

DIALOGUE
QUARTERLY

Volume-19 No. 1 July-September, 2017

DIALOGUE

QUARTERLY

Editorial Advisory Board

Mrinal Miri
Jayanta Madhab
B.B. Kumar

Editor

J.N. Roy

Associate Editor

Pranav Kumar

Subscription Rates :

For Individuals (in India)

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

For Institutions:

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

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

Advertisement Rates :

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

ASTHA BHARATI
DELHI

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

© Astha Bharati, New Delhi

Printed and Published by

Dr. Lata Singh, IAS (Retd.)
Secretary, Astha Bharati

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

Working Office:
23/203 East End Apartments,
Mayur Vihar, Phase-I Extension,
Delhi-110096
Phone : 91-11-22712454
e-mail : asthabharati1@gmail.com
web-site : www.asthabharati.org

Printed at : Nagri Printers, Naveen Shahdara, Delhi-32

Contents

Editorial Perspective	7
Welcome Change of Course in J&K Of Demonetisation and the GST	
1. North-East Scan	
Education: Challenges of the Millennial Generation	13
<i>Patricia Mukhim</i>	
Flood in Assam: Cause, Costs and Contention	16
<i>M. P. Bezbaruah</i>	
ST but not Tribal	20
<i>Pradip Phanjoubam</i>	
2. The Doklam Saga	23
<i>Claude Arpi</i>	
3. India-China Relations in the Coming Decade	35
<i>Manoj Joshi</i>	
4. Post-Doklam: Assessing the Prospects of Chinese Strategy	46
<i>Namrata Goswami</i>	
5. 'The India-China Border: Is There a Solution in Sight?'	63
<i>Shyam Saran</i>	
6. India's Emergence is Responsible, While China's Seems to Disturb and Disrupt	68
<i>Dr. Anirban Ganguly</i>	
7. Dealing With the Communist China	73
<i>Shankar Sharan</i>	
8. New Silk Roads and the Indian Alternative	83
<i>Anita Sengupta</i>	

9. Silk Road and India: The Historical Perspective <i>Dr. B.B. Kumar</i>	97
10. The Legitimation of Empress Wu and the Northern Colossus of Tun-huang <i>Nirmala Sharma</i>	111
11. Theo-Cosmological Issues in Gandhian Thought <i>Sanjay Kumar Shukla</i>	126
12. Demonetisation and After: A Discursive Review <i>Prof. Durgadas Roy</i>	135
13. Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal and His Work <i>Dilipkumar Mohanta</i>	142
14. Rest Houses for Travellers and Pilgrims in Ancient India <i>Dr. Bachchan Kumar</i>	155
15. Cattle Smuggling: A Menace to the Indian Society and Public Health in Bangladesh <i>Bimal Pramanik & Jayanta Kumar Ray</i>	168
16. Nationalism in India as Reflected in the Hindi Poetry <i>Dr. Shambhu Lal Verma</i>	176

Editorial Perspective

Welcome Change of Course in J&K

After over two years of pursuing a rather tough approach towards the separatists in the state, the Central government on October 23, 2017, announced the appointment of Dineshwar Sharma, former Director, Intelligence Bureau, as centre's representative to open the dialogue process in the state. The government invested certain seriousness to the measure, as the Union Home Minister himself announced the appointment. He underscored that Sharma's term have no restrictions and he is free to talk to anyone, to restore peace, normalcy and resolve the problem and issues affecting the state. It clearly represented the change of the stand in not engaging with separatists and dealing firmly with the secessionist militant groups.

It's a welcome move, as engagement and dialogue remain the best option in the state. This step will also ease the pressure on the coalition government in the state in view of the upsurge in violence ever since the death of Hizbul Mujahidin Commander, Burhan Wani in July 2016. The reactions on the announcement are on expected lines. The PDP and the Chief Minister have welcomed it, the National Conference (Farooq Abdullah) and the state Congress are wary of the outcome, but welcome it as the defeat of the centre's (read BJP) muscular approach in the state. Separatists led by the Hurriet and the United Jihad Council took some time to react but expectedly termed it as infructuous and a ploy to buy time, and reiterated their old preconditions to the resumption of dialogue, viz. acceptance of Kashmir as a disputed territory, acceptance of three parties to the dispute and that it should be resolved according to the UN Resolutions (1948). It is rejection with conditionalities. In brief, everyone welcomes the initiative with their own caveats. People in the valley reeling under, over two and half years of unrest are happy and expect return of peace and normalcy.

As its final outcome is concerned, there is informed skepticism in view of the past experience of similar exercises. Farooq Abdullah (NC) and Safuddin Soz (Congress) and some experts recommend simultaneous opening of dialogue with Pakistan. In the past, interlocutors like K.C. Pant (2001-02), N.N. Vohra (2004) and three member mediators (M.A. Ansari, Ms.Radha Kumar and Dileep Padgaonkar 2010-11) and several rounds of Round Tables (2004) with Hurriet Conference participating, had all failed to yield any results. Hence, the separatists have no faith in the initiative. Yet, all of them explicitly or by implication welcome the initiative in order to restore peace and normalcy. Kashmiris are the ultimate optimists and in J&K process is perhaps as important, if not more, as the outcome.

Besides the new initiative is slightly different than the past ones. Sharma is a government owned entity and has no restrictions. Yet if the past is any indicator it's going to be a time-consuming and torturous course. Nobody knows it more than Sharma himself as he is an old Kashmir hand. He has infinite patience. In J&K appearances and the reality have constant and simultaneous existence. Presence of Pakistani role is also real. Azadi and autonomy mean different things to different individuals and groups. All these provide enough space and hope for peace and dialogue. The new spoiler is resentful and militant youth who so far have been faceless, leaderless and without any defined agenda. Identifying and engaging them will be crucial but most difficult task of the representative. They are strong in south Kashmir. But they themselves are the product of no engagement, and no empathy policy of the government despite the efforts of the coalition partner PDP. An engagement with sincerity is likely to defuse their anger and alienation and make them stakeholder.

As Sharma himself has stated that his first task is to restore normalcy and peace in the state. A meaningful engagement can only follow it. All stakeholders in Kashmir have their own viewpoints, but none, including the Hurriet (except Gillani) can resist for long an engagement with government fearing irrelevance. SAS Gillani is an exception, as his whole politics is premised on Islamism and anti-Indianism. PDP will be the main gainer if the dialogue gets traction, and Pakistan the biggest loser. But all this has happened in the past. All stakeholders know there is no future beyond India but wish for some recognition and respect. The efforts of Sharma will have to overcome the long held view in the Valley muslims that the final, solution of the Kashmir problem is yet

to come. Lot of history rides the issue. The process will be helped only if the opposition political parties stop gloating over the alleged failure of muscular policy of BJP, and the BJP supporters carping about Articles 370 and 35A. Neither is helpful and they must realize the issues involved are above party politics and serious for the country.

In a democracy no policy can exclude dialogue, consensus and engagement. The Central government rightly shuns dialogue with Pakistan and wrongly used the same prescription with its own citizens in J&K. It has realized the mistake and moved on and needs to be complimented for it and not criticized. The process started needs patience, goodwill and resolve to stay the course by all, for dialogue and engagement are not the only options but desirable also. However, for the initiative to succeed atleast in restoring relative peace, the media must restrain itself as slogans like Azadi and "autonomy" mean different things to different players in the Valley. Kashmiris crave relevance and respect. The objective of final reconciliation traverses the difficult path of bridging the reality of Indian Kashmir and long held sentiments of separatism and autonomous Kashmir. Pakistan is a real presence and spoiler with its proxies in the Valley. Making Pakistan irrelevant in the State holds key to conciliating the valley Muslims. Presently it is a difficult task.

The journey will be long and end uncertain. Frankness and compassion in any dialogue with Kashmiris is the best option, without much expectation. In short-term, restoration of peace and normalcy ought to be Sharma's first objective. Best of luck to him.

Of Demonetisation and the GST

In the last one year, since Prime Minister, Modi announced the demonetisation of Rs. 1000 and Rs. 500 notes on November 8, 2016 and implementation of the GST Tax regime from July 1, 2017, these two have undoubtedly dominated the social, political and media space. Even more than the prolonged confrontation between India and China at Doklam in the Chumbi Valley in July-August 2017.

Both the issues, though different in content and implication concern the future of the Indian economy. While the jury is still out on the need and outcome of the demonetisation, the GST regime is considered beneficial by all, only the management and details of its implementation have been widely criticized and rightly so. A broad political consensus

exists in favour of GST. The government is already on course correction and its only matter of time before it achieves a paradigm shift in Indian tax regime.

It is however, the demonetisation, which continues to arouse intense debate between its supporters and opponents. Completion of its one year on. November, 8 aroused more passions with the Central government celebrating the day as an “Anti-Black Money Day” and opposition as ‘Black Day’ highlighting the setback and misery it has caused to the country’s economy and the poor. Known experts and economists have joined the issue on both sides, flaunting statistics, and pronouncements in favour and against it with equal fervour. It is enough to bewilder a normal concerned citizen, particularly in a country where statistics on unemployment and economic indices, particularly in the informal sector, are not very reliable. There is no doubt that it was politically popular particularly among the poor, who ironically were worst hit by it. Its role in BJP’s win in Uttar Pradesh cannot be denied.

Lot of confusion regarding the motive and rationale of the demonetisation has been caused by the government itself by constantly shifting the goal posts of its objectives. From unearthing black money, ending terror funding and fake currency, to encouraging digitisation (e-transaction), cashless economy and jump in number of tax returns etc. were flaunted as serious disruptions unfolded in small businesses, informal and employment sectors. The government also explained these as short-term pain for a long-term gain. It was apparent that for the sake of secrecy, enough preparations were not made, leading to prolonged shortage of currency and distress. Hence, the outcome in short-term has been mixed, and painful. In terms of black money also the result was rather confusing with 15.28 lakh crore of the 15.44 lakh crore currency notes deposited in banks.

In view of the vehemence of argument, on both sides, common sense dictates that the truth lies somewhere in between. Initial hardships mainly affected the poor daily wage earners and the informal sector in businesses; particularly those who dealt in cash. Lakhs lost their jobs/ employment, and nobody knows how many have come back or resumed their old jobs. The Centre For Monitoring of Indian Economy in October, 2017 indicated loss of 15 million jobs between January-April 2017, immediately after the demonetisation. But it is difficult to pinpoint as to how many were due to demonetisation. Similarly, slowdown of the GDP in every quarter in 2017 can also not be attributed entirely to

demonetisation as trend had become visible in early 2016. However, there is no doubt that the measure affected demand and employment in informal sector, particularly this resulted in slowdown of domestic production, which is now picking up. However, the most worrying is the employment front. It is not growing and may have no direct connection with demonetisation, but critics are flaunting it as such. Such a monumental decision, affecting over 86 per cent of the currency under circulation is bound to cause suffering.

There is no doubt that it was a bold decision with economic implications whether beneficial or not. The jury is still out. Finally, it is a done deal and let us be clear on one point, that while we can support or criticise it as a policy measure, we should not doubt the motive of the government and cast aspersions, as some do. It does not serve the national interest and deters major policy decisions.

Even as the outcome of the demonetisation was being contested, on July 1, 2017 the GST become operational. However, the GST is a different story. No one opposes it in principle. The criticism is only about the manner, and content of the implementation which admittedly lacked imagination, preparation and empathy. As a result it has caused confusion and temporary setback to the economy, including, initially production and retailing. Small traders hit by the scourge of too many forms, returns and formalities, an implication the implementers of the scheme had failed to comprehend. Trading community was also hit by its habit of the past of non-compliance to rules and avoiding paying taxes. Evidently, the transit on these two fronts was painful and made worse by the complexity of implementation and the muddle of slabs and rates of GST. In retrospect both lacked commonsense and understanding of the ground level realities. Too much of bureaucratic approach landed otherwise laudable effort into controversy. Initial defence by the government in the face of genuine grievances led to course correction. Although contribution of the opposition parties in creating this mess was no less while negotiating the GST passage in Parliament.

Fortunately, the government has realized the mistake and is now with the help of the GST Council taking curative steps. In its last meeting in November, 2017 at Guwahati, the Council reduced the rigour of forms and pruned tax rates of various categories. Reduction of the highest GST of 28 per cent from 227 items to 50, underscored the enormity of the earlier folly.

There is no doubt about the benefits of the GST in long-term in simplifying the tax regime and inducing compliance and expanding the tax base. Informed opinion is that in the long-term the government should reduce the tax slabs to two, and have single return form quarterly, if not six monthly. In GST the country is in the right direction, with initial hiccups, partly due to ignorance and apprehensions. Mistake at the government level was that it presumed that everyone is digitally literate (most of the small traders and the informal sector is not) and this should be factored in future moves. Another negative factor is unstated government mistrust of the trading community making the compliance process difficult. Trust may perhaps beget better results. Yet, the GST will cross the hump sooner than later.

Finally, while the pros and cons of demonetisation will continue to be debated for sometime, the GST is undoubtedly winner and will rebound soon if the government continues to be responsive and has its ears to the ground. The overall impact of two major economic reforms, have no doubt caused slowdown of economy and pressure on employment sector and informal economy. The government expects that the turn around is round the corner. It will happen, however only if the government is responsive and modest in its defence, and the opposition constructive. As mentioned earlier, both are done deals and we all should move on.

—J.N. Roy

North-East Scan

Education: Challenges of the Millennial Generation

Patricia Mukhim*

Those born between 1982 and 2002 are called millennial kids. This generation came at the cusp of the information technology revolution. That these children are educated in pretty much the same manner as their parents were, is a worrying phenomenon. But what is of greater concern is that the millennial kids who are today parents themselves, some having attained the age of 35 years, see the same teaching methods being peddled through the same educational institutions. Very few schools and fewer colleges and universities have the learning ambience and methods which the challenges of the twenty-first century demand. We continue to produce batches of students who don't challenge their teachers and don't question the status quo when the basic ingredient of education is a questioning mind. This is because not much has changed in the educational pedagogy today and it baffles those with an analytical mind. An unexamined life is not worth living said the great Greek philosopher, Socrates. The question is, are we examining our education system, which we rely on to change our lives, our thinking and our attitudes? If we were, would the same set of teachers last a day if they continued to teach, using the same old pedagogy?

The present world has changed by leaps and bounds and the youth have expectations from their elders. But we seem to have failed them. The growing number of suicides is an indication that youth today cannot cope with mental pressures and the expectations that their parents have from them. There is a mismatch between what youth needs to stay alive

* The writer is editor, The Shillong Times and an eminent social activist, journalist and member of National Security Advisory Board.

and the education system they consume. Sadly, most parents continue to live their own unfulfilled dreams through their children and push them to the edge.

There is a whole debate today about the education system in this country and its failure to meet the needs of the present generation, where the whole concept of “work” has changed. The world of work today is not that of a person sitting behind a typical desk and hammering at a typewriter. The computer which has replaced the typewriter is a sign of the twenty-first century information technology revolution. The workplace is now a flexible space; people with the right qualification demand flexi-timings from their organisations. A person with a computer can now work from anywhere. That’s the whole idea of the business processing industry (BPO), where a person working in a back office in India is communicating with a client in a different country with a different time zone and providing the person with investments decisions, insurance and health choices a plethora of other information.

Today, change is even more constant and redundancy sets in faster than we can cope with. Look at the revolution in mobile phone technology. What we learnt yesterday is passé today. Yet many who have crossed the age of thirty and have gone through a university education think they already know too much and have therefore stopped learning. They believe they are sorted out and can teach batches of students without relearning and reinventing themselves. But the reality is that many students have surpassed their teachers in terms of knowledge gained. They are bored by the teacher’s inability to read their minds and sense that boredom. What the student needs from the teacher is to hear real life experiences. Indeed, the pace at which the world of work is changing means that the skills learnt yesterday have to be replaced by those that work today and also to predict what will work for tomorrow.

The oft quoted adage, “Learning begins at the cradle and ends at the grave,” is something we don’t pay attention to. Hence, parents continue to tell their kids, “If it worked for us, it has to work for you.” Now that’s really an outdated thought.

An article I read the other day in ‘The Mint,’ titled, “A beginner’s guide to lifelong learning,” by Aruna Sankaranarayanan was educative. She quotes Harvard economist, Sendhile Mullainathan who says: “The list of professions and sectors soon to be obsolete grow steadily by the day.” What Mullainathan is saying is that we cannot predict which

careers will be there tomorrow. Hence, there is an imperative to revamp our traditional models of education to meet the needs of a fast-paced world where both knowledge and skills are quickly and unpredictably outdated. Hence, no matter at what stage of life we are at, there is need to keep learning and to be lifelong students.

Barbara Oakley’s book, “Mindshift: Break through obstacles and discover your hidden potential,” is intuitive. The book is a primer on overcoming stereotypes and preconceived ideas about what is possible for us to learn and become. Now, when we are constantly pushed by our organisations to retrain and reinvent ourselves to adapt to new technologies and changing industries, this book informs on how we can uncover and develop talents we didn’t realize we had – no matter what our age or background. In Mindshift, Barbara Oakley shows us not just what we can do with passion but also how to broaden our passions after drawing from latest neuro-scientific insights, Dr. Oakley debunks the simplistic ideas of “aptitude” and “ability,” which she says give us only a snapshot of who we are now – with little consideration about how we can change. In fact, for most who find it increasingly difficult to remember things Barbara Oakley says even seemingly “bad” traits, such as a poor memory, come with hidden advantages – like increased creativity.

After profiling people from around the world who have overcome learning limitations of all kinds, Dr. Oakley shows us how we can turn perceived weaknesses, such as impostor syndrome (high achievers who often fear being “found out” and have a tendency to attribute their success to external factors) and advancing age, into strengths. People may feel like they’re at a disadvantage, if they pursue a new field later in life, yet those who change careers can be fertile cross-pollinators: They bring valuable insights from one discipline to another. Dr. Oakley also teaches strategies for learning that are backed by neuroscience, so that we can realize the joy and benefits of a learning lifestyle. Mindshift further informs us how people change and grow. Our biggest stumbling blocks can be our own preconceptions, but with the right mental insights, we can tap in to hidden potential and create new opportunities.

After addressing several groups of young people, over many years, I have realised that what they value most is to hear of my own life experiences rather than a pep talk or a Ted Talk which they can get from the internet anyway. There is no dearth of people with experiences whom the youth can learn from, so that they can skip the avoidable

pitfalls. Education today is no longer about “classroom teaching.” Students and young adults can benefit more from mentoring. Mentors are essential for combating unemployment and underemployment among today’s young workers and can make those hard earned college degrees seem like they were worth it again.

