>

This was used to justify the need for counter insurgency operations by the armed forces and the imperativeness of AFSPA to give them legal and logistic protection. Countering the allegations that no one has been punished for human rights violations, it was pointed out that 70 personnel have been punished for human rights violations.<sup>11</sup> It was also stated that the persons killed allegedly through "extra-judicial executions" were in most cases, "persons who have been killed in the lawful exercise of the powers and/or performance of the official duties by personnel from the police and armed forces."<sup>12</sup> They supported the continuation of AFSPA as the Indian Army would become vulnerable without it. AFSPA is therefore, a functional requirement, for them to operate and survive.<sup>13</sup>

### **State Response to allegations of EJKs in Manipur**

The state legislature has responded to the various appeals against AFSPA without actually doing away with it. Till today, the state has not removed the 'disturbed area' tag which would have facilitated the removal of AFSPA from Manipur. In 2004, AFSPA was removed from 7 Municipal Units of Imphal. Disheartened by the state's indifference to her almost 16 years of fasting, Irom Sharmila decided to give up

her Gandhian method of protest on the 9th of August, 2016 in order to join politics. She had begun her fast unto death as a mark of protest against the extra-judicial killing of 10 civilians by the Assam Rifles.

Her justification in her own words reads, “These 16 long years I got arrested and released every year, but AFSPA still remains. So, I thought it is time to change my strategy. I thought enough is enough, I should find a new path. And since it is a political issue, a political will is needed. If I want to raise my voice, if I want them to hear my voice, then I myself need to enter into the system (politics)”.<sup>14</sup> The continuation of AFSPA is indicative of the felt need by the state on behalf of the public for the presence of central security forces in Manipur to counter insurgency.

The other relevant intervention is the Supreme Court’s directive to examine the 1528 cases of fake encounters in Manipur. The court ordered a thorough examination of each instance of alleged extra-judicial killing to ascertain and determine facts.<sup>15</sup> EEVFAM was given the charge of collecting and submitting the detailed information of the 1528 cases of EJKs so that Supreme Court can pass its final judgement on them.

### Conclusion

The essay tries to put together the diverging discourses on the subject of EJKs. It tries to bring in the perspectives of the different agents involved in the atrocities, from the victims to the alleged perpetrators to the civil society organisations. The survivors of EJKs are demanding justice, which is not just about the receipt of monetary compensation but for the truth. For the Manipur Police and the Armed Forces, the encounters are genuine and they allege that there was a local bias in the judicial probe constituted against them.<sup>16</sup>

The judgement of Justice Madan B. Lokur rightly says, “It is necessary to know the truth so that the law is tempered with justice. The exercise for knowing the truth mandates ascertaining whether fake encounters or extra-judicial executions have taken place and if so, who are the perpetrators of the human rights violations and how can the next of kin be commiserated with and what further steps ought to be taken, if any.”<sup>17</sup> The various civil society organisations are demanding for the repeal of AFSPA. For them, the Act is not an answer to the insurgency problem of the state but rather it directly encourages EJKs. It gives legal protection to perpetrators and liberate their conscience in the name of duty and service to the nation.<sup>18</sup>

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## Observing ‘Bohag Bihu’ Beyond Borders

Shilpi Shikha Phukan\*

*[The paper attempts to understand the meanings and context of celebrating the Assamese new year, Bohag Bihu, in Delhi by the Assamese migrant community. It results from an ethnography conducted in two Bohag Bihu festivals celebrated across Delhi, namely the Rongali Bihu Utjapon organized by Assam Association Delhi, and Bohagi Utsav organized by All Assam Students’ Association, New Delhi. The paper concludes that migrant festivals are not mere celebrations but seek more recognition, agency, and identity assertion. It is entangled in a complex web of civil society, corporate, and the state.]*

The Assamese New Year *Bohag Bihu* is the essence of Assamese tradition and identity that claim to surpass narrow ethnic lines and religious boundaries. In the recent decade, with mass migration of people from Assam, the festival is also transcending its borders. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to understand the dynamics of civil society, state, and corporate-sponsored festival- *Bohag Bihu* celebrated most elegantly in different places in the capital city of Delhi. The researcher has visited the festivals over three years in Delhi. Organizers of the festivals are also interviewed. In this paper, one does not see the festival as a mere celebration of food, dance, music, or fashion.

The *Bohag Bihu* celebration in Delhi is a way of identity assertion, an attempt to gain visibility and agency. The identity here is context-bound, invented, and reinvented in a given setting. Therefore, the *Bohag Bihu* celebration is not just a momentarily lived experience, but is a political construct. Hence, it flags off more nuanced questions like— what signifies as an Assamese identity in Delhi? Who constitutes as organizers, performers,

and the audience of *Bohag Bihu*? How does it address the larger question of citizenship and belongingness?

*Bohag Bihu*- the Festival of Spring, Oti koi senehor mugare muhura, Tatu koi senehor makur, Oi Tatu koi senehor Bohagi Bihuti, Napati kenekoi thaku.

The above stanza of the *Bihu Naam/Bihu* song signifies a woman singing her love for the Muga silk-spinning wheels. She says *muga* (a kind of silk) spinning wheels are lovely, but the *Bihu* festival is the dearest and cannot avoid welcoming it with celebration.

These lines suggest that the *Bohag Bihu* festival is the dearest and most awaited festival of the Assamese community. Celebrated as the Assamese new-year in April, this festival is the embodiment of romance, love, energy, and bonding of agricultural communities with nature. Like all peasant communities, Assamese society, too, cannot ignore the cycles of nature and the changes of the season, which are the essential mechanisms of agriculture. As Hem Barua (1973) notes, the ‘culture, arts, songs and dance of such societies are bounded to be nature-oriented, and hence Assam’s *Bohag Bihu* is also a people’s festival of nature’ (Barua, 1973: 37). Therefore, it is a celebration of the spring that brings color and hope to the farmers.

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Traditionally, the festival was celebrated only in upper Assam by ethnic communities such as Ahoms, Deoris, Morans, and other communities of the region. The performers used to be both male and female, but the ratio depending on the community. Bachelors would dance with each other under fig trees like mango or Jamun trees (Barua, 2009: 220). For example, the Moran community dance has a particular dance form called “Log Bihu,” where both men and females participate as performers. Whereas in another performance “Husouri,” the performers go door to door in the evening where female members were traditionally prohibited.

With the advent of urbanization, the commerce of culture, Bihu transformed from folk to mass-consumption (Pathak & Kalita, 2019). During the Assam movement, Bihu, as a festival, was seen to be the beholder of Assamese identity and culture. Therefore, by the end of the nineteenth century, the *Bohag Bihu* celebration was made more stage-centric. In contrast to traditional ways of ‘doing Bihu’ under the trees and in open fields, the performance of Bihu’s changed to dance competitions, beauty contests, and paid artists. Moving away from the ecological side of Bihu, the festival has become a site for political gains.

The festival that was an embodiment of the heterogeneous identity of different ethnic groups of Assam has taken a turn to become homogeneous under one umbrella of Assamese identity. Apart from the mainstream ‘Bohag Bihu’, varied forms of Bihu celebrated by other ethnic groups have been relegated to ‘tribal Bihu’ (ibid.). Hence, the culture of observing Bihu has become a site of political space, where identities are negotiated and contested.

The relationship of *Bohag Bihu* and identity can be prominently seen not only in Assam but also when the festival transcends its borders. It gets interesting to understand the way festivals migrate along with people altering the nature and meaning of festivals in different ways. The next section is going to discuss this transcendence of the *Bohag Bihu* festival along with the people of Assam who have come to Delhi in different junctures. The reason for this is increasing migration happening from North-Eastern states, including Assam to other parts of the country and Bihu being observed in major cities in a pompous way. The next section will reflect on how the Assamese people from the North-East, a small community, negotiates its identity and agency in a city. It will unfold the ways they feel a need to organize themselves as a community, where celebrating festivals like *Bohag Bihu* plays a significant role.

## **Bohag Bihu Festivals in Delhi**

The paper discusses two prominent staged Bihu celebrated by two Assamese organizations in Delhi. These are *Rongali Bihu Utjapon* organized by Assam Association Delhi and *Bhohagi Utsav* organized by All Assamese Students’ Association, New Delhi. The study is based on detailed observations of these two events, along with interviews from the organizers who are part of these organizations.

The paper acknowledges the heterogeneity and complexity associated with the term Assamese. The Assamese identity is a social construct where many groups have been historically left out or decided not to assimilate. Nevertheless, to be politically correct, the Assamese’ little nationalism’ (Guha, 1980) embraces all ethnic and religious groups that have settled in Assam before 1971. As the Assamese is not one group, it is a sentiment inherited by different indigenous groups, a feeling and sharing a common language and interwoven culture. Therefore, the paper looks into festivals organized by associations that claim to represent the larger Assamese community.

The *Rongali Bihu Utjapon*, the annual Bohag Bihu celebration of Assam Association Delhi, becomes a major attraction of the city during April. Assam Association Delhi is the oldest civil society organization that represented a handful of the Assamese community in Delhi since 1947. The motto of the association is primarily to build up solidarity based on a collective among the Assamese people settled in the city. Likewise, *Bohagi Utsav* organized by All Assamese Student’s Association, New Delhi is a newer organization established in the year 2011. The association has its ideological affiliation to All Assam Student’s Union (AASU), one of the prominent mainstream civil society organizations in Brahmaputra Valley.

Assam Association observes its *Rongali Bihu Utjapon* at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA) located in the heart of Delhi. IGNCA ground and the auditorium are Delhi’s one of the most elegant spaces for public events. Therefore, it is considered as an elite space, for which not just a good budget, but also strong social networks matter. Likewise, the *Bohagi Utsav* initially was organized in INA Dilli Haat, the government handloom market in Delhi. Now, as the association is growing and with a visible gain of popularity, the event is organized in posh halls like Shankarlal auditorium, New Delhi.

Such grand events that occupy elite spaces in the city hosting hundreds of audiences at free of cost demands analysis on how the North-Eastern people are negotiating to occupy its place in the mainstream. To have a systematic understanding, let us reflect on some

stereotypes associated with people from North-East in mainland India.

### **Representation of North-East in Mainland India**

One cannot speak of Assam in isolation to the category called North-East. Though there are many debates on the idea of 'North-East,' one cannot get away with the administrative construct that has to bind the region with itself as well as the rest of India. Assam is one of the eight North-Eastern states and is said to be the most developed one given its historical background. During the nationalistic construction of the image of modern India, the states of North-East were never given a mainstream position. The people from North-East associated with tribal identity were seen as inferior as the concept 'tribes' is itself regarded backward and outside the caste society.