If change is the only thing that makes sense today, the question is whether our education system is flexible enough to change quickly, reinvent itself and adapt to the current challenges and then to move on to the meet the next set of challenges, simply because the world of work is changing? I’m afraid the educational bureaucracy in this country is not geared to meet this demand.

Flood in Assam: Cause, Costs and Contention

M. P. Bezbaruah*

Given the physiography and climatic set-up of Assam and its surroundings areas, floods are perhaps inevitable in its plains. The Brahmaputra and the Barak valleys are relatively narrow strips of plain land surrounded by tall mountains. The entire area including the surrounding highlands receives abundant rainfall over a long rainy season that often begins well in advance of the onset of the southwest monsoon, which is generally quite vigorous in the region. The huge volume of water flowing down the surrounding highlands, including the Tibet Plateau which does not always get quickly drained out through the channels of the Brahmaputra, the Barak and their tributaries. Resulting in overflowing of the rivers and flooding of the valleys, therefore a natural consequence to be expected during this extended rainy season which sometimes lasts well into October. Indeed, formation of these fertile flood plains owes much to this flooding process and resulting in deposition of sediments by the receding flood water.

*M. P. Bezbaruah is Professor of Economics, Gauhati University.
Email: bezbaruah.mp@gmail.com

We are told that floods have become more frequent after the devastating earthquake of 1950, as a result of which apparently the riverbeds have become swollen. However, reports of floods, some of which were quite devastating, are there even for the times prior to the earthquake. Two other associated problems with floods are river bank erosion and sand deposition. Every year substantial acres of inhabited, vegetated and cultivable land near the riverbanks get eroded and engulfed in the rivers during the rainy season. Another phenomenon frequently affecting livelihood of villagers, especially on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra, is large deposition of sands left behind by receding flood waters which renders the land unsuitable for cultivation for several years thereafter.

Before discussing the damages arising from floods and the possible measures and strategies for avoiding and mitigating these damages, it is necessary to note how some well-intended, but sometimes not so well thought out, measures have actually ended up increasing flood damages and vulnerability of the people of Assam to floods. From the geological-geographical perspective, these active rivers carrying huge volumes of water and sediments, flowing down the unstable mountain ranges, require play areas on either side in their journey through the plains for shifting their courses from time to time. These play zones of the rivers, fertile as they are, should ideally be used only for seasonal and non-permanent activities. But in Assam, many such areas have substantial human habitation, many of which were set up as a part of government policy during the first half of the twentieth century. In course of time, these areas needed to be “developed” with roads and other infrastructure requiring permanent constructions. People and property in these areas are not only regularly invaded by floods in the rainy season but the areas often get eroded and engulfed leading to permanent displacement of dwellers.

In the early years after independence, embankments were raised in some parts to protect towns and other vulnerable habitats from floods. At the beginning, these were stated to be purely temporary measures. However, seeing the benefits of these erections, people in other flood prone areas started demanding more embankments. Thus, what began as a selective area-specific and temporary measure got converted into an extended and permanent structural constructs. In the longer-term, these structures have had several undesired consequences. By obstructing natural siltation process of river banks, these structures have resulted

in lifting of the riverbeds over time. In many areas now rivers flow above the levels of the surfaces outside the embankments during the peak flow season. In the event of the breach of the embankments, floods in surrounding areas can now be sudden and devastating. Moreover, draining out the flood waters becomes more time taking. The embankments have also reportedly interfered with the biological procreation process of aquatic life in the valleys. Meanwhile, developmental activities in the higher catchment areas in the forms of construction of roads, dams and urban centres have also contributed to volumes of sediments carried in the river streams, aggravating the situation downstream in the plains.

Economic cost of floods and erosion in the form of loss of life, livelihood and property including public assets of roads, embankments, irrigation channels etc. are well known. Huge sum of public money and non-governmental contributions for relief and rehabilitation also come at the expense of cutting down of allocation for other important causes. Moreover, the civil administration in the districts is over-stressed during floods for deploying relief and rehabilitation. Very often even the defense forces are required to be pressed into service for rescue and relief operations. Another consequence which has long-term implication is the loss of teaching and learning time of the students from flood prone areas. As schools are generally closed and often used as relief camps during floods, the youngsters in the areas are deprived of valuable schooling days. This loss can result in permanent deficiency in the formation of human resource in them with adverse implications for their longer-term efficiency and earning prospects.

No matter how much people of Assam may hope for a permanent solution to the flood problem of the state, a final and feasible solution has eluded so far. Sometimes references are made to the Chinese turning its river of sorrow (Hoang Ho) to a river of prosperity. A similar transformation of the mighty Brahmaputra along with its turbulent tributaries may not be feasible for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that the Brahmaputra, unlike the Hoang Ho, is an international river. Dredging of the riverbeds for larger and quicker flows is sometimes discussed and contemplated as a solution. The present dispensation at Dispur has also been actively considering dredging. The counter-argument is that the river system of this magnitude cannot be successfully tamed by dredging. While dredging may not be the full answer, it can possibly contribute towards mitigation and be a

part of the solution package. Dredging to maintain a waterway right through the Brahmaputra in Assam and across in Bangladesh into the Bay of Bengal may have several benefits. One of the possible gains is that a deeper channel through the middle part of the river can reduce the pressure of water on the banks reducing erosional activity discernably.

For a permanent solution, the pan-Indian river-linking project may also be looked at. If the excess water flowing down the Brahmaputra can be diverted across Eastern India to the dry lands in the central and southern parts of the country, both the regions apparently stand to gain. Socio-economic feasibility, financial implications and environmental consequences obviously have to be thoroughly investigated and debated before any step can be taken in this direction. Moreover, the Brahmaputra being an international river, Bangladesh, the country in the downstream, will also have to be taken on board before such a project is undertaken.

In this context the recent media report that China is planning a thousand kilometer long tunnel to divert the Tsampo (the local name for the Brahmaputra in Tibet) to the dry region in central China should receive serious attention, despite China's quick denial of the report. What are going to be negative and positive consequences of such an eventuality need to be worked out. A treaty in this regard between the three stake holding nations of China, India and Bangladesh on sharing water of the Brahmaputra and Barak river systems is an imperative.

As a permanent solution to the problem of floods and riverbank erosion is awaited, for the present it is necessary to focus on improving short-run adaptation to the twin natural hazard. Improving monitoring, information sharing and early warning can be of great help. Putting a system in place for quick mobilization of rescue and relief is another area that deserves more attention. While the government machinery can be adequate for a flood of regular magnitude, mobilizing trained volunteers from the public can be necessary to augment rescue, relief and rehabilitation efforts during higher more devastating floods. There is a need to learn from the adaptive practices of the riverine tribal communities for more effective coping with floods. There are now instances of traditional dwelling designs of these tribal people being combined with modern materials and techniques to devise more robust houses fitted with sanitary toilets and drinking water system even for flooded conditions. Academic sessions of schools should be made flexible to ensure that loss of teaching hours is minimized.

ST but not Tribal

Pradip Phanjoubam*

Can there be any doubt that the new waves of demands amongst more communities in the Northeast for inclusion in the Schedule Tribes list of the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution are all about the benefits of reservation and nothing to do with a backward march to tribalism as many seem to think is the case. Let nobody be fooled that those demanding tribal status for their communities truly believe they are primitive hunting-foraging communities left outside the paradigms that define the modern world and its economy. What they want is to be classified as Scheduled Tribes in the Indian Constitution and not at all to be tribal in the anthropological sense of the term.

In Manipur, sections of the Meiteis, proud people with a long history as a unique “paddy state” and peoplehood defined by this status, known for their rich art and culture, theatre and cinema, are demanding it. There are also other sections of the same community who are either indifferent or even opposed to the demand, but that is another matter. In Assam, according to reports, none less than the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given the assurance that a proposal by the Assam government for inclusion of six communities, namely Koch-Rajbongshi, Tai-Ahom, Chutiya, Moran, Muttock and the Adivasi tea-tribes, for inclusion in the ST list will be taken into consideration. According to these reports, Union Minister Ramdas Athawale confirmed this and said that once the Schedule Tribes Commission has examined the proposal and given the green signal, a Bill will be introduced in the Parliament to take the matter forward to its logical end.

Interestingly, these reports also say high caste Assamese Hindus, the Kalitas and Brahmins would also be provided reservation as many of them are economically backward. This news probably will come to those amongst the Meiteis demanding the ST status as encouraging. Already the Manipur government has agreed to institute a committee to examine the matter. There have been opposition to the demand, especially from those already in the ST list, and again especially in

*The writer is editor, Imphal Free Press.

Manipur. The reason for this too is obvious – nobody wants new competitors on turfs they consider as theirs exclusively. The allegation is also that the communities now demanding to be listed as tribal had long detribalised and stepped into the new reality of the modern economy and polity, therefore they would be garnering undue advantages from the reservation system should they be allowed to be classified as STs again.

Probably there is much truth in this, and there obviously is something very wrong in this new race for classification as primitive. But the fault is not entirely with those who are demanding to become STs. If it is agreed that a society is a living organism given to learning, evolving and organising itself into progressively more sophisticated economies, cultures and polities, and that at one stage all societies were tribal, somewhere down the line, encouraged by the incentive structuring of the Indian Constitution, this evolutionary process has been deemed frozen to suit certain entrenched vested interests. Hence, regardless of economic and social progresses made by individual tribal persons, catalysed by the positive discrimination guaranteed by the Constitution, the detribalisation process that normally should have been a natural process, is now deemed no longer relevant. With it, deprivation has ceased to be treated as an actionable social or economic issue, and is instead interpreted more as a genetic condition, or birth right of those already classified as deprived communities.

It is fine for a tribal person to benefit from reservation to enter the top and best paid government professions, becoming judges, professors, top civil servants etc., but if the children and grandchildren of these successful professionals – now no longer compelled to eke out a living from subsistent slash and burn agriculture, or go hunting and foraging from the forests for additional nutritional needs, whose associations and fraternal bondages now extend beyond the spheres of clans and tribes, who are no longer engaged in hostilities with other clans and tribes but make thousands of friends on social media, who are members of some of the most prestigious and exclusive clubs in the cities, who live in swanky flats in the country’s metropolises, attend the best educational institutions, who have long left behind the barter system as mode of commerce and are more comfortable with credit cards and internet banking – are still considered fit to reap the benefits of the Constitution’s guarantee of positive discriminations for STs, it was only time before others outside the ST list to begin to say, why not us too for these benefits. This is precisely what is happening.

As for instance, I cannot as an individual Meitei, endorse the demand for the Meiteis to become tribal again. However, because the elite amongst ST communities and their progenies continue to be entitled to positive discrimination, it must be said that it is difficult now for even those of us who see no merit in regressing to a primitive past, to rationally oppose this demand. Let there be no mistake then, to be Scheduled Tribe and to be tribal are no longer the same thing. The first is a Constitutional privilege while the second is an anthropological state of being of certain communities still stuck in a past era and economy. The first was designed with a view to lift those in the second category out of the time warp they were caught in. Today, the distance between the two has become stark and greater, this distance becomes even more when others outside the ST category will begin to see incongruence and unfairness in this policy.

There can be no gainsaying that when people in the same economic class are segregated, with one section permanently given a head start in the competition for jobs and livelihoods, the policy will ultimately begin to be seen as unjust. The answer as I see it is not in tribalising more, but detribalising those who have stepped out of the tribal world. The distinction between ST and tribal should be made official so that anybody and everybody can be given the freedom to call themselves tribal, but only those among them who are trapped in the primitive tribal economy are given the Constitutional benefits of the ST status. This is to say, the creamy layer of those who call themselves tribal can and should remain as tribal culturally, but not as Scheduled Tribes.

This will serve a double purpose. One, it will assuage the growing sense of injustice amongst those not in the ST list. Two, it will leave the benefits guaranteed for STs for those truly deprived amongst the tribal communities, helping them to also ultimately rise to be in the creamy layer. Maybe there is a third benefit as well. This is for those already in the ST list, but more for those wanting to be included in it now. Reservation should be treated as a bitter medicine. Addiction to reservation can dull the competitive spirit, thereby stunting intellectual growth in the long run. Even more damaging can be when achievers amongst the reserved category begin to doubt the worth of their own achievements because these did not come from open competition. This imaginably will be far more hurtful than the thought of others doubting the worth of their achievements.

The Doklam Saga

Claude Arpi*

After the 73-day confrontation between India and China near the Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan tri-junction, the time has come to look at what could be learned from the standoff. The Indian public has been surprised by the virulence of the Chinese reaction to India blocking the construction of a strategic road on Bhutanese territory. It is true that the Chinese get annoyed (or pretend to be) if the world does not mirror their interests.

Take an example from over 50 years ago: on September 26, 1965, a note was given by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Indian Embassy in Beijing; it related to an incident which had occurred a few days earlier.

The note asserted that “a mob of Indian hooligans went to the gate of the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi to make provocation, led by Indian officials and Congress leaders and driving a flock of sheep before them. They made a huge din, yelling that China had ‘invented absurd pretexts for threatening and intimidating India’ that ‘China wants to start a world war over some sheep and a few yaks,’ and so on and so forth.”

It continued in the same tone: “This ugly farce was wholly instigated and staged by the Indian Government ... The Indian Government will definitely not succeed in its attempt, by staging this ugly anti-Chinese farce, to cover up its crimes of aggression against China and the wretched picture of its troops fleeing in panic from the Chinese side of the China-Sikkim boundary. For a number of years you have flatly denied that Indian troops had intruded into Chinese territory across the China-

* Claude Arpi, Field Marshal K.M. Cariappa, Chair of Excellence, United Service Institution of India; Mobile: (0) 9443114400, Blog: <http://claudearpi.blogspot.com/website>: <http://www.claudearpi.net>

Sikkim boundary and built military works for aggression there. ...How can you succeed in hiding your shame? It was clearly because you knew yourselves to be in the wrong that you could not but hastily withdraw all your troops who had intruded to the Chinese side of the China-Sikkim boundary and demolish some of your aggressive military works there.” It sounds familiar today. But this referred to skirmishes near Nathu-la in Sikkim (not far from the present confrontation) during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war.

The Indian Government immediately answered the allegations about Indian citizens taking a procession of about 800 sheep: “[the government] had nothing to do with this demonstration. It was a spontaneous, peaceful and good-humoured expression of the resentment of the citizens of Delhi against the Chinese ultimatum and the threat of war against India on trumped-up and trivial issues. In India, as the Chinese Government is, no doubt, aware, citizens have the right of peaceful assembly and of peaceful demonstration. There is no reason for the Government of China to protest against this.”

Regarding another accusation of having fomented the Dalai Lama’s ‘rebellion’ in March 1959, Delhi boldly pointed out: “The falsehoods propagated by the Chinese Government do not even possess the virtue of consistency. The Chinese Government ought to be aware that rebellions do not take place under enticement or coercion.” And further said: “Where there is oppression, there is rebellion. It is futile to blame India for the troubles in Tibet and for large number of Tibetans being forced to leave their hearths and homes for refuge in other countries.” It is unfortunate that the MEA does not answer Beijing’s fake accusations in such straightforward manner anymore.

The event which had triggered the above exchange is rather amusing: an Indian politician (and later Prime Minister of India) took a herd of 800 goats to the Chinese Embassy in Delhi to send a message to Beijing that it was not worthwhile starting a war just because some herds had crossed an unmarked line. It is a great pity that today nobody is able to demonstrate in such humourous manner the futility of the present situation: China seems ready to risk an armed conflict just to build a road on the neighbour’s territory.

Asymmetric Warfare: One Battle Won, Three Lost

There is no doubt that India has today won a battle on the heights of Doklam and that’s why China is so furious; there will be no Chinese

road on the ridge and the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) may never be able to peep over into the Siliguri corridor.

Indeed, why should India have backed out from a legally and militarily strong position? Some in Beijing have started admitting the same, though the spokesperson continues to scream that China’s territory has been invaded. But Beijing’s violent reaction was undoubtedly to cover up internal factors such as the 90th anniversary of the PLA and the forthcoming session of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in October 2017 and the BRICS Conference at Xiamen in September first week.

One lesson of the standoff is that modern warfare is not just an affair of a few thousand infantrymen taking over a ridge as during the Napoleonic campaigns; it is multi-faceted warfare; China has understood this, probably better than Delhi.

In 2003, China’s Central Military Commission approved the concept of ‘Three Warfares,’ namely: (1) the coordinated use of strategic psychological operations; (2) overt and covert media manipulation; and (3) legal warfare designed to manipulate strategies, defence policies, and perceptions of target audiences abroad. China is ascendant on India in all three domains.

While some in India are satisfied with preventing the construction of the road, the other aspects of the standoff should be looked into (especially because India does have strong legal and historical arguments).

The Battle of History

One battle has been lost by Delhi — it has been unable to explain to the public some historical facts. The lack of a Historical Division in the Ministry of External Affairs has particularly ill-served India, letting Beijing having a field day. New Delhi did not point out to the Indian (and foreign) media, the Chinese trick about the 1890 Convention (known as the Convention of March 17, 1890, between Great Britain and China, relating to Sikkim and Tibet).

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson in Beijing vociferously managed to convince the Indian correspondents in Beijing that it was a valid treaty. However, the fact that the main stakeholders — Tibet and Sikkim (and Bhutan for the tri-junction) — were not even consulted, makes it an ‘imperial treaty’ with no validity.

In his book, *Tibet: A Political History*, Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa, the Tibetan politician and famous historian explained, “In 1890, a Convention was drawn up in Calcutta by Lord Lansdowne, the Governor-General of India and Sheng-t'ai, the manchu amban from Lhasa, without consulting the Government of Tibet. The first article of the Convention agreement defined the boundary between Tibet and Sikkim, and the second article recognised a British protectorate over Sikkim ... There was, however, no corresponding acknowledgment on the part of the British of China's authority over Tibet.”

Three years later, trade regulations were discussed to increase the trade facilities across the Sikkim-Tibet frontier: “Again, the provisions of that agreement could not be enforced because Tibet had not been a party to the negotiations. It is surprising that the British entered into a second agreement with the Manchus, when they knew from the results of the first agreement that there was no way of putting the agreement into effect,” says Shakabpa.

In practice, the Convention of 1890 and the trade regulations of 1893 proved to be of not the slightest use to the British as Tibet never recognised them; this eventually led London to directly ‘deal’ with Lhasa and send the Younghusband expedition to Tibet in 1904; it opened the doors to the tripartite Simla Convention in 1914, where British India, Tibet and China sat on equal footing.