As mentioned by Nongbri and Shimreiwung (2017), tribes from the Northeast are not only seen as ritually inferior to the dominant Hindu society in mainland India but also seen as dirty for consuming food such as pork or fermented dishes that have a distinct aroma. The food of the region has remained out of imagery of national cuisine. Instead, to eat certain dishes is a taboo in many private and public spaces in Delhi. Till a decade, cultural artifact such as Bihu dance was only showcased in Delhi during Republic Day parade or in government functions. Now, with more visibility and mass migration, one can see some acknowledgment for its culture, but it comes with the flavor of 'exotic' associated with the North-East. Therefore, such perception about North-East reveals that mainstream India still fails to take the historicity and complexity of the region into consideration.

Within such context, one could locate Assamese festivals such as Bihu not just as a celebration but as a festival of assertion and resistance. If one has to see how Bihu arrived in Delhi, it began with migration from the Assam to Delhi at around the 1950s by professionals seeking a high post in government jobs (Hazarika, 2018: 277). The children of the then middle-class Assamese families also migrated not only to cities outside their region but also abroad. After the 1990s liberalization of the economy one could see the rise of North-East people as students, professionals in IT sectors, call centers as well as in hospitality sectors (McDui-Ra, 2011).

In the last five years, there is a trend of people migrating to conduct business and open up start-ups in the city. With this exodus of huge population from Assam in particular and North-East in general to cities like Delhi, the culture of festivals, food, and politics practiced back home are also crossing its boundaries.

### **The Politics of Bohag Bihu in Delhi**

Let us start with the first question asked- what does it signify to celebrate Bohag Bihu in Delhi. As argued, the people from North-East have been historically kept in periphery not just in the geography but also in the nationalist imagination of India. Though the caste Hindu Assamese were in a better position than the tribals to connect with the mainland due to its Sanskritized culture and language, yet the experience of being marginalized was not very different. Therefore, when they migrate to cities like Delhi, different forms of 'othering' becomes an everyday experience. To counter such experiences, any migrant group tends to stay close to their community. Therefore, associations emerge so that people have an organized way to voice their challenges as well as celebrate their solidarity.

Interviews with organizers of *Rongali Bihu Utjapan*, reveal: Initially, we were a small community in Delhi during the 90s. So, we would keep the Bihu within ourselves. However, with the rise of the Assamese population in Delhi, we gained more confidence to organize on a big platform. No matter where we go, we are the Assamese first. Many of us are settled here, so it is not possible to go home every Bihu; therefore, this space gives us a feeling of home (translated from Assamese).

The feeling of home or missing home is something that is fulfilled by such festivals in Delhi. It gives a sense of solidarity, companionship, and a communitarian feeling among the Assamese people. It also acts as socialization to second-generation Assamese migrants settled in the city. However, to note though festivals are essentially socializing agents, they are also agents of resistance to racial discrimination. With decades of marginalization, such festivals also send a message that the community is gaining more agency and recognition than before. While central government employee or bureaucratic civil servants helps in having a voice within the administration, the rise of students and employees in semi-skilled industries give more visibility.

To have a nuanced understanding of the events, one needs to see the combination of organizers, performers, and audience. The organizers are voluntary associations formed by the Assamese community in Delhi. The Assam Association is an organization of more permanent members. This association accommodated many renowned Assamese elite personalities from the time of its establishment. The class composition of the association is also interesting to note. To become a member of the Assam Association, one has to reside in Delhi for at least a few years and should give its dedication financially as well as culturally.

Therefore, it can be seen that the composition of the organization is very much middle-class centric, who has a considerable amount of cultural, social as well as economic capital. The temporary migrants who come as daily wage earners or employed in blue-collar jobs may not have a comfortable space to join. The All Assamese Students' Association, on the other hand, is a students' association bloomed over some time. The members are mostly undergraduate and postgraduate students from Delhi University.

It brings us to the question of then what kind of cultural shows are organized in these Bihu events. The most common and unavoidable element is the Bihu dance. Bihu dance is not one form of dance. It has evolved, borrowed from different communities, and given a pan-Assamese color over time. The celebration of Bihu has its politics. Bihu, what is observed in the pan-Assam level, is mostly taken from the dominant groups. In the process, many other groups are left out or do not get adequate representation. However, when festivals migrate, there is a tendency to make communities inclusive at some level.

Although not all communities celebrate Bihu at the same point in time, the representation in Bohag Bihu is the ones who are in the mainstream. Therefore, in Delhi performances, that of 'nonmainstream Bihu' such as Tiwa, Mishing or Jhumr of tea tribes are also showcased. The performers range from local Delhi-based artists as well as invited paid artists from Assam. Such paid artists remain the main attraction of the event.

The audience includes all sections of the Assamese people that live in the city. In recent years it is also hosting a non-Assamese audience. Observing Bohag Bihu is also a space for socialization where the 'us' and the 'them' meet. The 'us' is anyone who identifies itself with the idea of Assam as a homeland and the Assamese as their imagined community. At the same time, the 'them' could be anyone who is the 'other' to the community. So, if more visitors from 'outside' visit these festivals, there is more legitimacy to it. Here tourism can represent the communities for its growth to local and national economies.

Therefore, it is not only dance or music, but other events are blended with drawing competition, ethnic fashion show, band performance, skit play and so on through which Assamese culture can be portrayed at its best. The stalls are decorated with items such as clothes, food, and handicraft ready to be sold to consumers longing to connect with home. Therefore, here identity is the manifestation of the proud Assamese community, unlike the colonial as well as state-centric representation of North-East as backward.

Most of these festivals are either politically or a corporate sponsor. Grand events like Bihu, therefore, also have the latent motive of business investments in the region. In one of the events, the researcher noticed posters for promoting tourism in the North-East. In recent times the government is trying to connect North-East more to mainstream India. The least explored lands, forests, and rivers of the region are growing to be a major extraction zone for the government and companies. Therefore, this nexus of organizers, sponsors, performers, and audiences have to be located within a broader political perspective.

### Conclusion

Therefore, observing Bohag-Bihu in Delhi is also not just a matter of celebration. It lies in the deeper anxieties of being an ethnic minority in the city, discriminated and othered. The phobia of becoming a linguistic and cultural minority with growing 'illegal immigrants,' a heated political debate in Assam, also reflects within the Assamese community in Delhi. During such festivals, the invited dignitaries often speak of saving one's heritage and ends the speech with -*Joi Aai Axom* (Mother Assam Long Live). Hence one argues that observing migrant festivals in cities like Delhi is not just cultural but deeply political.

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# Tibetan Issue: Major Irritant in India-China Relation

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*[India and China are the two emerging economies of Asia and the largest trading partner of each other. Together they can make the 21st century an Asian century. China is India's largest neighbour. Both nations have a history of more than 2000 years in which they shared cultural and historical contacts. Buddhism in China was introduced from India. Both India and China have issues of common concern in world politics. They are cooperating with each other in a number of spheres but the Tibetan issue and border problem are the major irritants in India-China relations. China is always suspicious about India's stand on Tibet and Tibetans living on Indian soil. It always blames India for supporting Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama and his exiled government for doing anti-Chinese activities. On the other hand, India sees China as an expansionist nation and blames it for illegally occupying Indian territory in the Aksai Chin region in Ladakh. India-China fought a war in 1962 and after that, both the countries are very security sensitive towards their Himalayan Borders.]*

India and China are the world's two fastest-growing economies. The two countries collectively account for 36% of the world population (Statistics Times, 2020) and share the world's longest unmarked border. Relationship in ancient time was marked by trade relations through the famous "Silk Route" and cultural relations particularly the impact of Buddhism on the Chinese people (Pokharana, 2009, p. 285). India and China are the vast countries, but bigger than the size of these great countries are the problems that they are facing. They are the two oldest known civilizations of Asia. The people of both countries have more than 2000 years of traditional friendly relations (Ruixiang, 2013, p. 301). In modern times, both the countries have some bitter experiences such as western imperialism and colonial rule until the twentieth century. India got its independence from Britain in 1947 and China became the Peoples Republic of China in 1949. During the initial years of their formation, leaders of both nations looked at each other with sympathy and respect. After the establishment of communist China, India was the first country among non-communist countries to recognize the People's Republic of China and set up its embassy in China (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2012). On 1st April 1950,

India- China officially established diplomatic relations and recently celebrated the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relation ("70 Years of Diplomatic Relations between China and India [1950-2020]," 2020). However, the countries have seen a large number of ups and downs during these 70 years of bilateral ties. Before the invasion of Tibet, India and China looked at each other as friends. And the initial focus of the leaders of both the nations was not the foreign policy, but the internal growth and development of their countries (Pokharana, 2009, p.9).

Historically, India was never the immediate neighbor of China, it was Tibet, which shared a common border with India. Tibet always served as a buffer state between India and China, which kept the two nations separate from each other and kept them at peace. However, India-China relations became tense after the Chinese occupation of the buffer state Tibet in 1950. The Dalai Lamas asylum in India in 1959 and the border war of 1962 on territorial disputes made their relationship fractious and uneasy (Lal, 2008, p.205-216). Other than these factors, China's ties with other South Asian countries particularly Pakistan, unrest in Tibet and Kashmir, terrorism, ties with USA, Russia, and even with Japan, Chinese encroachment into India's sphere of influence particularly South Asia, nuclear and missile proliferation issues have further contributed to their uneasiness and misunderstanding.

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## **India-China Politics over Tibet and Border problem**

Tibet is a plateau region in Asia and the north-east Himalayas. It is the highest plateau on the earth with an average altitude of 4900mts. The physical boundary of Tibet touches with the former Soviet Union, India, Burma, and China. The area of Tibet is 25 lac square Kilometers and has approximately 60 lacs of population (Tibet Data, 2015). It is the native place of Tibetan people and some other ethnic groups such as Monpas, qiang and Lhobas. But after the occupation of Tibet by China, China shifted large number of Han and Hui people to settle there. Due to proximity of the Tibet plateau with the Himalayan Kingdoms, some population of Tibetan origin also reside in Bhutan and Nepal, and in some parts of Indian states like Sikkim, Himachal, Uttarakhand and Ladakh (Munjal, 2011, P.272).

Tibet plateau is also called the water tower of Asia because Asia's major rivers originate from this region (Globalcal, 2017). The boundaries of Tibet: geographic, ethnic, and political raise problems of some complexity. The ethnic boundaries of Tibet however, stretch beyond the political. The question of political boundary is undoubtedly the most controversial (Munjal, 2011, P.272).