Today, Beijing speaks of ‘renegotiating’ the 1890 Convention. It would consequently imply that the ‘equal’ treaties signed with the Tibetans, particularly the Simla Convention and the border agreement (defining the McMahon Line) in 1914, would be scrapped and India would have no more defined border with Tibet in the North-East. The Chinese have tried similar tricks earlier.

The Propaganda Warfare

Not only does Beijing hammer its views on the world media, but it tries to use Indian border population by praising and ‘promoting’ them.

An article published in July in the *China Travel Guide* magazine promotes Ziro as a tourist destination for Chinese travellers. Why ‘promote’ Ziro, headquarters of the lower Subansiri of Arunachal Pradesh?

The answer is simple: For Beijing, Ziro is part of Southern Tibet and the local population is hence Chinese. Six pages of the magazine

describe in detail the ‘Chinese’ tribe, the Lhoba Apatanis. Lhoba are usually diverse Tibetan-speaking tribes living around Pemako, a region in south-eastern Tibet, north of the McMahon Line. Wikipedia says: “The term is obscure ... largely promulgated by the Chinese Government, which officially recognises Lhoba as one of the 56 ethnic groups in China.”

In its introduction, the article explains that the Apatanis are “the most beautiful ethnic people” ... of China of course. It says: “In the Tibetan area of southern Tibet, there is a tribe named Apatani. The women of this tribe are known to be the most beautiful of all Tibetan tribes. But their beautiful appearance can also become a burden. In order to protect themselves from other tribal intruders’ attack, they make themselves less attractive, by plugging a big cork into the nose. ... but for the Apatanis in southern Tibet, this is considered as a protection to live a longer life.”

This type of propaganda warfare using tribes of Arunachal Pradesh is dangerous for India's security; but it may happen more and more. Beijing's objective is clearly to destabilize the Indian borders.

Trying to Change the Historical Posts

On June 30, 2017, the Ministry of External Affairs in Delhi stated that in 2012, China and India had agreed that the status quo would be maintained in this area: “The two Governments had in 2012 reached an agreement that the tri-junction boundary points between India, China and third countries will be finalised in consultation with the concerned countries.”

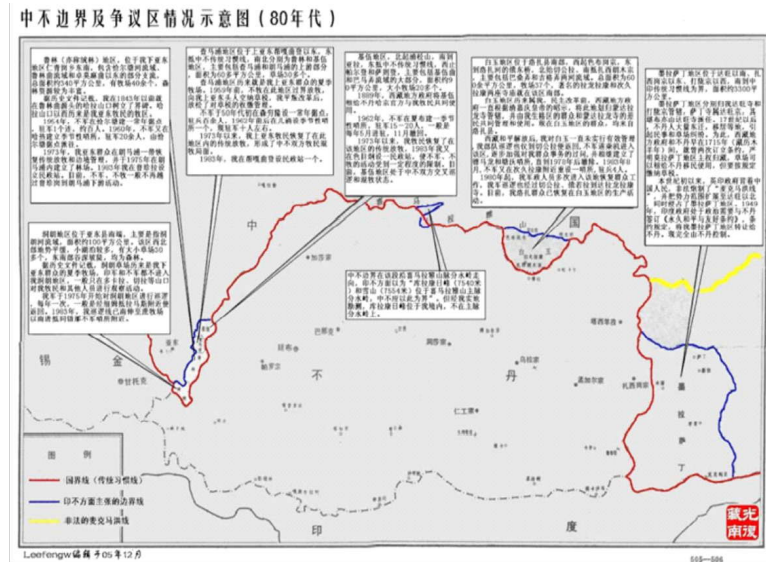
Probably wanting to test the waters, Beijing decided to take the matter in its own hands, as it had done earlier in the South China Sea. Beijing has a tendency to believe in the principle that it is better to first take ‘possession’ and then start talking.

Thimphu pointed to the same issue: non-respect of past agreement. In a press release issued by the Bhutan Ministry of Foreign Affairs on June 29, Bhutan asserted that the Chinese activities amounted to “a direct violation of the agreements and affects the process of demarcating the boundary between our two countries. Bhutan hopes that the status quo in the Doklam area will be maintained as before 16 June 2017.” It appears that China has no respect for bilateral agreement.

The Factual Background

Soon after the beginning of the conflict, a book *Spying Against India (Chinese Military Intelligence from 1962 to 2012)*, written by one Ben Keiler (probably a *nom de plume*) was published by Amazon Kindle. Although it is difficult to verify the veracity of the content, it makes sense.

One chapter entitled: *The Western Territories of Bhutan* comments on a copy of Top Secret Chinese Intelligence map, published to hide the embarrassing information about the Indian and Bhutanese camps inside the area today claimed by China, already 30 years ago. The book publishes the originals along the translation of the accompanying texts and provides its own comments. [Insert Map]



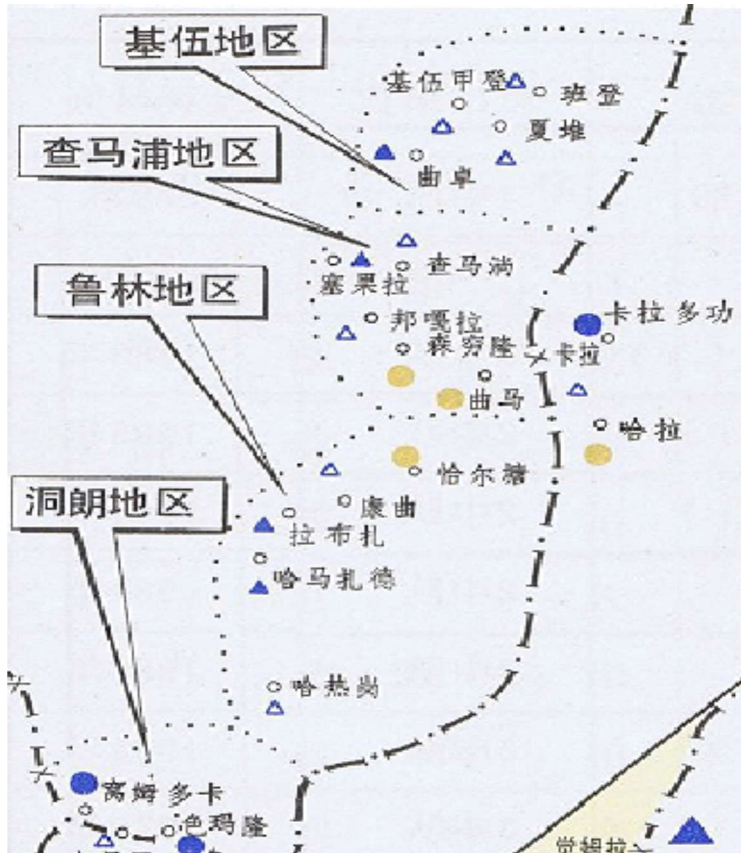
[* File contains invalid data | In-line.JPG *]

To give an example, a Chinese Intelligence map provides an overview of the disputed areas in Western Bhutan with detailed explanations. The maps are said to have been compiled by Chinese intelligence in the 1980s. [Insert Map]



The positions of the Bhutanese and Indian Armies at that time contradict China's version of the present standoff with India near the trijunction: 'it has been from immemorial time occupied by China.'

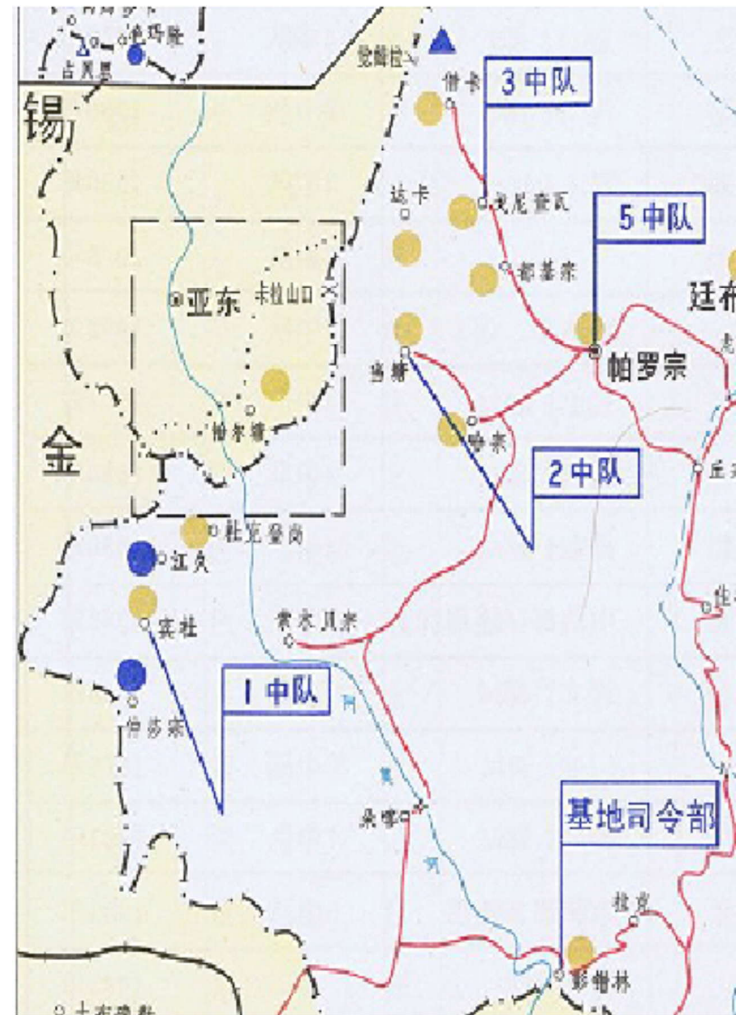
The first map shows [see above] what the Chinese consider as the international border and where India's and Bhutan's perception of the border is, as well as what China calls the 'illegal' McMahon Line. The mere fact that the entire Doklam area is shown in a separate colour (green), as well as the captions, clearly demonstrates that the area was already disputed, though in possession of Bhutan, 30 years ago.



[Details of the above map]

It shows the areas controlled by the Royal Army of Bhutan and the Indian Army in the 1980s; not a single post occupied by the Chinese Army is marked. The PLA was nowhere to be seen.

On another map, we can see the deployment of Bhutanese and Indian army units in western Bhutan in 1987. The first Battalion of the Bhutanese army defends the area close to the border with Sikkim. [Maps]



In that location they make sure the Chinese army cannot take any shortcut through Bhutanese territory and cut-off and encircle the Indian border defense in the northern areas of Sikkim.

The book describes the way used by China to claim new territories. They first send grazers. If not objected, the grazers would visit every year. Then a small patrol is sent.

The following year a tent (representing the Civil Administration) is planted. After a few years, it becomes “Chinese territory administrated by China since immemorial times.”

China’s Internal Issues

Watching Chairman Xi Jinping officiating during the mega parade at the Zhurihe Combined Tactics Training Base in Inner Mongolia on the occasion of the PLA’s 90th anniversary, one is struck by Xi Jinping’s martial manner, driving in an open jeep and dressed in combat fatigue. Incidentally, he was called by the troops ‘Chairman Xi’.

In his speech, he ordered the PLA to be prepared for battle and to defeat ‘all enemies that dare offend’ his country. Was India, who had dared to challenge the mighty PLA when Beijing tried to change the status quo at the tri-junction between Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim, targeted? It’s difficult to say.

It was indeed a huge display of military power; Chinese state agencies reported that some 40 per cent of the weapons on show had never before been seen by the public. Let us not forget that Xi is the Chairman of the Central Military Commission, by far the most powerful organisation in the Middle Kingdom.

But ‘Chairman’ Xi has a problem; a serious problem. Can he speak of a ‘Chinese Dream’ or ‘Peaceful Rise’ while threatening to go to war against those who dare to oppose China? Would war take place, the Chinese Dream and its attendant mega projects such as the One-Belt-One-Road or the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor would be over in no time; the myth of ‘Peaceful Rise’ would be busted.

Is it what China wants? True, India dared putting a spanner in China’s wild expansionism, while it is a national feature that the Chinese leadership does not like to lose face, especially at a crucial time when the leadership term is supposed to be renewed. So where is the solution?

The Infrastructure to the Frontiers

One issue has hardly been covered by the Indian media, though crucial for the defence of the borders: it is the construction of a decent

infrastructure for the Indo-Tibet Border Police Force (ITBP), Army and the local population to reach the most remote border posts.

On July 18, it was announced in Parliament that some 73 roads were being built along the Sino-India border. According to PTI, Minister of State for Home, Kiren Rijiju told the Lok Sabha: “The government has decided to undertake construction of 73 roads of operational significance along Indo-China border. Out of these, 73 roads, 46 are being constructed by the Ministry of Defence and 27 by the Ministry of Home Affairs.”

Very few in India have heard of Taksing. It is the last village on the border with Tibet (China) in Upper Subansiri of Arunachal Pradesh. It is certainly the first village susceptible to be invaded in case the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) decides to retaliate after the confrontation in Sikkim. Here the villagers believe that it will take at least five to ten years to see a road. It is not that nothing is happening.

On April 6, 2017, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) managed to open a new section connecting Tame Chung Chung (TCC) and Nacho. The inhabitants living in the vicinity of Tame Chung Chung (TCC), near the confluence of Subansiri and Tsari Chu river valleys, had dreamed of seeing this road for decades, but like many other things for the border population, it had remained a dream.

A BRO’s communiqué explained: “The area is located in an extremely remote area with rugged terrains, thick vegetation and inhospitable weather. The place has remained inaccessible since 2009.” In fact, the road was to be opened in 2009.

The last Indian military outpost before the border is still some 35 km away from the newly-opened section, but the construction will hopefully be easier: “Due to the exceptionally hard rock and treacherous terrain, this portion of the road took many more years than expected,” said the BRO statement.

The question remains: have the Central and Arunachal authorities finally decided to undertake the construction of roads in border areas on a ‘war-footing’? The work is frighteningly slow.

It is extremely doubtful that Takshing will see a road in the next 5 years though recently the Ministry of Defence has decided to delegate administrative and financial powers to the BRO right upto the level of Chief Engineer and Task Force Commander, so as to avoid delays on account of references between the Chief Engineer and the HQ in Delhi. Let us hope that it won’t be too late. But it is worrying.

Can China be Trusted?

One issue remains extremely disturbing: China non-respect of its engagement whether it is for the supply of data for the Sutlej or the Yarlung Tsangpo, the cancellation of Kailash Yatra or the implementations of border agreement.

An Indian scholar, Namrata Goswami pointed out in *The Diplomat*: “China has strategically preferred to act in ways that go contrary to its signed commitments in the framework agreements. Its act of sending in PLA soldiers and engineers to build roads inside disputed territory in Bhutan, its intrusions across the LAC in India, its building of artificial islands in the South China Sea.”

She concludes: “Why does China sign ‘guiding principles’ and ‘framework agreements’ with countries with which it has territorial disputes and then violates the commitment to the status quo enshrined therein? ...the pattern in these three cases reflects China’s inability to meet its ‘framework agreement’ commitments, thereby throwing in doubt its seriousness as a reliable negotiator.”

At the end of the day, the question is therefore can we trust China?

India-China Relations in the Coming Decade

Manoj Joshi*

India and China have come to know each other through their imperial predecessors—the Chinese Qing Empire which established Chinese control in Tibet and the British Empire which consolidated the different Indian kingdoms into what is the successor states of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The task is to try and look at the future, always a difficult task, and see what they will be like in the coming decade. Prophecy is difficult and what the scholar does is to outline his view of the current trends and extrapolate from there. He cannot, of course, take into account Black Swan situations.

A framework through which this task can be accomplished can be developed through a matrix, comprising four elements that describe Sino-Indian relations—conflict, cooperation, competition and containment (four C’s).

What are the broad self-declared goals of the two countries? For China, 2030 falls in the middle of its two key benchmarks—2022, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the CPC and 2049, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. By 2049, China wants the status of a “prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious country.” By 2020, China hopes to double its 2010 GDP and emerge as a “moderately prosperous society.”

There is an unstated goal as well—for China to become a leading world military power. We have seen that while China’s economic reach and power has become global, its military capacity remains limited to

* The writer is a distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi.

its borders. Even here, it is contested, whether in the South China Sea or in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. The principal thrust of Chinese security policy, as I see it today, is to remedy this and become the dominant regional power in East and South Asia to start with and then become a truly global power, a rival of the US.

The Indian vision is more diffuse and abstract. Prime Minister Modi speaks of a New India often in moral rather than physical terms. So, eliminating poverty is as important as promoting cleanliness, justice, freedom from discrimination, corruption, women's rights and full of hope. The deadline here is 2022. Cutting through the words, often with electoral aims in mind, we can see that the vision is of an economically vibrant country which plays a strong and autonomous role in world affairs.

Conflict

The conflict aspect is well known. India and China have long disputed their border and fought a war over it in 1962. The origins of this war are complex, Indian miscalculation is to blame for some of it, but it probably had more to do with Chinese mis-perceptions—such as the belief that India wanted to grab Tibet. India wanted autonomy for Tibet under Chinese sovereignty and that is why it signed up in the 1954 Sino-Indian agreement. An autonomous Tibet would have also guaranteed Indian security since this would have minimised the Chinese military presence on the Sino-Indian border. But this was not to be.

In 1967, the two countries had serious clashes in the Sikkim part of the border.

In 1986-87, India's efforts to resume a credible defence posture led to a near-war situation. A similar situation developing over Doklam has, for the present, been defused.

This is a border over which no bullet has been fired since an accidental one in the mid-1970s. Yet it is a militarised border and conflict can never be ruled out. Though, it should be clear that neither side can contemplate an all out conflict bringing as it does, the danger of nuclear escalation.

In 1998, when India conducted its nuclear tests, it cited Beijing as a factor. This brought a harsh response from China, but over time this has been dealt with diplomatically, though some debris remains.

Cooperation

The phase of cooperation began with the successful handling of the 1986-87 crisis that led to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing in 1988. This was on the understanding that India would be willing to normalise its relationship with China, even though their border remained to be settled. So, the **Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement of 1993** was the key development.

The next benchmark was the **Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation of June 23, 2003**, that established the principles of economic cooperation and appointed Special Representatives to deal with the border issue. The document spelt out the terms of engagement of the two countries in terms of assisting each other's development tasks and a joint perspective which promoted globalisation and saw the world moving towards multipolarity.

The April 2005 visit of Premier Wen Jiabao saw the relations being elevated to a Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security. **They also signed a far reaching Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the settlement of the border question.** Article VII of the treaty said that the two sides would "safeguard" the interests of settled populations of the border areas. Article IV would "take into account" the strategic interests of the other.

They also arrived at a protocol on modalities for the implementation of confidence building measures in the military field along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas which are essentially built on the 1996 Agreement which had set up CBMs along the LAC.