The vast area of the Tibet plateau and the Tibetan people both play a crucial role between India and China relations. There was no border dispute between India and China before the invasion of Tibet as both India and Tibet accept the McMahan line as the international boundary between India and Tibet. But the Chinese invasion of Tibet has changed the geopolitical equation between India and China forever (Prakash, 2017). After the forceful occupation of Tibet by China, China incorporated Tibet into its mainland and refused to accept the treaty signed between British India and Tibet at Simla conference in 1914. Communist leader Mao and Chinese Premier Zhou-En- Lai refused to acknowledge the McMahan line in Arunachal Pradesh as the border between two nations. On 23 January 1959, Zhou-En-Lai wrote a letter to Nehru in which he had written "the Sino-Indian boundary had never been formally delimited and that there were certain differences between the two sides over

the issue. He further added that the 'McMahan Line' had never been recognized by the Government of China" (Appadurai & Ranjan, 1985, p. 119). As for the Chinese maps, he claimed that the boundaries drawn on them were consistent with those on earlier maps, thus laying claim to about 4000 sq. miles of Indian territory (Kamla, 2011, p. 91).

Since then India-China border dispute arose and which ultimately led to a war in 1962. The India-China war in 1962 led to a serious setback in bilateral relations (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2012). This war made the relations between India and China bitter.

So far, the Indo-China border dispute remains unresolved. India claims that China has illegally occupied 38,000 sq. km of territory in Ladakh, including the 52,00 sq. Km Beijing has illegally acquired from Pakistan through the so-called China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement of 1963. China refuted India's allegations and further claimed that India has occupied some 96,000 sq. Km of Chinese territory, most of it in Arunachal Pradesh. But India claims that it is part of India (Lal, 2008, p. 94). Water has become linked to land disputes. China claims Arunachal Pradesh (Particularly Twang) and also assert a claim over the parts of Sikkim. China has a problem with India as India is playing host to Dalai Lama and Tibetan refugees. All the mentioned issues arouse when China invaded Tibet and Tibet lost the status of a buffer zone between India-China (Pokharna, 2009).

Today India and China both the nations consider Tibet region very significant for their national interest. Since the forceful invasion of Tibet in 1949, India has explicitly stated its position over Tibet and accepted it as an internal part of China but on the other hand, India also granted political asylum to Tibetan spiritual and temporal leader Dalai Lama and to his Tibetan community (Lidarev, 2019).

### **Indian Opinion on the Chinese Invasion of Tibet**

In the beginning, India had supported Tibet's claim as an independent state. On December 7, 1950, Jawahar Lal Nehru stated in the Parliament: "It is not right for any country to talk about its sovereignty

or suzerainty over an area outside its own immediate range. That is to say, since Tibet is not the same as China, it should ultimately be the wishes of the people of Tibet that should prevail and not any legal or constitutional arguments- the last voice in regard to Tibet hold be the voice of the people of Tibet and of nobody else.”

The above-mentioned statement of India’s first Prime Minister was very important in many respects. It reflects India’s stand on the right of the people. It also reveals a clear understanding of the Tibetan Issue (Mehrotra, 2000, p.14). The Chinese entry into Tibet was criticized all over the world. The Government of India criticized the attack and said that the Chinese government could have waited further to solve the matter by a peaceful approach. India opposed China’s entry into Tibet as military action could cause unrest and disturbance in her own border. India Knew that the Chinese forceful occupation of Tibet will dilute the status of Tibet as a buffer state. But despite giving Parliamentary remarks India did nothing to protect Tibetans from Chinese. It was explicit by India’s behavior that it disliked Chinese incursion into Tibet but do not want to infuriate China (Pokharana, 2009, p.140). India’s policy was to avoid provoking China but at the same time to protect Tibetans and their nation is in the national interest of India. Hence India provided moral and material support to the Tibetan Government headed by Dalai Lama.<sup>46</sup> China attacked and controlled Tibet on October 1, 1950. However, despite massive protests and concerns among the Indian public opinion Nehru concede that neither India nor any other external power could prevent the Chinese takeover of Tibet (Pokharana, 2009, p.15).

In 1950, Tibetan leader Dalai Lama appealed to the United Nation to intervene in the Tibetan case and claimed that “It was British persuasion which led Tibet to sign a treaty which superimposed on it the nominal (non-interfering) suzerainty of China and by which China was accorded the right to maintain a mission in Lhasa, though it was strictly forbidden to meddle in the internal affairs of Tibet. Apart from that fact, even the nominal suzerainty in which Tibet conceded to China is not enforceable because of

the non-signature of the treaty of 1914 by the Chinese. It will be seen that Tibet maintained independent relations with other neighbouring countries, such as India and Nepal” (“Dalai lama’s appeal to UN (1950) | Friends of Tibet (INDIA),”). Tibet was not a member of the United Nation, so it did not receive a positive response, and the Dalai Lama’s appeal was not heard at the United Nations General Assembly. Tibet was looking at Indian leaders to support the Tibetan cause but India did not want to infuriate China so it did not support the Tibetan Appeal to the United Nation. Instead of raising the Tibetan issue at the general assembly, India stated that the Tibetan problem is the internal matter of the People Republic of China (*Occupation of Tibet and Its Appeal to the UN (1950)*, 2010).

### **1954, India-China Agreement on Tibet**

No doubt India did not like the way China had settled her affairs with Tibet, yet the former has to face realities. India-China agreement on Trade and Intercourse on Tibet region was signed on 29 April 1954. Under that agreement, India gave all territorial rights and privileges enjoyed in Tibet by the British government of India and recognized that Tibet was a region of China. It seemed by signing that agreement India surrendered to China the Tibet region of China.” The agreement was to be in force for eight years (Munjil & Chand, 2011, p. 276).

Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence were signed on April 29, 1954. These principles were first formally uttered in the Agreement on Tibet region between India and China. In the preamble of Panchsheel agreement, it was stated that the two Governments “have resolved to enter into the present Agreement based on the following principles (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India): -

1. Mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty;
2. Mutual non- aggression;
3. Mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs;
4. Equal and mutual benefits;
5. Peaceful coexistence.

The Panchsheel agreement opened the door to the Chinese military control of the Roof of the world by the People's Liberation Army (PLA). This translated into building a network of roads and airstrips heading towards the Indian frontiers in NEFA, UP, and Ladakh. But India was never benefited from its generosity. On the contrary, it lost a peaceful and friendly neighbor, Tibet.

In one of the most detailed studies of Sino-Indian relations from a historical perspective, John Graver makes a convincing case that India-China relations have, over the years, been shaped by a deep and enduring geopolitical rivalry. According to Graver, the rivalry is rooted in the decades-long, multi-layered, and frequently sharp conflict over the two states relations with the lands and peoples lying around and between them. Moreover, the idealistic Five principles were never followed either in a letter or in spirit by China. Chinese intrusions into Indian territory began hardly three months after the treaty was signed in June 1954 (Kinger, 2011, p. 217).

### **Basis of the Tibetan Problem**

The Tibetan Problem is rooted in the history of Tibetan nationalism and Tibet- China relations. It can be divided into four main periods. At the beginning of the first phase, from 630 to 842 AD, the largest Tibetan Empire was formed by the merger of several small states. During this period the territory and people of the Tibetan Plateau were politically unified by the Tibetan empire. It was the only time in the history that all Tibet was unified under an independent centralized Tibetan state. And it is during this period that political identities, the fundamentals of later Tibetan nationalism were consolidated. This period is also called the golden period in Tibetan history. Tibetan Empire collapsed in 842 AD and it was never again politically unified under one ruler until the mid-13th century. Tibet was a dependent state under the Mongol rulers from 1260 AD to 1368 AD. During the Mongol empire, Tibet established a priest-patron relationship with the Mongolian rulers which Tibetan also called as Cho-Yon relationship. After the Mongol empire, China was ruled by the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) (R, 2011, p. 234). During that period Tibet was independent of Chinese influence. In 1644 AD

Manchu dynasty taken over power in China from the Ming dynasty. Meanwhile in Tibet Fifth Dalai Lama was in power and he is politically very active but after his demise, the succeeding Dalai Lamas were weak rulers. Hence the Tibet again become a dependent state under Manchu rulers (N, 2017, p.4). In the 1911 Cho-Yon relationship came to its end with the fall of the Manchu empire. After the collapse of Manchu rulers, Tibet formally declared its independence in 1912.

Even the Tibetan had already declared Tibet an independent state, but there was still direct Chinese interference in the internal matter of Tibetans. Thus, during the second phase, China ruled Tibet for a brief period of three years (1911 to 1914). In the third phase (1914 to 1950), Tibet was free from Chinese influence and it acted as an independent nation. Nationalist sentiments among Tibetan citizens had begun during this period. But it is the irony of this Buddhist nation that although it had achieved its de facto independence during this period with the support of the British Empire, it later failed to gain international recognition as an independent state (N, 2017, p.7).

The last phase of the Tibetan Issue is the existing period which started in 1950 with the invasion of Tibet by Communist China. China calls it the Liberation of Tibet and on the contrary Tibetan people call it the forceful occupation of Tibet. Tibet-China signed a Seventeen-point Agreement in 1951 under which Tibet was an autonomous region under the Chinese suzerainty and sovereignty (N, 2017, p. 12). China openly violated the assurances which it promised to implement. That was the reason behind the severe clashes that took place in Tibet from 1956 onwards between Tibetan and Chinese forces. Lhasa witnessed an open revolt against the Chinese in March 1959. To save the life of the highest spiritual and political leader of Tibetans, the close advisors and ministers of the Dalai Lama helped him to escape from Tibet. On March 31, 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama crossed into Indian territory and on his request, India granted him political asylum (Sikri, 2011). Since then Dalai Lama with his exiled community is continuously struggling for the "genuine autonomy" for Tibet from people's

republic of China. After the flight of Dalai Lama large number of Tibetan people followed their leader in exile and took refuge here. They left Tibet because of fear of persecution at the hands of Chinese. Every year around 1000 to 1500 Tibetans come to India, some of them come to pay homage to their religious leader and some to settle in India. Presently more than 1,08,005 Tibetan refugees are living in India (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2019, p. 251).

### **China's Apprehensions on India's Stance on Tibet**

Since 1954, India has accepted that Tibet is an integral part of China. It explicitly stated that India supports the One China policy. The successive government in India reaffirmed its stance on Tibet. In 2010, Indian Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao stated that the Chinese again sought reiteration of India's position on Tibet that "Tibet is a part of China and any anti-China activities will not be allowed on India's soil"(NDTV, 2010). In 2003, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited China, and both the countries signed the "Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation". India again affirmed its stand on Tibet and in return, China acknowledged Indian sovereignty over Tibet (Pokharana, 2009, p. 293).