As a part of this, the two have had six rounds of joint military exercises, the last in November 2016. India has participated in the International Fleet Review, there have been exchange of ship visits. The two sides also began an annual defence dialogue, the first of which took place in December 2007 and the last in 2015.

PLA's worries arising from India's belated efforts to develop its border infrastructure, led to discussions in which the Chinese side wanted to freeze this process, saying that it was not necessary in the light of the other CBM, but the Indian side demurred. Eventually, the **Border Defence Cooperation Agreement of October 2013** was signed by India's defence secretary and Admiral Sun Jianguo, Deputy Chief of General Staff of the PLA.

This Agreement was a marginal advance on previous ones and the Chinese are now looking to arrive at a Code of Conduct. In fact, given the fact that past Agreements are yet to be honoured and goalposts keep getting shifted, these are tactical moves, whose aim is to confuse even while continuing to: a) block movement on a border settlement and b) gain advantage on the border, especially in the west.

Another aspect of cooperation is their contact at the highest levels, with their leaders meeting several times in a year, either in multilateral settings or bilateral visits. To resolve their vexed border issue, they have established a Special Representatives mechanism, as well as a Strategic Dialogue at the Foreign Secretary level. There have been 19 rounds of SR talks, the last with Doval and Yang Jiechi in April 2016. But as the Doklam issue showed, the problems are far from being resolved.

China and India being developing countries, find much to cooperate on when it comes to global issues like trade, climate change and the environment. They have come together in important forums like the East Asia Summit, ARF, the Group of Twenty (G-20) and BRICS.

China's economic achievement has brought the two countries together in creating the New Development or BRICS Bank and the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank. These are also manifestations of the two being together in trying to shape a new world economic order.

China India trade is around \$71 billion (2016) of which Chinese exports to India are \$58 billion. Indian exports are just around \$ 13 billion making the deficit of around \$ 45 billion. The two sides want to boost Chinese investment in India to make up the deficit. But as of now total investment is around \$ 2 billion only, though some \$20 billion was promised in the XI Jinping visit of 2014.

The more recent element of cooperation has been India's membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. India became a full member this year and Prime Minister Modi went to Astana for the 17th summit of the organisation.

Joining the SCO is a smart move on the part of India which will offer us long-term, rather than any short-term gain, provided we understand what that means.

The membership is a manifestation of the reality that India's interests are as much in the Indian Ocean as the Eurasian landmass. Srinagar and Leh are nearly at the same latitude as Kabul and north of Lhasa and Kandahar. Membership offers us equities in Central Asia and

Afghanistan. The fact that China, perhaps at Russian urging, agreed to Indian membership, is a manifestation of the new dynamics in the world order.

Confrontation

The confrontation between India and China has been building up since the mid-2000. This is when a rising India and a rising China find a lot to cooperate on, but at the same time also generate a lot of friction between themselves.

There is a bit of a paradox here because as we have shown that in the 2005-2006 period, important bilateral agreements were reached. But in 2007, Yang Jiechi, then Foreign Minister told his Indian counterpart Pranab Mukherji that the mere presence of settled populations would not affect the Chinese claims on the eastern border, in other words the 2005 treaty was dead.

The shift probably has two causes: 1) the Indo-US Nuclear Deal of July 2005, which signalled a new and closer relationship between the two countries.

2) The economic crisis of 2007-2008 which saw the West being hit badly and China's relative economic power advancing faster.

3) The Tibetan uprising of 2008, on the eve of the Olympics, seems to have made the Chinese position more strident. The Chinese were taken aback at the fact that despite their huge investment in pacifying Tibet, the uprising took place not only in the truncated region of what is Tibet today, but the large areas that the Chinese have hived away and incorporated into the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan. The Chinese believe that the incidents in Tibet were planned by a group of Tibetan exiles based in India and that New Delhi had acquiesced in their actions, if not provided them assistance.

4) China's growing commitments to Pakistan which go beyond merely offsetting India. Since the inaugural of Gwadar port 2007, China is seeking Pakistan as an element in wider strategy of establishing itself in the Indian Ocean. This has since evolved into the CPEC over which India also has objections.

In the 2008-2010 period, there was an intensification of Chinese transgressions on the LAC, the provision of stapled visas to residents of Jammu & Kashmir, and the denial of a visa to Lt. Gen. B. S. Jaswal

in 2010, allegedly because his command responsibilities as the GOC of the Northern Command included J&K.

In 2009, the Chinese made a big issue of the visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Tawang in October 2009, followed by a visit by the Dalai Lama in November.

Three incidents stand out in the recent years—the incursion in the Depsang Plains in April-May 2013 just before Li Keqiang’s May 19th visit and the face-off in Chumur in September 2014 during President Xi Jinping’s visit to India and more recently, the Doklam incident.

Of course, not everything was China initiated. Prime Minister Modi inviting the Lobsang Sangay, the head of the Tibetan Government-in-exile to his swearing in, the Dalai Lama being invited to the Rashtrapati Bhavan in 2016 November and his visit to Tawang this April had the Chinese fuming.

Containment

Since the mid-1950s China has sought to use Pakistan as a means of pinning down India in South Asia. To this end, it has become Islamabad’s “all weather” friend, its major military supplier and the country that played a crucial role in enabling it to make nuclear weapons and missiles.

Now, containment has taken another aspect, this is the use of Chinese economic muscle in offsetting India in the South Asian and Indian Ocean Region. I referred to the CPEC earlier as an instrument of this.

All three of the wings of the Bangladesh military are equipped with Chinese equipment and China is deepening its economic relationship with Bangladesh.

In February, Nepal and China had their first ever joint military exercise.

The Chinese building of an international airport and a port at Hambantota in Sri Lanka rang alarm bells in New Delhi. The visits of Chinese submarines to Colombo deepened this alarm. The Srisena government has reworked the port agreement to ensure that they are not used for naval purposes. But the fact of the matter is that Chinese influence is now a growing reality that India must take into account in Sri Lanka.

Beginning with Hu Jintao in 1997, Chinese leaders have been making forays into the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) regularly. China is

using economic, military and diplomatic tools to gain influence over coastal states and small islands in the IOR and is using its investments and aid to consolidate its strategic positions in the IOR and secure the approaches to these positions.

As far as the Indian Ocean is concerned, China has benefited enormously from the anti-piracy effort. It has so far sent 22 task forces to join the international anti-piracy mission beginning in 2008. 16,000 sailors and 1500 marines have gained experience while China has escorted some 6,000 commercial vessels. Over 30 warships, half of PLAN’s destroyers, frigates and helicopters and all its replenishment ships have gained far seas experience

In February 2014, we witnessed a military exercises at the Lombok straits when three ships, including the Changbaishan – China’s largest landing craft which can carry a marine battalion and 15-20 armoured vehicles—crossed the Makassar Straits between Sulawesi and Kalimantan, and then went through the Lombok and entered the Indian Ocean.

Subsequently in that year, its 093 class nuclear submarine went across the Indian Ocean to the African coast. Since then, there have been regular sightings of Chinese submarines in Colombo and Karachi.

As Chinese economic interests grow, they are seeking to consolidate them through the building of ports and also naval capacity to protect their LOCs. For them, the oil routes from Africa and the Persian Gulf are vital and they are aware that geography gives India considerable advantage in interdicting these routes, should there be conflict between the two.

China has built ports in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Pakistan (Gwadar). Chinese companies like the China Communications Construction Company are bidding to make berths in Kenyan ports like Lamu while the China Merchants Holding company is developing the rival port of Bagamoyo in Tanzania. There is talk of a Chinese naval facility in the Maldives, which if it comes, will be the second after the Djibouti base set up last year.

Competition

At the bottom of the Doklam issue and the fact that the Sino-Indian relations appear locked in a posture of confrontation, is the issue of competition.

Both compete in South Asia and at the global level. But China's enormous money resources has tilted the table against India.

China, continues to swarm over us in South Asia. Chinese commitments to Pakistan are increasing exponentially. In 2016, China promised a whopping \$24 billion aid, loans and investment to Bangladesh during Xi Jinping's visit. As it is, all three of the wings of the Bangladesh military are equipped with Chinese equipment.

Indian aid to Nepal has dipped, while China has now pipped India as the top aid donor. More worrisome are the internal trends suggesting growing Chinese influence in the country.

Chinese trade with Sri Lanka has grown sharply in recent years, doubling between 2008 and 2012 from \$1.5 billion to \$2.7 billion and is now second only to India, despite the fact that China and Sri Lanka do not yet have a FTA. China has emerged as a major investor in Sri Lanka, with some 70 per cent of Sri Lanka's infrastructure projects being funded by Chinese banks.

China has challenged India in small ways like sending a token consignment of oil to Kathmandu in the period India had blockaded Nepal in 2015.

Just a day after India sent five aircrafts and two ships to aid Maldives to overcome its water crisis in 2014, China pointedly sent a military vessel carrying 960 tons of fresh water. Beijing also donated \$500,000 to Male for the repairs of the country's damaged sole desalination plant.

New Delhi lacks the wherewithal to compete with China on the economic front and is therefore trying to shape a coalition strategy with like-minded powers like Japan to undertake joint projects in third world countries and also provide each other with preferential treatment in the trade front.

Future:

This matrix does not seem to alter in the next decade. What will happen is that the relative weightage of its elements may change. There may be more confrontation, and less cooperation, or more containment than competition or vice versa. Further, policy decisions taken by the two sides could encourage one trend over the other.

What the Doklam crisis has brought out is the fact that the CBM and border resolution mechanisms which were initiated in the 1990s

and 2003, may have run their course and are not adequate to deal with the situation. The call by the two leaders to enhance military-to-military engagement on the border is a manifestation of this. What mechanism will come up is not clear, though the two sides have been discussing a COC. (It could be DGMO-level contact). As for the border, there is consensus on the framework, but it requires the last-mile push by the two political leaders. Both Modi and Xi have the authority and clout to push it, but whether they do depends not only on their respective calculations, but the fact they need to do it together.

In the larger perspective, by 2030, China's GDP is expected to be \$ 26 trillion as compared to the US at \$22 trillion. India will be around \$ 11 trillion. Even with the new normal of lower economic growth, this will be a massive economy. Investments being made today in the BRI could yield closer integration of China with Eurasia and a more sophisticated economy. Besides this, China will continue to hold vast foreign exchange reserves, stakes in markets across the world and a higher status in the global production and supply chains.

India is certainly a budding rival of China, the only one with sufficient physical size and population to offset its power in Asia. But India will remain the economically and militarily weaker party, even if its economy and military transformation is growing faster than it is today. It will certainly, however, be able to moderate China's drive for pre-eminence in the SA-IOR. This would be an important check on Beijing, since the key precondition of emerging as any kind of global power is to be a regional hegemon. Smaller countries dealing with China would find India as a good foil for Beijing's assertiveness.

But India is some way from actualizing the potential. In the meantime, India urgently needs a strategy to do so. The broad thrust of India's foreign policy remains legitimate and worthwhile. We have substantial soft-power assets, but those can only be effective together with the real currency of hard-power— cash and exportable military goods.

Because of the enormous difference in economic and military power between India and China, the Indian approach cannot be taking on China head on, but adopting an asymmetrical means of dealing with Beijing. So what is needed is retrenchment and focus and a viable coalition strategy.

Our South Asian neighbourhood is a priority and Modi's outreach to the Persian Gulf has great value, because that is the most important

external region for India. It is where it gets most of its oil and where it has 7 million citizens who send back substantial remittances. Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar have huge sovereign wealth funds which are always looking for good investment destinations. India needs to not only access these funds, but build security linkages to secure its oil and its nationals there. The Chah Bahar (Iran) project offers us a relatively inexpensive riposte to the One Belt One Road strategy by enabling a multi-modal link to Europe through Iran, the Caucasus and Russia. If we can provide sub-continental and Indian Ocean linkages, we, too, can be in the connectivity business.

The two countries also have the option to move towards a more positive dynamic away from the past where the aim was to exploit vulnerabilities to a point where both countries can synergise each others' path to economic growth. But to do that they need to shed the burden of the past. From India's point of view this means first, to resolve the border dispute on a fair and equitable basis and second, to get Beijing to stop thinking of Pakistan as a means of hobbling India.

Both stand to gain from a more cooperative framework. India would be foolish to dismiss the BRI as it has been doing so far. Given the enormous scope of the scheme, New Delhi needs a strategy of cherry-picking the scheme. We are members of NDB and AIIB and there is no reason why India cannot use Chinese finance and experience in developing its own backward infrastructure. With China ascending the global production and supply chains, it is prudent for India to ensure that its companies can find an appropriate place in them.

For its part, China too needs a border settlement with India and constant reassurance that we will not interfere in Tibet or become part of a larger US-led containment of China. Likewise, it cannot ignore the vast Indian market which has many opportunities for Chinese companies.

We do share a huge agenda with China on issues like climate change and environment, where cooperation, rather than competition will help, as well as in providing leadership to the developing world on trade issues with the developed world. As strong military powers, the two can also play a role in ensuring a stable regional environment, which both need to achieve their domestic goals. This could include sea-lane security and cooperation in countering terrorism and Islamist radicalism.

To repeat, it is obvious looking at any statistics, that even over the next decade there will really be no comparison between Chinese military

and economic power and that of India. But the time where geopolitical power— defined by the simple arithmetic of adding the tanks, aircraft and warships, or counting the GDP numbers and natural resources is over.

Nuclear weapons can, if used, trump any conventional measure of military strength. But the lesson of the Soviet collapse was that even nuclear weapons cannot get you too far. Russia's present predicament, among other things, is its adverse demographic profile that limits the advantages of its enormous geographical spread and natural resources. As the example of Japan shows, economic might alone is not enough. Neither, for that matter, as the case of Saudi Arabia would reveal, control over strategic resources like oil.

Power today is a multifarious compound of economic strength, cultural vibrancy, social resilience, diplomatic skills and, of course, military power. It is as much about location, as it is about an optimum mix of soft and hard power. Yet, in all these departments, India has something going for it, and hence the attention it is getting. But India's role in this is not so much aimed at China, as towards peace and stability of the Asian region upon which it can build its economy and take its hundreds of millions out of poverty.

It is a well-known axiom that the strength of a gravitational force is proportional to the mass of a body. In the Asian context, there is just one country that can even hope to approach China in terms of its size, population, economic potential and military capacity, and that is India. The emergence of a body, India, with sufficient gravitational force of its own to offset, at least to some degree, the enormously powerful attraction of another, China, will certainly be welcomed and benefit the smaller countries of the region and can be done in a cooperative and competitive framework, or, in a confrontational and conflictual one. These are the choices the two sides will have to confront, as they brush against each other in the SA-IOR.

Post-Doklam: Assessing the Prospects of Chinese Strategy

Namrata Goswami*

On August 28, 2017, India and China agreed to resolve their 70 days long stand-off in Doklam, Bhutan. The dispute started when the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) observed Chinese road-building activities in the Doklam area. The RBA tried to dissuade the People's Liberation Army (PLA) engineers from constructing the road but failed. Indian border guards then entered the Doklam area and stopped the PLA from building a road there. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in a statement released on July 30, 2017, stated that the Chinese PLA had infringed upon sovereign Bhutanese territory by constructing a road there. Also, India was aware that the RBA border patrol tried to dissuade the Chinese from constructing the road on disputed territory administered by Bhutan.¹ When that failed, Indian border troops in the area called out the PLA for infringing upon Bhutanese territory.

China, on the other hand, has a completely different take on the road-building exercise. China argues that its road-building activities do not infringe upon Bhutanese territory, as Doklam has always been a part of China. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Lu Kang, asserted: "Doklam has been a part of China since ancient times. That is an indisputable fact supported by historical and jurisprudential evidence, and the ground situation. China's activities in Doklam are acts of sovereignty on its own territory. It is completely justified and lawful."² Kang went to argue that "it is an irrefutable fact that the Indian troops crossed into the Chinese territory. By doing so, they have violated the

* Dr. Namrata Goswami is a Senior Analyst and a Minerva Grantee. All views expressed in this article are solely her own.

boundary convention and the commitment upheld by successive Indian governments."³

The Bhutanese government's take is that China's road-building activities is against the 1988 and 1998 bilateral agreements, by which all boundary disputes will be resolved by negotiations. Bhutan states that "we have written agreements of 1988 and 1998 stating that the two sides agree to maintain peace and tranquility in their border areas pending a final settlement on the boundary question, and to maintain status quo on the boundary as before March 1959. The agreements also state that the two sides will refrain from taking unilateral action, or use of force, to change the status quo of the boundary."⁴ From 1984 to 2016, Bhutan and China have held 24 rounds of negotiations and both sides have agreed not to unilaterally change the status quo pending a final resolution. Consequently, China's attempt to build a road, registers a unilateral move to change the status quo and establish presence to stake claim on the territory.

The Doklam incident occurred in the tri-junction or 'Gyemochen' where the borders of Bhutan, China and India meet. The PLA was trying to build a road from this area to Zompelri, which hosts a Bhutanese army camp. This area is very close to the Chumbi valley, which is Chinese territory, and the building of roads to the Bhutanese and Indian borders is viewed by China as strategically critical for its own future plans. As per a 2012 agreement between India and China, there was an understanding that the tri-junction area will be finalized based on consultation with third country peacefully.⁵ According to Shiv Shankar Menon, who was the Indian Special Representative (SR) in border negotiations with China at that time, "The incident is serious because this is an attempt by China to change the status quo, that we are committed to maintain under the 1993 BPTA. They were trying to build a road, which would change the situation at the tri-junction."⁶

It is important to note that the disengagement of Indian and Chinese troops achieved on August 28 was framed by Chinese media as a victory for China. On August 29, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated: "We will make an overall assessment of the weather conditions and all related factors, and according to the actual circumstances complete construction plans for the Dong Lang (Doklam) area."⁷ A *Xinhua* article of August 29, 2017 asserted that China will continue to build roads in the Doklam area to better lives of civilians and soldiers as this area has historically belonged to China.⁸ Interestingly, China

asserted that Indian troops withdrew from what was Chinese territory (Dong Lang) or Doklam, and stated that China will continue to safeguard its sovereignty based on the 1890 Treaty between Great Britain and China with regard to Tibet and Sikkim.⁹ Wu Qian, spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defense stated: “We remind India to draw lessons from the stand-off, abide by established treaties and the basic principles of international law, and work together with China to safeguard peace and stability along the border and promote the healthy development of the two militaries.”¹⁰ Missing from all these Chinese grandstanding with regard to Doklam is their otherwise great unhappiness with ‘unequal treaties’ signed with Western powers in the 19th century, as well as framing treaties like the 1890 Treaty with Great Britain as their “Century of Humiliation.” One must wonder at this selective Chinese application of which treaty to be cast aside as ‘humiliating’ and which to be recognized. Perhaps those that appear to benefit the country are not seen as humiliating despite China’s repeated reference to the ‘unequal treaties’ that so humiliated them.¹¹

That said, any strategic analysis should ponder about timing of this Doklam road-building exercise and what was China aiming to achieve from it. China has been negotiating with Bhutan on the disputed territory that includes Doklam since 1984. Significantly, in 1996, China had offered a ‘swap deal’ to Bhutan in which it proposed swapping 495sqkm in the north, in exchange for 269sqkm in Doklam. If Doklam was always a Chinese territory as claimed by Chinese officials now, what explains that 1996 swap offer? Bhutan did not accept that offer primarily due to Indian security concerns, as pointed out by Bhutanese security analysts. Until 2007, India controlled Bhutan’s foreign and defense policy under a British-India agreement. That changed after 2007 when the treaty was revised and Bhutan started pursuing its own foreign policy.¹² During the current stand-off, China argued that Indian troops had violated international norms, as they had crossed an international boundary. Bhutan’s silence on the matter did not help matters much because it did not officially ask for India’s help. The June 29 statement by the MFA, Bhutan while clearly stating that China should stop road-building activities and retain the status quo prior to June 16 did not mention India.