On the contrary, China is suspicious of India's stand on Tibet. China calls the Tibetan leader Dalai Lama a separatist and the greatest threat to the sovereignty of China ("China calls Dalai Lama a 'separatist', says he fled after failed armed rebellion," 2017). As per the Chinese view by giving refuge to Dalai Lama, India has interfered in China's internal affairs in violation of the Panchsheel agreement of 1954 and betrayed China. China sees India as expansionist and blames that Arunachal (especially Tawang) is the part of China and India has illegally occupied it. Moreover, China is apprehensive about India's diplomacy over the Tibetan government in exile (Jacob, 2018).

### **India- China Galwan skirmishes and US diplomacy over Tibet**

In June, 2020, when the world is going through COVID crisis, India-China again engulfed in a worst

border conflict in last 45 years. Chinese troops again violated the boundary standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Galwan valley, in the disputed territory of Ladakh ("China reaches out to India; Says meet us halfway," 2020) There were casualties on both sides. India lost twenty soldiers, while China did not reveal how many casualties it suffered. Many reasons aggravated the tension between India and China. The major reason is China is objecting to India's border road project, along with the Line of Actual Control. China has opposed its construction because it does not want India to build a road in the disputed area. In response, India claimed that it had built a road in Indian territory (India TV, 2020). Several secondary reasons made China hostile toward India, these are China's opposition to India's decision to address Article 370 (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2020) , China wants to create an observation post on Indian side of LAC which India opposed, America and other western countries are criticizing China internationally for spreading coronavirus. Recently, in May 2020, the US introduced a bill that aims to recognize Tibet as an independent country and challenge One China Policy. The bill has been enthusiastically welcomed by the Tibetan government living in exile in India and the Tibetan community everywhere (EurAsian Times Desk, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

National security is the basis on which a nation's existence and its growth are guaranteed. Hence not only India and China, for every nation its national security and national interests are the key factor which is the basis of the foreign policy and its relations towards the other countries. In the 21st century, India and China are the only nations that have the longest unresolved land border dispute. But despite the lack of an agreed border settlement, both the countries are cooperating in a number of spheres. India- China are the two emerging economies and most populous nations of the world. They share broad consensus and common interests in major international affairs. They are influential members of many important regional and international institutions and mechanisms. India and China are the largest trading partners since

2010. Together they can play a major role in the growth and stability of the South Asian region. Although, India and China have improved their economic ties and cooperating in many sectors. But still, the Sino-Indian border problem remains an unresolved issue. It appears that once the historic status of Tibet as a buffer zone between British India and China is resumed that would resolve the border problem between India and China. Hence it would not be wrong to say that Tibet holds a strategic position in the geopolitics of India and China and the Tibet issue is one of the major irritants in Sino-Indian relations.

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# NEP 2020, Peace Education and Quest for a Global Curriculum

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*[The aspect of peace education is very well synchronised with ideas of Indian education and therefore should be given a due space, by making peace education a connecting link to keep students connected internationally besides developing a solid peace knowledge base back home. The question obviously is how to develop such a globally relevant peace content and later integrate it in the Indian curriculum that will be developed soon as per the policy directions.]*

One of the significant features of the recently released and much discussed New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is to internationalise Indian education by opening up Indian higher education to global players. Now Indian universities can set up their campuses in other nations and foreign universities can open up their campuses in India too. Although setting up of campuses by reputed universities in India is a welcome step; however, to actualise it and even before that realising its pros and cons on the ground is not seen by critics without many ifs and buts, what's, why's and how's.

Because a larger chunk including columnists, field experts, intellectuals and academics are concerned rather apprehensive about increasing privatization of higher education in the Indian context besides doubting the quality delivery by such big foreign brands as it is believed that such campuses when outside of their own countries donot deliver the quality that is expected of them. Also there lies a fundamental concern that is working in unison towards a common global curriculum that is globally relevant, inclusive, humane, gender sensitive and with peace education content besides being well integrated, all-encompassing and fully synchronised with the local as well as global ethos. Such a task

needs a lot of ground work and has to be started sooner to get desired results.

The main pressing concern at the moment is that of the curriculum development, keeping in view inclusivity, integrity, novelty, experiential learning aspect besides critical thinking which have been discussed and emphasised upon in the policy as well. The question is who will do this curriculum development and are there enough academic bodies to do it besides NCERT, keeping in view the global standard and modern needs that can be meted out through education and injected into the younger generations. Therefore, the prime consideration at this juncture should be the kind of curriculum development that makes Indian curriculum global in scope which ultimately realises internalisation of Indian education.

## **Why Peace Education can be a connecting Link**

Peace education or Peace content in an integrated form in curriculum is the need of the hour as world is too peace deficit at the moment with a huge human cost especially now. Right from the Wuhan virus outbreak leading to pandemic Covid 19 as a global catastrophe to the recent horrendous Lebanon bomb blasts, to increasing bioterrorism to ego and power clashes between big powers, nuclear proliferation and terrorism hardly any region on the globe is peaceful and safe.

Frankly speaking, the peace education needs to be critically evaluated and integrated into primary as

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well as higher education as it is imperative to build harmony and manufacture peace. It is a fact that world at the moment needs just one thing that is peace content in curriculum to counter global terrorism and widespread uncertainty and insecurity. The aspect of peace education is very well synchronised with ideas of Indian education and therefore should be given a due space, by making peace education a connecting link to keep students connected internationally besides developing a solid peace knowledge base back home. The question obviously is how to develop such a globally relevant peace content and later integrate it in the Indian curriculum that will be developed soon as per the policy directions.