Now that the stand-off is resolved with India and China, withdrawing their troops, albeit with China claiming that it will continue to patrol the Doklam area, the key question is: what are the prospects for India-

China relations especially pertaining to the border? More importantly, what was China’s motive and strategy regarding Doklam? And what are the scenarios that we need to keep in mind as we go forward?

China’s Motive

China’s behaviour regarding Doklam should be placed within the larger frame of its motives with regard to its claims on the disputed territory in general. When Xi Jinping became President of China in 2013, one of his stated ambitions was to assert China’s claims on disputed territories or what is termed as ‘lost territories.’ This idea is further located within the gambit of ‘rejuvenation’ or ‘renewal’ of the Chinese nation. This idea was popularized by Premeir Zhao Ziyang and adopted by Presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. This idea has been adopted by Xi Jinping as well and categorically means that China’s sense of self is based on the Ming and Qing dynasties and has been continuous for 5000 years now.¹³ Pertinently, this idea includes all territories that were occupied by these dynasties to include East Turkestan Republic (Xinjiang) and Tibet which Mao occupied (liberated in Chinese terms). Mao’s vision of territorial expansion based on history inspires next generation leaders of the Communist Party of China (CPC). In this discourse of ‘Greater China’ is included Taiwan, Arunachal Pradesh (Southern Tibet as China calls it), South China Sea (SCS) and East China Sea (ECS) islands. Since 1968, China has upped its claims for the ECS and have built artificial islands in the SCS to stake claim. Doklam in Bhutan is included in that idea of ancient Chinese territory.

China’s motives are therefore very clear; not as deceptive and complicated as made out to be. China views these territories as its own and will try establishing presence and military bases. For example, dispute over islands in the SCS, historically claimed by Brunei, China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines, escalated in January 2014 when it was discovered that Chinese vessels were dredging white sand and placing them onto corals at seven points in the disputed Spratlys, namely; Fiery Cross Reef, Mischief Reef, Gaven Reef, Cuarteron Reef, Subi Reef, South Johnson Reef, and Hughes Reef. Once the artificial islands have been built, China has followed it up with erecting buildings, harbours and airstrips, deploying radar and surveillance, as well as stationing its troops: all activities geared towards establishing ownership and sovereign control over disputed territories.¹⁴

These efforts have become even more assertive and visible under President Xi Jinping, who came to office with the promise that China will militarily, if need be, reclaim back all lost territories.

China's Strategy Emerging Pattern

What is however, hard to dissect is China's strategy to meet its motives. It is not as straightforward as its motives are. There are patterns that emerge which reveals that China's strategy with regard to disputed territories have blindsided its partner nations to its moves on territory. For example, China and India have a dispute in India's eastern border. Chinese claims 90, 000 square kms of Indian Territory encompassing the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. The discord between India and China is historically rooted and based on a lack of proper demarcation of the 4,000 km eastern border. China questions the 1914 McMahon line in this sector and argues that the area now known as Arunachal Pradesh in India belonged to Tibet historically, with the Tawang Monastery having tributary relationship with the Dalai Lama.¹⁵ Since Tibet is now a part of China, goes their argument, so is Arunachal Pradesh. China and India fought a border war in 1962 over this dispute that resulted in India's defeat. Though China unilaterally moved back to its side of the McMahon Line after the war, the dispute has remained live and unresolved to this day. In May, 2014, China issued an updated version of its official map that showed the SCS, Arunachal Pradesh, Taiwan, as integral parts of China.¹⁶

Significantly, China and India have held several rounds of negotiations through a "Special Representatives" forum and signed numerous agreements to maintain peace and tranquility at the border. For example, in 1993, India and China signed an agreement to maintain peace and tranquility in the borders. Amongst other commitments, both sides agreed that "Pending an ultimate solution to the boundary question between the two countries, the two sides shall strictly respect and observe the line of actual control between the two sides. No activities of either side shall overstep the line of actual control."¹⁷ Interestingly, "the two sides agree that references to the line of actual control in this Agreement do not prejudice their respective positions on the boundary question."¹⁸ This means that the Line of Actual Control or LAC is not the final boundary but through consultations, a decision would be taken as to

where the India-China border should be. In 2005, both sides signed a framework agreement, in which they again committed "Pending an ultimate settlement of the boundary question, the two sides should strictly respect and observe the line of actual control and work together to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas."¹⁹

However, despite these commitments, in 2006, Chinese Ambassador to India, Sun Yuxi unilaterally stated without prior consultation and rather provocatively that "In our position, the whole of the state of Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory. And Tawang is only one of the places in it. We are claiming all of that. That is our position." This occurred just a week before President Hu Jintao was to visit India.²⁰ One could argue that the Chinese Ambassador was caught off-guard in a CNN-IBN interview and replied in context to being asked China's position on the territorial dispute, but a similar pattern emerges when one dwells deeper. In 2014, when President Xi Jinping visited India, border transgressions across the LAC in Ladakh by the PLA darkened the visit. Similar to the Doklam issue, the PLA was observed building roads in Chumar, Ladakh. Several such intrusions by the PLA across the LAC has been observed.²¹ Significantly, as I had documented in an article for *The Diplomat*,²² a clear Chinese strategy emerges when it comes to disputed territory. For instance, Chinese intrusions were amongst the highest,²³ even as China and India signed the 2013 Border Defense Cooperation Agreement (BDCA) "acknowledging the need to continue to maintain peace, stability and tranquility along the line of actual control in the India-China border areas and to continue implementing confidence building measures in the military field along the line of actual control."²⁴ Such Chinese behaviour can be discerned with regard to the SCS as well. China and ASEAN agreed on the framework on a Code of Conduct (CoC) in the SCS in May this year.²⁵ The draft CoC commits the parties to resolve crisis peacefully and avoid placing offensive weapons in the SCS islands. In 2002, a "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea" was adopted by China and ASEAN. Interestingly, Art.5 of the declaration states:

The Parties undertake to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability including, among others, refraining

from action of inhabiting on the presently uninhabited islands, reefs, shoals, cays, and other features and to handle their differences in a constructive manner.²⁶

Yet, China is using early presence and facts on the ground to alter territorial claims despite its adoption of the 2002 declaration and establish exclusion zones and zones of military coercion in the SCS clearly violating that commitment. So, what exactly is the underlying strategy?

The Strategy

Strategy is usually defined as “the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war.”²⁷ It is also defined as “the art of devising or employing plans or stratagems toward a goal.”²⁸

In the light of the above two definitions, I identify four Chinese stratagems that is employed to achieve its goal of territorial expansion.

First, blindsiding fellow signatories with unanticipated coercive move; claim there is no mutual understanding of LAC; maintain deniability for border intrusions; and finally, building leverage.

Blindsiding Fellow Signatory/Signatories

A pattern that emerges from China’s behaviour with regard to territorial disputes is that it signs framework agreements and agrees to commitments to maintain peace and tranquility at the borders, and maintain status quo, only to act contrary to these commitments. Once a fellow signatory state has signed an agreement with China to resolve a disputed territorial issue, it expects China to stay true to its commitments. Yet, China acts in a manner that demonstrates military capability and a willingness to break those commitments. This blindsides its signatory state who is not anticipating such behaviour from a country who claims to be a responsible stakeholder for regional peace and security. China touts the “Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence” as the basic normative framework to develop relationships with states. Included in these principles is “mutual respect for each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.”²⁹ For instance, after the signing of the 2005 framework agreement, in which a commitment was made to

show mutual respect and resolve issues peacefully, the Chinese Ambassador to India’s subsequent statement on Arunachal Pradesh and the PLA intrusions across the LAC blindsided India.

A similar pattern of PLA incursion is registered in the China-Bhutan border despite the 1988 and 1998 agreement that commits each side to maintain the *status quo* pending final resolution. For instance, PLA soldiers came up to RBA outpost at Lharigang in the Charithang valley in 2004 and 2009.³⁰ Usually the pattern that is followed by China is to construct a version of territorial claim plausibly based on ancient Chinese history, followed by incursions and road-building activities. These developments occur despite agreements signed by China to maintain *status quo* and its commitment to peaceful negotiations. A similar pattern emerges in the SCS with China agreeing not to physically change anything and yet doing the exact opposite by building artificial islands and then justifying it based on historical claims.

Lack of Mutual Understanding of LAC

China’s clever response to its intrusions across the LAC is to state that there is no mutual understanding of where the LAC is. Hence, intrusions will take place. What China perceives as the LAC is different from what India perceives as the LAC. The Indian government has proposed that the LAC should be clearly and commonly identified but there has been no response from China to that effect.³¹ Significantly, this Chinese insistence on lack of common understanding of LAC has become the dominant narrative picked up by international media and scholars as well. It is a strategy that has worked to justify PLA intrusions. The critical question is: How did China and India agree to maintain peace and tranquility across the LAC if they disagree as to where the LAC is? For instance, the 1993 agreement states:

Pending an ultimate solution to the boundary question between the two countries, the two sides shall strictly respect and observe the line of actual control between the two sides. No activities of either side shall overstep the line of actual control. In case personnel of one side cross the line of actual control, upon being cautioned by the other side, they shall immediately pull back to their own side of the line of actual control. When necessary, the two sides shall jointly check and determine the

segments of the line of actual control where they have different views as to its alignment.³²

The last line “When necessary, the two sides shall jointly check and determine the segments of the line of actual control where they have different views as to its alignment,” has emboldened Chinese intrusions and put at risk border populations from conflict escalations.³³ It is indeed surprising that between 1993 and 2017, both sides have not succeeded in understanding which segments of the LAC leads to these misunderstandings and attempt to resolve the issue for the sake of peace and tranquility.

Maintain Deniability for Border Intrusions

A pattern that emerges from China’s explanation for any intrusion is that it was conducted by some lower level military personnel with little or no coordination from Beijing. For example, during Premier Le Keqiang and President Xi Jinping’s visits to India in 2013 and 2014 respectively, PLA personnel intruded across the LAC and set up camps. For instance, Le Keqiang’s visit was preceded by a border flare up in which 50 PLA personnel crossed the LAC in the Chumar area of Ladakh.³⁴ Significantly, PLA intrusions increased at the time when the former Defence Minister, A.K Antony went to China. The same pattern was repeated during the visit of President Xi Jinping to India in 2014.³⁵ As he was signing business deals with India worth \$20 billion, 1000 PLA troops intruded across the LAC in Southern Ladakh and were trying to build a provisional road. At the same time, Modi was hosting a banquet for their Commander-in-Chief, the Chinese President. About 35 of them stayed back and pitched tents thereby derailing the President’s visit to India. There were those who argued that the PLA had gone rogue and wanted to derail Xi’s India visit. This aspect was attributed to Xi Jinping’s actions, who on arriving back in Beijing, elevating two Generals faithful to him, namely; Liu Yuan, and Zhang Youxia, to become Vice President of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and Head of Military Discipline respectively. Xi also called two rounds of military meetings to ensure that discipline is maintained. However, a closer analysis reveals that these actions are part of his larger ongoing campaign to purge the PLA of corrupt officials and elevate those with battle experience.³⁶

It is a little hard to believe that the PLA has continuously intruded across the LAC, especially during the time of visits by leaders of both countries to the other, and yet the Beijing headquarters argue that they have no control over their foot soldiers. In a tightly controlled environment like China, it is nearly impossible that the military leadership has no control over the PLA, not once but several times repeatedly. Similarly, when asked about inclusion of the map that depicted disputed territories as Chinese in China’s e-passports in 2012, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei stated: “The issue of the maps in China’s new passports should not be read too much into. China is willing to remain in touch with relevant countries and promote the healthy development of the exchange of people between China and the outside world.”³⁷ Moreover, for those who assume that the CPC, the PLA and the Chinese citizenry are separate entities, do not understand China’s idea of comprehensive national power. In China, despite numerous analyses about factionalism and difference as it is in any society, the PLA and the CPC are one, or to say it more bluntly, the PLA is the army of the CPC. Hence, to argue that there is lack of control at their borders especially when their top leaders are visiting the country concerned, sustains the Chinese aim to maintain ‘deniability’ as a strategy.

Building Leverage.

Maintaining deniability, yet ensuring that it visibly demonstrates its stake or claim on disputed territory helps to build leverage for China. For example, when Indian troops intercepted Chinese road-building activities in Doklam, China described India’s behaviour as infringing upon sovereignty and international law. Even when Indian troops withdrew, Chinese media and official statements termed it as a withdrawal by Indian troops. Before the withdrawal, on August 3, 2017, Chinese Deputy Chief of Mission in New Delhi, Liu Jinsong stated that “the crossing of the boundary line by Indian troops into the territory of China using the pretext of security concerns for a 3rd party [Bhutan] is illegal...the troops should be withdrawn immediately, otherwise there will be serious consequences.”³⁸ This put pressure on Bhutan, who while asking China to return to the status quo pre-June 16, would not openly support Indian troops presence in Doklam. In fact, there were

indications that Bhutan advised India to resolve the issue peacefully with China. Wangcha Sangey, a Bhutanese scholar, argued that India acted rashly in Doklam and now seeks a face-saving device. Sangey indicated that “The ideal solution is for India to withdraw and claim that Bhutanese troops are replacing Indian forces at the disputed site.”³⁹ If one analyses this, what China succeeded from its Doklam strategy is to bring to the forefront Bhutan’s stand on Bhutan-China border talks and dispute; that Bhutan wants to resolve it bilaterally, thereby giving China leverage in the matter vis-à-vis India.

What Can India Expect from China: Four Future Scenarios

China Territorial Stand Will Get Harder

China’s policy under President Xi Jinping is to assert its claim on disputed territory. In April 2017, China renamed six places in Arunachal Pradesh. “The official names of the six places using the Roman alphabet are Wo’gyainling, Mila Ri, Qoidêngarbo Ri, Mainquka, Būmo La and Namkapub Ri,” stated Professor Xiong Kunxin, at Beijing’s Minzu University of China. He further elaborated that re-naming places is a step towards re-affirming “China’s sovereignty to South Tibet.”⁴⁰ Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang asserted that “To issue these names, it is actually carried out in accordance with our regulations about the names of localities and it is a legitimate action by the Chinese government...these names reflect from another side that China’s territorial claim over South Tibet is supported by clear evidence in terms of history, culture and administration.”⁴¹ China is also planning to rename Tawang monastery as “Wo’gyainling,” significant to Tibetan Buddhism as the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama. There are plans to rename monasteries in the Menchuka area of Arunachal Pradesh, all attempts to assert and stake territorial claim. This is coupled with military assertiveness. China has improved infrastructure in Tibet, and deployed weaponry and troops to the area. This was demonstrated by its 11 hours live wire ammunition exercise in Tibet in July 2017. The aim of that exercise was to demonstrate PLA capability, both to India and an internal audience.⁴² India should be concerned about the rapid militarization of Tibet and renaming of places in India with Chinese names.

China Will Use Economics as a Rationale

Using economics as a rationale, China will continue to invest in road-building in South Asia to include disputed territory. This includes the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), linking China to the Arabian Sea as a key component of the 65 nation One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative, described by Xi Jinping as the ‘project of the century.’⁴³ The \$55 billion investment includes areas that are disputed between India and Pakistan. Yet, China has gone ahead with the project.⁴⁴ Similar Chinese aims are to connect Yunnan to the Bay of Bengal, and open that region to more access as part of its “Go West” initiative. Any Chinese assertiveness in India’s border region will increase and be framed as a territorial issue connected to economic revival of China and its neighbours.

Bhutan Becomes More Assertive

The Doklam incident revealed that Bhutan, now a democracy, faced a diversity of perspectives. While some Bhutanese are supportive of a closer relationship with India, others want Bhutan to chart its own independent foreign policy. In the Doklam incident, Bhutan was viewed as being caught in a stand-off between its bigger neighbours, even though it was its sovereign claim on territory that had been infringed upon by China. For Bhutan, China is becoming a focus area for economic initiatives. Bhutanese resent that India blocked Bhutan’s aspirations to establish trade and diplomatic relations with China. Chinese tourists are another draw and they are travelling in hordes to Bhutan, paying the \$ 250 in advance per day for their vacation packages. Indian tourists, on the other hand, do not require a visa to visit Bhutan, and do not have to pay this daily fee.⁴⁵ Bhutanese thereby view China as a source of income, a big draw in a democratic country. Forthcoming elections in Bhutan might see voters asserting Bhutan’s chart towards more independence in its foreign policy.

Chinese Hackers

India should be prepared for a cyber attack emanating from China, given India’s growing dependence on the web for governance. The net can also be used to spread dis-information in South Asia. Chinese hackers get very active whenever there is an external dispute China is

engaged with. For example, the “Red Hacker Alliance,”⁴⁶ a private Chinese hacker group targeted Indonesian government websites during the 1998 Indonesian riots that targeted the Chinese minority population. Then in August 2004, 1,790 Chinese hackers targeted nearly 200 Japanese official websites over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute.⁴⁷ India could be inflicted with similar targeted cyber attacks aimed at its government and other critical infrastructure websites and banking, especially during an escalation in the China-India territorial dispute.

The recent Doklam stand-off revealed China’s willingness to flout agreements with neighbours to demonstrate presence and claims. Such activities are then explained by the Chinese government as ‘these areas were always China’s, hence they were not part of any agreement’ thereby blindsiding the fellow signatory state. Such behaviour will continue in the future. China, cleverly and strategically also forced Bhutan’s hand during the Doklam stand-off to decide whether it wanted to continue remaining under Indian guidance with regard to China or chart its own course. Bhutan’s unhappiness with conflict escalation on its territory tells us where the future lay.

Notes

- ¹ “Recent Developments in Doklam Area,” Ministry of External Affairs, June 30, 2017 at http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28572/Recent_Developments_in_Doklam_Area (Accessed on September 19, 2017).
- ² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lu Kang’s Regular Press Conference on June 29, 2017 at http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1474166.shtml (Accessed on September 19, 2017).
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bhutan, “Press Release,” June 29, 2017 at <http://www.mfa.gov.bt/?p=4799> (Accessed on September 19, 2017).
- ⁵ Devirupa Mitra, “Current Stand-off an Attempt by China to Change the Status Quo at Tri-Junction: Shiv Shankar Menon,” *The Wire*, July 9, 2017 at <https://thewire.in/155766/current-stand-off-attempt-china-change-status-quo-tri-junction-shivshankar-menon/> (Accessed on September 25, 2017).
- ⁶ Ibid.

- ⁷ “China to Continue Patrolling, Defending Doklam Area: FM Spokesperson,” August 29, 2017 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-08/29/c_136565670.htm (Accessed on September 20, 2017).
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ “China Confirms India’s Withdrawal of Troops, Equipment from Dong Lang,” *Xinhua*, August 28, 2017 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-08/28/c_136562392.htm (Accessed on September 20, 2017).
- ¹⁰ “China’s Military to Stay Vigilant Firmly Safeguard Territory,” *Xinhua*, August 28, 2017 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-08/28/c_136562890.htm (Accessed on September 20, 2017).
- ¹¹ William A. Callahan, “National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism,” *Alternatives* 29 (2004), pp. 199-218 at <http://www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/CallahanChina.pdf> (Accessed on September 25, 2017).
- ¹² “Bhutan and India Sign New Treaty,” *BBC News*, February 8, 2017 at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6341143.stm (Accessed on September 21, 2017).
- ¹³ Graham Allison, “What Xi Jinping Wants?” *The Atlantic*, May 31, 2017 at <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/05/what-china-wants/528561/> (Accessed on September 25, 2017).
- ¹⁴ For more, please see Bonnie S. Glaser, “China’s Island Building in the Spratly Islands For What Purpose?” in *Examining the South China Sea Disputes*, eds., Murray Hiebert, et.al (Washington, D.C. Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 2015), 31.
- ¹⁵ For those interested in the India-China border conflict of 1962, please see J.P. Dalvi, *The Himalayan Blunder* (New Delhi: Thacker, 1969); John Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); Steve Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Xuecheng Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute & Sino-Indian Relations*, (Maryland: Lenham, 1994); Parshotam Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After* (New Delhi: McMillan, 1974); D.K. Palit., *War in the High Himalaya: Indian Army in Crisis* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1991); Yaccov Y.I. Vertzberger, *Misperception in Foreign Policy Making: The Sino-Indian Conflict 1959-1962* (Colorado: Boulder, 1984); Neville Maxwell, *India’s China War*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).
- ¹⁶ Ankit Panda, “New Chinese Map Claims Arunachal Pradesh, Provokes India,” *The Diplomat*, 1 July 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/07/new-chinese-map-claims-arunachal-pradesh-provokes-india/>
- ¹⁷ “Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility Along the Line of Control in the India-China Border Areas”, September 7, 1993 at <http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/>

CN%20IN_930907_Agreement%20on%20India-China%20Border%20Areas.pdf (Accessed on September 25, 2017).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ “Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People’s Republic of China on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question,” Ministry of External Affairs, August 11, 2005 at <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/6534/Agreement+between+the+Government+of+the+Republic+of+India+and+the+Government+of+the+Peoples+Republic+of+China+on+the+Political+Parameters+and+Guiding+Principles+for+the+Settlement+of+the+IndiaChina+Boundary+Question> (Accessed on September 21, 2017).

²⁰ “Arunachal Pradesh is our Territory,” Rediff, November 14, 2016 at <http://www.rediff.com/news/2006/nov/14china.htm> (Accessed on September 21, 2017).

²¹ Namrata Goswami, “Chinese Intrusions Across the LAC,” IDSA Issue Briefs, December 13, 2013 at http://www.idsa.in/issuebrief/ChineseintrusionsacrosstheLAC_ngoswami_171213 (Accessed on September 21, 2017).

²² Namrata Goswami, “Can China be Taken Seriously on its ‘Word’ to Negotiate Disputed Territory?” *The Diplomat*, August 18, 2017 at <http://thediplomat.com/2017/08/can-china-be-taken-seriously-on-its-word-to-negotiate-disputed-territory/> (Accessed on September 21, 2017).

²³ “Chinese Intrusions Across the LAC,” n.20.

²⁴ “Border Defense Cooperation Agreement Between India and China,” Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Prime Minister’s Office, October 23, 2013 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=100178> (Accessed on September 21, 2017).

²⁵ Laura Zhou, “China and ASEAN Agree to Draft Code of Conduct in SCS,” CNBC, May 18, 2017 at <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/05/18/china-and-asean-agree-to-draft-code-of-conduct-in-south-china-sea.html> (Accessed on September 21, 2017).

²⁶ “2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.” at <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/rp/pdf/2002%20Declaration%20on%20the%20Conduct%20of%20Parties%20in%20the%20South%20China%20Sea.pdf.pdf> (Accessed on September 21, 2017).

²⁷ “Definition of Strategy,” Meriam Webster, at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/strategy> (Accessed on September 22, 2017).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ “China’s Initiation of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence,” at http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18053.shtml (Accessed on September 22, 2017).

³⁰ “Chinese Intrusions into Bhutanese Territory Increase,” Bhutan News Service, December 11, 2009 at <http://www.bhutannewsservice.org/chinese-incursions-into-bhutanese-territory-increase/> (Accessed on September 25, 2017).

³¹ “Q. No. 1963 China Rejecting Clarification on LAC,” at <http://mea.gov.in/rajya-sabha.htm?dtl/25670/Q+NO1963+CHINA+REJECTING+CLARIFICATION+ON+LAC> (Accessed on September 22, 2017).

³² “Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility Along the Line of Control in the India-China Border Areas,”

³³ as above.

³⁴ “50 Chinese Soldiers on Horses Intruded into Indian Territory,” *The Hindu*, July 21, 2013 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/50-chinese-soldiers-on-horses-intruded-into-indian-territory/article4937859.ece> (Accessed on September 22, 2017).

³⁵ Eric Meyer, “Who Sabotaged Chinese President Xi Jinping’s India Visit?” *Forbes*, September 23, 2014 at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ericyemeyer/2014/09/23/who-sabotaged-xi-jinpings-india-visit/#6259100a70fa> (Accessed on September 23, 2017).

³⁶

³⁷ “China Decries Attempts to ‘Read too much into’ Passport Map Row,” Reuters, November 28, 2012 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-usa-passport/china-decries-attempts-to-read-too-much-into-passport-map-row-idUSBRE8AQ18P20121128> (Accessed on September 22, 2017).

³⁸ Suhasini Haider, “China Raises the Heat on Doklam Standoff,” *The Hindu*, August 03, 2017 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/withdraw-troops-or-face-consequences-says-chinese-diplomat/article19417002.ece> (Accessed on September 24, 2017).

³⁹ Wangcha Sangey, “India Must Find a Face-Saving Pretext and Withdraw from Doklam,” *South China Morning Post*, August 14, 2017 at <http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2106709/india-must-find-face-saving-pretext-and-withdraw-doklam> (Accessed on September 24, 2017).

⁴⁰ Sutirtho Patranobis, “China Renames Six Places in Arunachal Pradesh on its Official Map,” *The Hindustan Times*, April 20, 2017 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/china-renames-6-places-in-arunachal-pradesh-on-its-official-map-retaliates-against-dalai-lama-visit/story-GopcxKWUJsOQ7Cys3nOcsK.html> (Accessed on September 25, 2017).

⁴¹ (Accessed on September 25, 2017).

⁴² Liu Zhen, “China Flexes its Military Muscle in Tibet, Close to Border Dispute with India,” *South China Morning Post*, July 25, 2017 at www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2102965/china-

flexes-its-military-muscle-tibet-close-border (Accessed on September 25, 2017).

⁴³ Henry Sender and Kiran Stacey, "China Takes 'Project of the Century' to Pakistan," *The Financial Times*, May 17, 2017 at <https://www.ft.com/content/05979e18-2fe4-11e7-9555-23ef563ecf9a> (Accessed on September 25, 2017).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Sajjad Ashraf, "Bhutan Caught in Big Neighbour Stand-off," *The Strait Times*, August 24, 2017 at <http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/bhutan-caught-in-big-neighbour-stand-off> (Accessed on September 25, 2017).

⁴⁶ "China's Red Hackers: The Tale of One Patriotic Cyber Warrior," *Time*, February 21, 2013 at <http://world.time.com/2013/02/21/chinas-red-hackers-the-tale-of-one-patriotic-cyberwarrior/> (Accessed on September 25, 2017).

⁴⁷ "Organized Chinese Hackers hit Official Japanese Websites," *The Japan Times*, August 7, 2014 at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2004/08/07/national/organized-chinese-hackers-hit-official-japan-sites/#.WckhMciGPD4> (Accessed on September 25, 2017).

'The India-China Border: Is There a Solution in Sight?'

Shyam Saran*

The 7th A. K. Dave Memorial Lecture was delivered by Shri Shyam Saran on August 3, 2017 at the India International Centre, New Delhi. The event, organized by the Association of Retired Senior IPS Officers (ARSIPSO), in collaboration with IIC.

The subject was pertinent in the backdrop of the current faceoff between the Indian army and the Chinese in Doklam needed to be viewed in the larger context of Sino-Indian relations. He said that there were worrisome dimensions on account of an apparent hardening of attitude of the Chinese, domestic compulsions on account of the forthcoming Chinese Party Congress in November 2017, and the impact of current developments on Indo-Bhutan relations. Whereas the situation in the Doklam plateau was of contemporary concern, it needed to be viewed in the larger perspective of Sino-Indian relations.

The relations between India and China in their nascent years as independent countries were of bonhomie between the two. The positive relations were the outcome of a belief that, with the end of colonial rule, both neighbours would play important roles in the following period of resurgence. The two countries even developed a bilateral code of

* Shri Shyam Saran IFS (Retd.) is Padma Bhushan, former Foreign Secretary, former Chairman of the National Security Advisory Board. An eminent thinker and writer on International Affairs. His book *How India Sees the World* was published in 2017.

** The article is an edited version of the 7th A.K. Dsave Memorial Lecture delivered on August 3, 2017, under the auspices of the Association of Retired Senior IPS Officers (ARSIPSO) at IIC, New Delhi. It was delivered before both sides agreed to withdraw (August 27, 2017).

conduct – the Panchsheel. Their relations, however, soon soured. The underlying reasons are best understood in the historical context.

Both India and China are ancient civilizations which, though dissimilar, interacted as cultures throughout history. There were no rigid boundaries between them and the civilizations were defined more by cultural influences than territorial claims. The necessity for drawing territorial boundaries was first felt in history only after the concept of the ‘state’ evolved in the post-Westphalia Treaty in Europe. In the case of India and China, the notion of the ‘state’ emerged only in the eighteenth century, with the attendant ideas of sovereignty and non-interference by outside forces.

The second aspect was the manner in which China and India interacted in the past. It was important to appreciate that historically the Chinese always remained north of the Kunlun Mountains. With India being south of the Himalayas, there was never widespread contact between the two civilizations. Linkages were established, but these were through trade along caravan routes and journeys of religious men. Thus, the two civilizations were aware of but not in direct contact with each other. Even the tenuous link of trade and religion remained disrupted for almost a thousand years on account of Islamic conquests in the Indian subcontinent. Contact between the two cultures recommenced after 1644 with the ascendance of the Qing Empire in China.

Because the Chinese remained north of the Kunlun, there was never any boundary dispute between India and China in the past. The boundary issue gained importance when China took over Tibet. Tibet was overrun by troops that were moved to that area across Aksai Chin, where an earlier dirt track was upgraded to a wide road. India, however, discovered the Chinese presence in Aksai Chin only in 1957 and the first formal note of protest from India was sent on October 18, 1958. Till this time, China had never contested the McMahon Line, either with Burma or India. It was only after the Indian protest against the Aksai Chin road that China declared that the McMahon Line was not acceptable to it. The east border was dubbed as contested only to ease pressure on the Chinese claims in the west. Chinese archives bear out that Chou En Lai was inclined to agree to the boundary demarcation in the east, provided India adopted a ‘realistic attitude’ in the west, thereby underlining the importance, at that time, of the Aksai Chin road for the Chinese.

In this background, it was no surprise that after the 1962 conflict, the Chinese withdrew from occupied areas in the eastern sector, despite having intruded as far as twenty kilometres inside India. At the same time, they actually occupied additional areas in the west. Even as late as 1982, Deng Xiao Peng offered a proposal that essentially meant continuation of the status quo.

The importance of the Aksai Chin road, however, diminished as China developed more access roads to Tibet. Thus, in 1983-84, when China wanted to project a centrist image and adopt a pro-nonaligned stance, it made overtures for a visit by Indira Gandhi. As quid pro quo, it mooted a ‘Package Proposal’ envisaging settling the border in Ladakh at the LAC with some additional area. No progress was, however, made on this proposal.

There was a qualitative change in China’s position soon after, with the Thaga La incident, when Chinese troops occupied the Sumdorong Chu area. Though they were evicted, the transgression itself indicated a significant shift in the Chinese stance. The intrusion was the result of cartographic inconsistencies which provided to the Chinese an opportunity to contest the McMahon Line. The Chinese side then declared that the largest area of contestation was in the east and India should, therefore, make meaningful concessions here, in order that China might make concessions in the west. For the first time, China also made a clear claim on Tawang.

The current developments were better understood in this perspective. There was a move towards resolving the border dispute in 2004-05, as China started perceiving itself as an emerging global power. For this reason, it sought a larger role for itself in global governance issues like climate change, trade negotiations and cyber security. It felt that there was greater convergence between Indian and Chinese interests on these issues and the two Asian giants could work together.

Towards this end, China felt that Sino-Indian relations should not get mired in legacy issues like an unsettled border or the Chinese refusal to acknowledge the merger of Sikkim. At the same time, China showed a willingness to accommodate India’s stand, which included the principle that populations should not be disturbed and prominent geographical features should be incorporated in any border demarcation. The establishment of the Special Representative mechanism and attendant discussions marked the high point of congruence in 2005.

Relations between India and China began to change after 2007-08, following the global economic crisis. While it was generally felt that India had come out of the crisis better, Chinese aspirations made it start benchmarking itself with the USA. The current belief persists that Sino-US relations matter to the whole world, and in this new great power rivalry, India should accept that China is much larger than India. China is also no longer bothered about issues which it was sensitive to earlier.

In regard to the current standoff in the Chumbi Valley/Doka La area, it is to be noted that China always followed a policy of nibbling while making territorial claims. The South China Sea was a good example of the manner in which it achieves this objective. The Chinese had similarly been creeping into Bhutanese territory, claiming the tri-junction was located further south, and occupying territory that belonged to Bhutan. The Chinese were surprised and shocked that this time Indian Forces confronted their troops, and that, too, in Bhutanese territory. While the current confrontation was in a limited area, it represented high stakes for the Chinese. Foremost, it wants to ensure that Bhutan became more responsive to the might of China – through acceptance of diplomatic and trade relations, talks on the border issue, involvement with the OBOR initiative, etc. China also could not afford to lose face in the standoff. The Doklam situation was not likely to be resolved easily. Because China could not afford to lose face and also has domestic compulsions, the confrontation could well escalate. He felt that should such a situation arise, it was unlikely that China would persist with aggression in the Chumbi Valley area and could decide to activate some other area. Because of the onset of winter and the Party Congress schedule, the period before November 2017 would bear watching.

While resolution of the border issue was desirable, the question was at what cost? The most practicable solution would be to let the eastern side remain as it was and freeze the western side at a LAC Plus position. This would be close to the 1983-84 approach. While the principles for border demarcation were clear, the old conventions were not always based on accurate knowledge of topography. This had been the source of some misinterpretations.

With the emergence of Shri Modi as leader, there was some initial euphoria that both countries now had strong leaders and so the border issues could be sorted out. But relations have become uncomfortable

because of several factors. One of them is undoubtedly the forthcoming Party Congress of the CPC in October 2017. Recent years have also witnessed China increasingly hyphenating itself with the USA, whereas there is a sense in the international fraternity that in a world increasingly dominated by China, the countervailing force can only be India. He said that this was possibly a consideration that swung the nuclear deal in India's favour.

In this background it is lamentable that the strategic fraternity in India simply did not give enough attention to China and we do not know enough about that country.

India's Emergence is Responsible, While China's Seems to Disturb and Disrupt

Dr. Anirban Ganguly

Many an Indian apologist for Chinese expansionism have, over the last few months, prolifically written on how the Narendra Modi government's handling of the current Doklam issue will only aggravate the situation and will not serve the cause of India's stability and the larger cause of "peace" in the region. In short, these apologists want India to back off or back down in the face of the current phase of Chinese belligerence. They too like the CPIM politbureau, want India to submit to the Chinese reading of the situation and to their false claims and propaganda. Over the years if these types who have been cultivated and feted by certain countries so that they could conveniently serve as their mouthpieces back home and on crucial occasions take a line which is different from the one that serves India's national interest.

There are many specimens of these "proxies," some of them call for India's dismemberment, some others, under the garb of the "Idea of India" debate, baulk at anything that is civilisational India, yet others develop severe intellectual rashes the moment they are confronted with cries of "*Bharat Mata Ki Jai*," yet others have silently, under the garb of academic freedom, associated themselves with separatists and terrorists. These elements, though severely challenged in the last three years, have become most vocal against India's position on Doklam. It is best that one keeps exposing these elements; it is through a continuous counter that they stand to gradually dissolve or be intellectually battered into silence.

* The author is Director, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation, New Delhi.-110001.

The latest phase of Chinese expansionism, follows a phase in which Prime Minister Modi, genuinely reached out to the Chinese and spoke of China and India as being two ancient civilisations that can "reinforce each other's progress" amid the "global uncertainties of our times." In a profoundly statesman like address to the Tsinghua University in May 2015, Prime Minister Modi had, in fact, laid a roadmap for India-China partnership for the next two decades. The address was studded with hard truths, genuine appeal, practical suggestions and a civilizational perspective. Modi had said, for example, that "Today, after difficult and sometimes dark passages of history, India and China stand at a rare moment of vast and multiple transitions in the world. Perhaps, the most significant change of this era is the re-emergence of China and India." He saw the rise of India and China as the *sine qua non* for the rise of Asia and for bringing to fruition the vision of the Asian century.