### **Current Scenario**

Curriculum development in the present context generally has been understood as making students globally competent, however the aim must not be making younger generation just globally competent but globally compatible and globally humane for peace building on the globe. The peace content, its efficacy and implementation therefore should be on the prime agenda of nations across the world with India taking lead. The fact remains that we cannot achieve desired results just by making students to compete blindly and consider rat race for acute meritocracy against each other as the sole objective and purpose of education.

Curriculum after all has to be for human beings and for society at large. The curriculum that does not infuse 'the Humane' element in any society can never be a complete curriculum. Like Vygotsky's theory was an attempt to explain consciousness as the end product of socialisation, likewise it can be argued that manufacturing 'the Humane' within the curriculum must be the prime focus of curriculum development and for that peace content has to be developed.

### **Need for a Peace Conscious Society**

As far as peace education in Indian context is concerned, it is not a new concept. However, teaching values and morals has been emphasised upon but peace education has not been given much priority and space. There is a considerable scholarly disinterest while we talk of integrating peace education as an essential aspect of the global curricular development that has to be given some serious attention. Though a global competition in education is good but creating a globally peace conscious society through a curriculum loaded with peace building content will be far better? Isn't that more important than everything and defines the very core of inter-disciplinary, multidisciplinary and universal educational standard. Doesn't that make curriculum more responsible and inclusive and integrating? Therefore, time has come to go for a global curriculum and think of a universal global curriculum to make citizens not just citizens but global citizens. Such a curriculum will boost both quality in the classroom and peace in the society with a global sense of consciousness and responsibility and more importantly peace consciousness.

The pity is while working on curriculum and curriculum development the academic bodies, organisations or as state, we have been more working on integrating technologies, integrating robotics, artificial intelligence and more or less technological aspects into education and trying to integrate them and calling it curriculum development. However, while developing this technological acumen we have been neglecting, that there must be an important element to it which is 'peace acumen'. Peace acumen (term coined by sociologist Adfer Shah) unlike technological acumen is the integration of the content of mutual harmony, global brotherhood, interfaith dialogue, peace building framework, dialogue and communication aspects and conflict resolution strategies into the mainstream curriculum to socialise the younger generations against violence.

Along with the technological acumen whole world needs integration and synchronisation of peace acumen as well. The peace acumen will evolve from the contents of peace education, well merged in the global curriculum across the disciplines and different and diverse streams of knowledge, which will not just highlight the importance of peace, mutual harmony, brotherhood and love but also manufacture and construct a society that values peace, rather than violence, works for harmony rather than hate and bloodshed and respects human and social development rather than nuclear weapons and war mongering. Unless and until peace content doesn't come in an integrated form in the curriculum and becomes a compulsory part of its development process, all curriculum development will be an unfinished and an incomplete project.

Therefore, let it not be an optional content learning skill now but a compulsory and main skill to learn because the modern world and current younger generation doesn't just need to work with peace or learn peace or learn the elements of peace but need to live with it and develop analytical and all the methodological and sustainable aspects of manufacturing peace on the ground. Therefore academicians, experts or the authorities concerned at higher level who have been thinking of curriculum development specially with the coming of NEP 2020, the peace element and peace content in curriculum definitely will be a step towards building India's and Globe's new innovation and peace economy.

### **Tail Piece**

Given the new policy, there is a clear emphasis on overhauling curriculum in Indian schools, reduction in syllabi, focus on experiential learning and critical thinking. If we have to achieve and create a classroom atmosphere for experiential learning and critical thinking, it calls for a drastic change in the current curriculum in use and such a huge responsibility can't be just done by school education departments, teachers or universities by nominating a few members for inputs but needs a global and serious engagement and experts from global organizations especially who work on the theme of

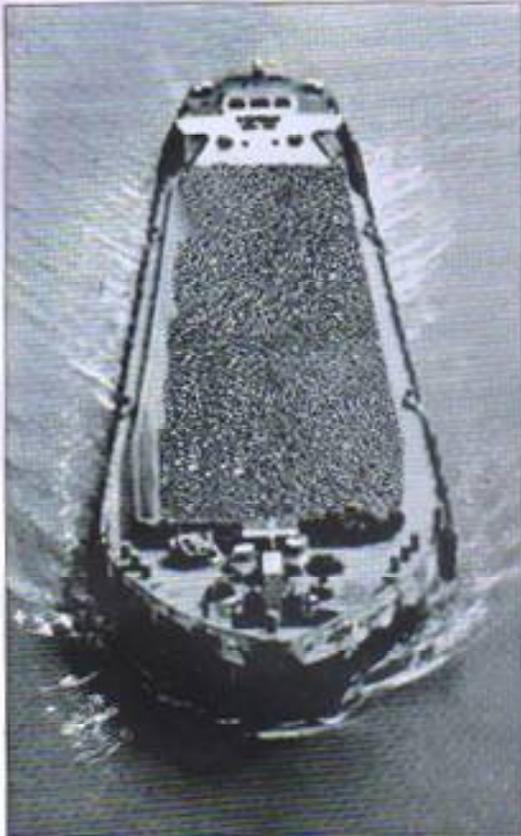
education and have expertise on peace building both in the field and in theory.

Today when India's NEP2020 talks of skill development, let peace building be classified and defined as a skill so that youth work for peace and manufacture it for a global peaceful society. Lastly at the global level let major organisations working on comparative education, allied societies and in cooperation with different nation states in take a lead role in proposing a curriculum of a global standard.

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