Some of the candid and yet profound statements that Prime Minister Modi made in that address, clearly spoke of a concrete civilizational partnership between our two countries. Some of those points that Modi made are worth recalling today: "Asia's re-emergence is leading to a multi-polar world that we both welcome. But, it is also an unpredictable and complex environment of shifting equations. We can be more certain of a peaceful and stable future for Asia if India and China cooperate closely. Asia's voice will be stronger and our nation's role more influential, if India and China speak in one voice – for all of us and for each other. Simply put, the prospects of the 21st century becoming the Asian century will depend in large measure on what India and China achieve individually and what we do together...First, we must try to settle the boundary question quickly. We both recognise that this is history's legacy. Resolving it is our shared responsibility to the future. We must move ahead with new purpose and determination...The solution we choose should do more than settle the boundary question. It should do so in a manner that transforms our relationship and not cause new disruptions. If the last century was the age of alliances, this is an era of inter-dependence. So, talks of alliances against one another have no foundation. In any case, we are both ancient civilizations, large and independent nations. Neither of us can be contained or become part of anyone's plans." That both India and China are independent and proud civilizations and will only gain by striking a multi-layered partnership clearly emerged in this historic address of his. The CPC media and think tanks must have or to ought to have analysed this speech if they had actually wished to map Modi's vision for the region.

The CPC and its actions on Doklam clearly showed that they have chosen to ignore the trust of friendship that Prime Minister Modi's words conveyed in the summer of 2015. It was a clear case of betraying the spirit of friendship and partnership that Prime Minister Modi displayed during that visit of his. But there was an obvious difference, the Chinese had not anticipated the sturdy determination the Indian side displayed, the Chinese miscalculated one crucial aspect and that is that Modi is not Nehru, his trust and hand of friendship is backed by a firm resolve to protect India's national interest, a resolve which is not a merely ideational but which is further backed by a clear roadmap and strategy.

While Nehru philosophised his trust of the Chinese, Modi's trust is propped up by pragmatism, dynamism, alertness and the will to take positions and withstand all sorts of pressures. It is thus true that Modi is not Nehru and India of today is not stuck or awed by the phantom of 1962.

Doklam has for the moment fallen silent, the CPC party Congress has also come and passed and President Xi's position has only been further strengthened with some arguing that Xi's stature has now attained or will eventually attain that of Mao. Xi's staunch and unequivocal advocacy of the Chinese dream has gained greater credence and acceptability within China it seems. Doklam for us has displayed a shift vis-a-vis our approach and relations with China. India has demonstrated her quiet determination to work for her own rise as a responsible power and to legitimately protect her national interest and continue with her quest for strategic depth in the region.

For the Chinese, Doklam seems to have given a clear indication that the present Indian leadership is not going to resort to false sentimentalism, to public rhetoric while ceding space all the while. There was no indication during the entire episode that India was a soft and undecided state, prone to backsliding and compromising. Neither did she resort to rhetoric nor did she cede space and buckle.

The narrative that must now be taken forward is whether China's rise will be a peaceful and responsible rise, whether that rise recognises the right of other powers to equally rise and prosper, whether it accepts the right of other powers to equal access to international lanes of communication and trade, whether the region as a whole can aspire to a future of peace, interconnectivity and prosperity? Can China deny India her civilizational approach and space? While ancient times, the

times of the mighty Cholas to be precise, India had a clearly marked out civilizational space in the region, had amalgamated, fused and subsumed her cultural and religious expressions among people and civilizations of the area abounding southeast Asia right up to Japan and Korea, the Chinese were mostly always in a state of flux.

Author and thinker Howard French in his latest study of China: *"Everything Under the Heavens: How the Past Helps China's Push for Global Power"* (2017) notes that as "empire built upon succession of dynasties, China had never had a fixed name as a country, nor anything like a universally shared national language, nor for that matter anything remotely resembling a national history."

This was in sharp contrast to India, where despite many political differences and diversities, the term *Bharatvarsha* evoked a clear geographical and spiritual entity, where Sanskrit was widely spoken and recognised, where a larger cultural and religious unity was reinforced and reiterated through institutions like the *Tirthas* (pilgrimages), where the narrative of *Itihasa* displayed a clear historical sense. Howard cites Chinese, scholar, philosopher and reformer of the late Qing and early republican period, Liang Qichao (1873-1929), arguing that Qichao played a crucial role, through his writings beginning in 1901, in formulating "an idea of the nation for the first time." Qichao observed thus, "what I feel most shameful of is that our country does not have a name. The name of the Han or people of Tang are only names of Dynasties, and the name 'China' that foreign countries use is not a name that we call ourselves." In fact Qichao argued that the Chinese people had no concept or vision of a "national people" [*guomin*]. "The Chinese people do not even know there is such a thing as a national people [*guomin*]. After several thousand years, there have been the two words *guo jia* [state, family] but I have never heard the two words *guo min* [state, people] ever uttered..."

The Chinese approach, the formulation of its policies towards the region and its players has been conditioned with a mindset of the past. Their approach to present day policy formulation is always infused with a sense of their past, whether that past existed in reality or not, is another matter. China's approach to her neighbourhood, where she attempts to expand and dominate, is influenced by her past mindset. This past mindset sees the entire surrounding region right up to Japan in the north and Philippines in the south and India's northeast as a subsidiary region which, China feels, ought to pay tribute to it.

As French observes, “for the better part of two millennia, the norm for China, from its own perspective, was a natural dominion over everything under the heaven, a concept known in the Chinese language as *tian xia* (everything under the heavens).” The Chinese saw everything as their dominion, especially that part of the world which they daily saw and with which they interacted. But this is a calcified mindset that sees no takers in the present times, even though, as the American thinker John Mearsheimer has argued in his “*The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*,” powerful states have the habit of “pursuing regional hegemony” and China is seeking to do the same in the region.

As strategic thinker Robert Kaplan in his fascinating account, “*Asia’s Cauldron: the south China Sea and the end of a stable pacific*” notes “China will pursue regional hegemony as a matter of course, regardless of whether or not its political system becomes open.” The Chinese thinking on statecraft argues, therefore, based on a created historical narrative that since the surrounding region stretching up to the Indian Ocean and the South China sea was a tributary region, China has to rise to status of a dominant power and once again command the allegiance of the countries around. This is what makes its international conduct untenable in the long-run, disturbance, coercion, hegemony and hectoring are its expressions.

It is here that India, an equally long-running civilization, more cohesive, and with a deep sense of international commitment and responsibility, emerges as a crucial player. The manner in which India addresses the Chinese challenge, the way in which she handles herself in the face of challenges from China, the commitment that she displays towards international institutions and multilateralism will define and decide the way forward. Prime Minister Modi has referred to the need to reject expansionism – *Vistaarvad* and to embrace development, growth and progress – *Vikaasvad* in the region and beyond. His words express the collective aspiration of people of the area. Under his leadership and international vision, India has emerged as a proactive, dynamic and mature power with a narrative of co-existence, growth, interconnectedness; it is a narrative that attracts and will eventually dominate and prove and anchor for transforming the Indo-Pacific region. China will have to realize that sooner rather than later, as will have to those within India who have emerged as apologists for Chinese expansionism.

Dealing With the Communist China

Shankar Sharan*

Politics is conducted with the help of levers. There are handles a politician or a party or a government has at its disposal, in order to force or encourage the other side to behave in a desired manner. So, when India had signed the famous ‘Panchsheel Agreement’ with the communist China in April 1954, it did not have the lever to compel its observance by China.

The result: when communist China started violating the Agreement, a fact that our Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru himself complained about on several occasions, he had no leverage to chastise the violator. As a matter of fact, India did have good levers to force the communist Chinese respect Panchsheel. But it did not occur to Nehru to recognize and use them. He was ideologically enamoured with socialism and inclined to ignore it even when it involved the country’s security.

How much has the situation changed since then? Did Indian leadership ever contemplate about all the levers that can be used against the communist Chinese rulers whenever they harm India by words or deeds? Apparently no. Which is the main reason why we have not been able to establish a normal relationship with the great neighbour.

Take the latest example. The names Joshua Wong, Nathan Law and Alex Chow. How many Indians know them? Hardly few, mostly those who prepare for competitive examinations and try to be update on current affairs. Otherwise no Indian has any idea who these three fellows are. The three are very young men of Hong Kong, an autonomous region now under communist China, sentenced by the Hong Kong appellate authorities to seven to eight months of prison. Their crime?

* Professor, Political Science, NCERT, New Delhi-110016.
E-mail: hesivh@gmail.com

Asking for democracy in a peaceful meeting of youth. In other words, blatant violation of the rights of the citizens of Hong Kong assured to them when the island was transferred by the British dominion to China in 1998.

We could condemn giving support to the democracy movement in Hong Kong and mainland China too. This is not only a matter of now fashionable human rights, but also consistent with the age old humanist tradition of siding with the oppressed. We ourselves rejoiced at such support when we were waging the independence struggle from the colonial rule. Besides, we kept supporting so many such struggles in Asia and Africa since our independence. For example, supporting the movement to end apartheid in South Africa, supporting Hungarians against the Soviet oppression and helping the democracy movement in Nepal against the monarchy. In fact, the Socialist and Communist parties of India actively took part in undermining the King of Nepal in order to 'establish democracy' in Nepal.

Then, why not to the democracy movement in Hong Kong and in the mainland China too? This is a potent handle in our hand in order to make the communist Chinese leaders behave, besides doing a right thing. It is not a wicked or devious act to raise voice for Joshua Wong, Nathan Law and Alex Chow. Similarly, it is not at all wrong to raise the issue of Tibet's autonomy destroyed and the Tibetan people brutalized by the communist Chinese rulers. Again, it would not be meaningless to honour the fighters like Liu Xiaobo, who died in prison just for asking for the rights mentioned in the present Chinese constitution.

Even if the government of India hesitates, as it may be construed as inter-ferece in internal matters of China, what stops our independent media, civil society, social and political organizations to come together in support of Joshua Wong, Nathan Law and Alex Chow? Our political parties could come together to make statement in support of the fledgling party 'Demosisto' in Hong Kong. What keeps our cultural and literary organizations from honouring the memory of Liu Xiaobo? Why the youth of universities in Delhi should not march to the Chinese embassy and the UN offices in Delhi to handover a memorandum to extend support to the oppressed people of China, Tibet and Hong Kong as and when some news of blatant abuse of their human rights comes to our

knowledge? Why our cultural and religious organizations should not start a movement to restore the traditional right of visiting Kailash and Mansarovar as it was since time immemorial till 1955? Why our educational and cultural institutions should not honour the Dalai Lama and give him the highest platforms to speak his wise words to benefit us? These are all peaceful, civil and humanist actions. It is another matter that they are also political, indirectly to pressurize China. But that is natural and legitimate. If the communist Chinese use their dictatorship to suppress their people and bully others, why the Indian people should not use their democracy to condemn them on all occasions?

If the Indian people start raising their determined voice in support of the oppressed people in China, Tibet and Hong Kong, the communist Chinese leaders would actually feel the pressure, while reacting to their usual rhetoric. It would also encourage other countries in the world to join the effort. And this, the Chinese people's longing for freedom and the constant fear of the ruling dictatorship about it, is the rawest nerve of the communist Chinese leaders. After all the supporting, materially and vocally, the Indian communists to overthrow the democratic government of India and help communists come to power it has been a missed opportunity.

We have been celebrating the Panchsheel Agreement unilaterally ever since, but never looked into what it actually was! Just a one and half page Agreement and today hardly any Indian political leader or intellectual would know about its vital content. Even when, for instance on 5 July 2017 the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Gen Shuang accused India of 'trampling Panchsheel' we failed to use the opportunity. India should have shown to the whole world, who has trampled the Panchsheel and what it actually was, so that the issue of Tibet could become the world headlines.

The very title of the Panchsheel Agreement mentions that it was about the 'trade and intercourse between Tibet region of China and India.' In other words, the agreement recognized the special and independent nature of the relation between Tibet and India. That means India has a natural right to raise the issue of the Tibet. In fact, five of the all six articles of the Panchsheel Agreement is nothing but a restatement of the fact in so many words.

The Article III of the Panchsheel Agreement says:

(1) Pilgrims from India of Lamaist, Hindu and Buddhist faith may visit Kang Rimpoche (Kailash) and Mavam Tse (Mansarovar) in the Tibet region of China in accordance with custom.

(2) Pilgrims from the Tibet region of China of Lamaist and Buddhist faiths may visit Banaras, Sarnath, Gaya and Sanchi in India in accordance with custom.

Next, the Article V says:

(1) Traders of both countries known to be customarily and specifically engaged in trade between the Tibet region of China and India, their wives and children, who are dependent on them for livelihood and their attendants will be allowed entry for purposes of trade into India or the Tibet region of China, as the case may be, in accordance with custom on the production of certificates duly issued by the local Government of their own country by its duly authorised agents and examined by the border check posts of the other party.

(2) Inhabitants of the border districts of the two countries, who cross borders to carry on petty trade or to visit friends and relatives, may proceed to the border districts of the other party as they have customarily done heretofore and need not be restricted to the passes and route specified in Article IV above and shall not be required to hold passports, visas or permits.

...

(4) Pilgrims of both countries need not carry documents of certification but shall register at the border checkpoint of the other party and receive a permit for pilgrimage.

These would indicate the kind of free relations India and Tibet had since olden times up to the capture of Tibet by China. Now it can be earnestly asked, who is violating the Panchsheel Agreement? Are the Indians free to visit Kailash and Mansarovar, without getting any official permission etc., as was the custom and agreed to in the Agreement? Are the Tibetans free to similarly come for pilgrimage to India in the customary manner? Are the traders of the two sides free to come and go with their families, servants and carts with just a certificate given by their respective local Governments? Are the inhabitants of both the

sides free to visit their friends whenever they liked by crossing the border anywhere, and are not bound to do so by using only the official checkpoints?

Then and now it is only the Chinese rulers who created hurdles and then broke the relations altogether between Tibet and India. It is indeed a regrettable chapter of the independent India that her leadership proved so naïve consistently as not to raise the issues even when it directly affected our security, and culture.

It is useful to remember that the communist China was not at all powerful at that time or till the late 1970s. It was not even a member of the United Nations. The UN seat belonged to Formosa (Taiwan) till 1971, who was the rightful member of the UN representing the erstwhile Republic of China. As a democratic country, India should have sided with Formosa, not the undemocratic communist China. But we did the opposite, the Nehru government campaigned in the UN to give recognition to the communist China. It was such a bizarre gesture in view of the communist China, creating trouble on Indian borders, by then well known to the world. Nehru himself informed the Indian Parliament in 1959 that the Western nations laugh at India in the UN on this odd behaviour, of supporting an inimical regime harming the Indian interests. We may see it in Nehru's own words:

Take even the last meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations. When this question of China being seated there was brought up by some countries including India, people were surprised. They said: 'Oh, India goes on doing this in spite of what has happened in Tibet, in spite of what has happened on India's borders. How blind they are!' It is not for me to say who is blind and who is not...¹

It was and is for anyone to see who was blind? Especially, after taking into account that not only Nehru sponsored the case for the communist China, but he also refused to accept a permanent seat in the UN Security Council which was offered to India in 1950's.

For instance, on 24 August 1950, Ms. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, then the Indian Ambassador to the USA, wrote to her brother Jawaharlal Nehru from Washington DC:

One matter that is being cooked up in the State Department should be known to you. This is the unseating of China as a Permanent Member in the

Security Council and of India being put in her place. Last week I had interviews with [John Foster] Dulles and [Philip] Jessup, reports of which I have sent to Bajpai. Both brought up this question and Dulles seemed particularly anxious that a move in this direction should be started. Last night I heard from Marquis Childs, an influential columnist of Washington, that Dulles has asked him on behalf of the State Department to build up public opinion along these lines.²

Nehru's quick response was quite clear, that he did not like the proposal:

In your letter you mention that the State Department is trying to unseat China as a Permanent Member of the Security Council and to put India in her place. So far as we are concerned, we are not going to countenance it. That would be bad from every point of view. It would be a clear affront to China and it would mean some kind of a break between us and China. ... We shall go on pressing for China's admission in the UN and the Security Council.³

There are many other documented references that show how India repeatedly refused the permanent seat for the UN Security Council right up to 1956.

In fact, due to their respective strategic interests both the USA and USSR wanted to give the seat to India instead of the communist China! It was such a happy chance that could give India a permanent respectful situation to have a weighty say in world affairs. Not to mention making us more secure in a warring world.

It is the saddest part of the Nehruvian diplomacy that it aggressively refused to accept the UN Security Council permanent seat in the name of ideological 'principles,' neglecting the national interest. Had he done the right thing, we would not only have saved our land in Ladakh and Kashmir and rebuffed Pakistan forever from being a nuisance to us; but also helped Tibet to remain truly autonomous or become free again as it was till 1951. India as one of the five most powerful countries at the UN could have saved so many innocent lives in Tibet, China and India. Because that would have made communist China a much less powerful entity. In fact, the very history of South Asia could be different and peaceful.

This must also be understood clearly that it was the Indian lapse that helped the communist China to capture Tibet in the first place. The world community naturally looked up to India, as she was the most affected country by the developments in Tibet. As we see in the Panchsheel Agreement above also, the relation of India and Tibet were close and free till communist China captured it by force. It was Indian support to it that silenced the West. Otherwise Tibet, a country of at least three hundred years of proven independence before that, could not be grabbed by the communist China. In fact, communist Russia was also uncomfortable with the Chinese move. This is why they wanted India to have the permanent seat at the UN Security Council, instead of the communist China.

Since all the communist dictatorships have by now collapsed save the Chinese and the North Korean, the issue of Tibet is by no means a closed chapter. Especially so, as the Tibetans in exile as well as inside Tibet have shown exemplary courage and discipline to keep the flame of freedom alive.

Today, Tibet is the last colony in the world, and the entire world knows it as such. There is no need to introduce the Dalai Lama anywhere in the world. What is more, the Tibetans are non-violent and most peaceful in their movement. Besides being the leader and spiritual master of the Tibetan people, the Dalai Lama is also respected as the most esteemed seer and Buddhist Guru all over the world. As a matter of crucial fact, even the common Chinese also respect the Tibetan lamas. All this must be weighed carefully.

Therefore, the Tibet is 'not a lost cause' to use the words of the well-known journalist late Nikhil Chakravarty. Any event, inside China or other place, may trigger the undoing of the communist dictatorship. Please recall the unravelling of the Soviet Union, a superpower for decades till 1980s. Communist China is no way more powerful than that. There are vulnerabilities.

The very incidents like jailing the young kids like Joshua Wong, Nathan Law and Alex Chow for merely demanding freedom of expression and free elections indicate the state of affairs. The recent death of Liu Xiaobo, a Nobel laureate and the most kind person, in the Chinese prison even as he was suffering from the last stage of cancer, shows the fear of the Chinese communists still more vividly. Liu was not allowed to say even his last words to the people of China. What does it indicate? Simply the fear psychosis of the communist leadership

who are aware, that just anything can be the beginning of their downfall. Hence, not taking any chances and demonstrating their determination to punish all those who dare criticize them.

This should be unacceptable by the common standards of the entire democratic world. The world is silent for various reasons. But it is not the case that the world is afraid of the Chinese communists. Hence, the Chinese communists' nervousness over any incidence perceived harmful to their interest. Their dictatorship is but their vulnerability. Especially so in the age of social media and easy access to all information for the entire world.

Therefore, the role of India is still a key for the world on the Tibet issue, as it was in 1950s. If India slowly and confidently takes the rightful path of securing its interests and that of Tibet, the West will quickly recalibrate their position.

As for the inferiority complex of India, and internalized by the Indian establishments since the 1962 humiliation, it is all the more necessary that we must come out of it. The very coming out of it will be a fundamental change in the Indo-Chinese relations. It might affect the Chinese in dramatically positive way. One should know the fears of dictators. They are more afraid of words than weapons. All past and present experiences show it most clearly.

Of course, there is no danger of war between China and India if we just speak our mind on human rights in China and Tibet. Especially so as the communist China have been supporting anti-India Islamic terrorists like Masood Azhar and encouraging anti-Hindu forces in India, accusing 'Hindu nationalism' being the villain for the deteriorated Indo-Chinese relations.

We must reciprocate; in fact, take the opportunity provided by the communist Chinese leadership, by saying with all our moral and vocal force that it is the communist dictatorship of China who has been the culprit of all the violence inside China, Tibet, Hong Kong as well as in relation with India. They had openly supported the communist conspiracies and Naxalite violence in India. They have destroyed the 'customary' relations of Tibet and India, and they have hindered the cordial relations of the Chinese and Indian people who enjoyed a mutual goodwill for millennia. It is a proven fact that only since the communist capture of power in 1949, the relations of China with India, and with Tibet became hostile.

Therefore, as and when the communist Chinese try to browbeat India, the Indian side must use the opportunity to lecture them more profoundly on humanism and democracy. Please note: we have double advantage. One, we can speak freely as society irrespective of the government stance. We can honour democracy fighters of China, Hong Kong and Tibet even if the government of India does not. Secondly, we are on the freedoms side while the Chinese communists are on the repression side. The public opinion of the world and that of inside China is on the side of freedom of expression. The Chinese people need it and value it. Here are the words of Liu Xiaobo spoken in 2002 for all to consider:

“[F]or people like me, who live inside a cowardly dictatorship, which is a prison of its own kind, every little bit of good-hearted encouragement that springs from the human nature of people who live in other places...causes us to feel gratitude and awe.”

We must understand it fully and should not underestimate those heartfelt words. There are a number of Liu Xiaobos in China working and waiting for the good day. We must do the simplest thing the citizens of any democracy can do easily – to support by all means the freedom movement in any repressive rule.

There are other advantages also that we enjoy in comparison to the communist China. However, for the moment we may contemplate on the contrast between democracy and dictatorship only. Democracy might have its own shortcomings but in comparison to communism, it has enormous advantage. It is a proven fact. The undoing of all the communist dictatorships in Russia, Eastern Europe, Arab and Latin America is a case in point.

In short, we must start using our advantage against the communist Chinese rulers. As Liu Xiaobo had famously said: “I have no enemies and no hatred,” we Indians should show that we similarly have all goodwill to the Chinese people but are opposed to the brutal dictatorship of the communists. The same communists, who by their own admission have killed at least 60 million Chinese during their ongoing rule. It is quite right to show them the mirror and extend all support to the freedom loving people of China, Hong Kong and Tibet.

Both Indian and Chinese are great civilizations. Both are trying to have the rightful place in the world in the changing times. It is our duty to show friendliness to the Chinese people while being critical to the

communist rulers. The present discord between the two countries is temporary as the communist dictatorship in China also is. We must see clearly the path for both the civilizations to again become the traditional friends to each other.

Notes

- ¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, Speech delivered in Lok Sabha on 27 Nov. 1959. Jawaharlal Nehru, *India-China Relations* (Government of India: The Publications Division, Delhi, n.d.), p. 12
- ² Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit Papers 1st Instalment (Pandit I), Subject File No. 59, Subject: 1949-51, Letters to Jawaharlal Nehru from V.L. Pandit sent during her tenure as Indian Ambassador to the United States of America, 132, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi (NMML).
- ³ Jawaharlal Nehru to Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, 30 August, 1950, in Pandit I, Subject File No. 60, Subject: 1949, 1950-51, Letters received by V.L. Pandit as Ambassador to Washington from Jawaharlal Nehru concerning India's relations with US, Pakistan and other countries and developments at home, 137, NMML.

New Silk Roads and the Indian Alternative

Anita Sengupta*

Once the setting for the historic Silk Road and host to a multiplicity of mobilities, Central Asia, has re-emerged as a useful case study for exploring the complex relationship between pursuing economic development through trans-state infrastructural projects and promoting political agendas through securitization both of which involve questions of mobility and connectivity. In the post-Soviet context, connectivity assumed central importance in Central Asia as did the development of inter and intra-regional trade networks. New routes and in the process new partners were sought for creating opportunities for rethinking traditional ways of conceptualizing partnerships within the Central Asian space. The popularly named New Silk Road initiatives refer to a variety of visions for formalizing transit and human flows across the Central Asian space.

The various 'New Silk Road' Initiatives provided opportunities for exploring the multifaceted impact of trans-state corridors of human/resource and ideational transit and were contingent on the assumed acquiescence of the participating states to varied modes of overland traversal in the interest of collective gain. Within the metaphorical frame of the New Silk Roads there were a number of strategies including the American 'New Silk Road' strategies, the Chinese led One Belt One Road and the Russian Eurasian Economic Union. This focus on transportation capacity and the opportunities that they provide for increased global and regional investment is reminiscent of a Mackinderian world where control over transportation was the key to global hegemony. At the center of Mackinder's story was the relationship

* Dr. Anita Sengupta, Director, Asia in Global Affairs, Kolkata.

between physical geography and transportation technology. Mackinder claimed that there were three epochs of history, pre- Columbian, Columbian and post-Columbian. Each epoch is defined by what he calls 'dominant mobility of power.'¹

The Central Asian Logistical Space

The connection between strategic interests and connectivity initiatives has meant that regional and global connectivity is now the competitive site where geopolitical and political economic transitions will be played out. Highways, railroads, electricity networks, bridges and pipelines are the so called 'hardware' of these visions, whereas reducing barriers to trade, standardizing customs duties and reducing the time to cross borders are the 'software' on which these short, medium or long-term projects depend. These corridors of connectivity are essentially situated between historic routes and 'greenfield' developments and their effectiveness is related to their capacity to translate traditional routes into new logistic frameworks.

All transportation corridors have two components; they are both a spatial description of something happening on the ground and also the projection of something to be realized. As such, they tend to shape a new imagination that follow existing supply chains, but also the possibility of development powered by logistic connectivity. In recent times, logistic strategies have sought to re-organize and consolidate politics/economics/cultures and everyday existence along the routes that they traverse. While the focus is on geo-politics and economy, specially their potential to develop business opportunities there is also the realization that it is the cultural interaction that these corridors will engender that will make them the gateway for mobility and interaction among people. This has been historically true as Buddhism was one of the most significant commodities to travel along the 'Silk Road' together with musical instruments and tea. Similarly, the Indian policy of Look/ Act East is grounded in a re-discovery of the traditional Indian connect in South East Asia, where trade enhanced cultural influence. Logistics is therefore as much about mobility as traditional transport geography and mobilities define logistic strategies as much as geo-political and political economic transformations.

While mobility technologies are promoted on the assumption that infrastructure provides a solution to problems of social or economic

integration, transportation infrastructures (pipelines/roads/bridges/ airports/communication linkages) may also become sites of disjunction. Mobilities, flows and spaces therefore become significant in understanding the imperatives within which logistics functions as also the occasional resistance and sensitivities that it encounters. Inexorable increases in human mobility and the impact of geography on travel and transport all lead to a varied understanding of what logistic strategies entail.² Here, the centrality of governance to geographies of transport is as significant as changing labour regimes and economic/ environmental/social concerns evident at local, regional and international levels to come to an understanding about possible future trajectories.

While global logistic visions, that span entire continents and beyond is one part of the contemporary logistic story, the other part of logistics is the multiple alternative corridors that span these same spaces. Too numerous to enumerate or categorize they nonetheless influence the functioning of the larger networks and occasionally even dispute their logic. In fact, the significant geographical challenges to connectivity in the areas that are the operating environments for these infrastructural projects mean that these alternative logistic arrangements may provide viable arrangements where larger projects fail to materialize. In fact large-scale infrastructural projects have been subject to scrutiny for increasing host country debt burdens, the high maintenance cost of low quality products and inadequate environmental sustainability which are difficult to predict and may have unintended consequences.³ Commenting on the proposed China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway, Alexander Cooley writes:

At first glance, the transportation project appears to add critical regional connectivity by giving China a direct link to Uzbekistan, via southern Kyrgyzstan. However, the Kyrgyz government and civil society groups have objected to its potentially divisive social impact on Kyrgyzstan itself. Southern Kyrgyzstan has already witnessed two bouts of horrific ethnic violence pitting ethnic Uzbeks, a majority in the city of Osh, against ethnic Kyrgyz. The most recent occurred in 2010 following the collapse of President Bakiyev's regime during major ethnic violence in which hundreds were killed in the southern cities of Osh and Jalalabad. The Kyrgyz government itself has dithered on the project, both praising and then criticizing it, and it currently remains stalled even though the Uzbek portion was completed in October 2015. Although Bishkek appears to be using ethnic concerns as a bargaining

tactic to secure additional concessions such as higher transit fees from Beijing, Bishkek's position highlights just how the "connectivity" of major transport corridor projects can cut in either direction of the ethnic divide.⁴

There is also apprehension that the influx of goods and possibly migrants that these projects would encourage will lead to 'social problems.' On the Central Asian side, there has also been some unease about a possible Chinese influx that could result from large-scale Chinese economic penetration into the region with further development of infrastructure. Chinese bilateral agreements on joint ventures with all the states have led to large-scale resettling of Chinese in the Central Asian states. Many Chinese who came to give economic assistance, then stayed on after the expiry of their visas. Some married local women and acquired property. Central Asian authorities have not moved to expel the illegal settlers for fear of antagonizing the Chinese government but a degree of concern is evident from a reading of local newspapers. Similarly, there is concern about the movements of locals from rural settlements to urban markets created by the massive influx of Chinese goods. Even though the labour migration flows to Russia are the most visible, similar movements are in the process of taking shape in the direction of China. Less visible, in statistical terms, are the effects that the diversified interaction between the Central Asian states and China are creating and developments in the sphere of infrastructure and connectivity are likely to magnify these effects.

The local social fabric is being significantly modified by the economic opportunities that are now being made available by Beijing. Similarly, varied groups are now involved in playing the role of economic mediators and minorities are rediscovering their role as shuttle traders. The Uighurs who was the first to take on the role was later joined by the Dungans and China's Kazakhs. Other small interconnected networks have also started to appear. A whole range of new professionals are also being created all linked to the service economy: transportation, freight, logistics, translation, legal and commercial services etc. Yet, much of the bazaar related activities continue to be informal and carried out principally by marginal groups on both sides of the border. It remains to be seen whether the establishment of large infrastructural projects would bring more formality into the process of labour migration; this would also be dependent on a number of other factors (1) how states design their access and exit rules? (2) the interplay between

domestic and international considerations (3) the relationship between regime types and access rules and (4) how the rules are affected by internal political considerations?

It is in the backdrop of these complexities, both in terms of the emergence of transcontinental logistic spaces and numerous 'Silk Road' strategies but also the various 'slip roads' that local mobilities traverse that India would have to negotiate its own logistic space. Here, there has been constant negotiation between its spaces to the East and South East and its alternative connects in the West and North West based on its 'pivotal' geographical position allowing access to both its east and west on the one hand and to maritime and continental routes on the other. And it is within this complex background that one needs to examine Indian alternatives.

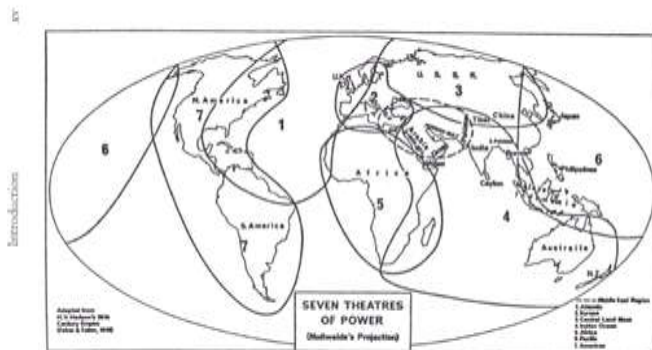
The Indian Alternative

The recognition of the subcontinent's geospatial centrality was brought into focus in the final years, leading to the demise of the British Empire. Sir Olaf Kirkpatrick Caroe, British India's leading geopolitical thinker during the final days of the Raj had served as Foreign Secretary to Britain's Government of India throughout the Second World War. He was afterward Britain's last Governor of the North West Frontier Province, which lies along the border with Afghanistan in present day Pakistan. Caroe's career spanned the transition from an era of World War to one of Cold War coinciding with the onset of decolonization and the rise of air power as an organizing conception of global strategy. Caroe carefully studied and followed these developments and emphasized underlying continuities in the pattern of world power. At stake was nothing less than global supremacy. Of course Caroe was not alone in identifying this transcendence. Lord Curzon imagined a "chessboard upon which is played out a game for global domination" and of course the imagery of a "grand chessboard" resonates even today as a metaphor.⁵

What is interesting is that Caroe, like Mackinder emphasized the permanence of geography versus the vicissitudes of empire and ideology. Caroe described a map of the world divided into "Seven Theatres of Power" – Atlantic, Europe, Central Land Mass, Indian Ocean, Africa, Pacific and America.⁶ Like Mackinder, he also hinted at a binary division of the global space and emphasized that it was Britain's control of the

of the “Indian Ocean Theatre” that had during the nineteenth century worked to check Russia’s absorption of the colossal “Central Land Mass Theatre.”⁷ The central land mass is to a large extent coterminous with Mackinder’s pivot (later heartland) area. However, while Mackinder identifies the state controlling the ‘heartland’ as ‘commanding the world’ Caroe argues that as a counterpoise to Soviet and increasingly Chinese power consolidating in the Asian heartland, India would remain pivotal in the maintenance of a global balance between land and sea powers. This of course was not surprising given the context within which he was presenting his ideas and his own position within it. It is important to bear in mind that in the last reformulation of his theory, Mackinder had envisioned a global balance where the heartland (Russia) and the mid-Atlantic nations (America, France and Britain) would combine to balance China and India.⁸

Caroe’s Seven Power Circles



Map 1. Caroe's Seven Theatres of Power (Olaf Caroe, "Arabia Felix and the Indian Ocean: A Study in Political Strategy," *The Round Table*, no. 316 (1964). Reproduced by kind permission of Taylor and Francis Publishers.)

Peter John Brobst argues that the ‘Great Game’ continued to be played out just as Caroe had predicted. Caroe recognized the subcontinent’s geospatial centrality when others typically located South Asia on the world’s strategic periphery. He believed that Russian land power posed a traditional and future danger to international stability. But when many tended to fear an implacable enemy, Caroe imagined

the long-term vulnerability of the Soviet Union’s multi-ethnic empire in the heartland of Asia. He foresaw the resurgence of China as a great power when conventional wisdom discounted that country’s potentialities separate from external organization. Caroe warned that Afghanistan and the remote Pathan borderlands of what is today Pakistan, formed a political fault zone of global significance. He anticipated the resilience of Islam in the face of communism and secularizing ideologies more generally in an era when fashions were disposed to dismiss religious motivation as a spent force. And Caroe explained the importance of the Persian Gulf in relation both to world oil production and as a base area well situated for the staging of Anglo American forces throughout the western Indian Ocean and up into Central Asia. Brobst notes:

In short, even though the geopolitical vision that Caroe had articulated failed to sustain the empire it had once animated – hence our difficulty in perceiving its resilience – the Great Game continues to drive the dynamic of global power and strategic competition in Asia today and presumably tomorrow.⁹

It is in the background of this ‘pivotal’ position that Caroe predicted for South Asia in general and India in particular that the Indian alternative to focus on the eastern and western reaches of the Indian Ocean and the sub continental landmass south of Eurasia but linked to it, assumes significance. The ‘Connect Central Asia’ initiative has to be viewed within this context where both the traditional continental trade routes and the maritime multi modal routes would come into play. There also remains the alternative to connect Indian initiatives with other existing (like Turkey-Iran-Pakistan railway) or proposed routes (branches of the Silk Road Economic Belt). A multi modal link to Central Asia through the Iranian port of Chabahar could then link through existing and newer links to Russia and Europe. These include both transport corridors like the INSTC and pipeline projects like TAPI. The potential for both if linked to the South East Asian states would be manifold. Similarly, the BCIM corridor could link to a broader Asian network. The development of a network of Indian Ocean ports to serve as regional shipping hubs for littoral states with connecting highways and rail routes would mean leveraging India’s location in one of the most strategic stretches of ocean space.

The launching of a Spice Route, Cotton Route and the Mausam Project, all of which are attempts to tie together countries around the Indian Ocean, assumes significance in this context. At the macro level,

the aim of Project Mausam is to re-connect and re-establish communication between countries of the Indian Ocean world, which would lead to enhanced understanding of cultural values and concerns, while at the micro level the focus is on understanding national cultures in their regional maritime milieu. The aim is not just to examine connections that linked parts of the Indian Ocean littoral but also the connections of these coastal centers to their hinterlands. The ‘Spice Project’ aims to explore the multi-faceted Indo-Pacific Ocean World, collating archeological and historical research to document the diversity of cultural, commercial and religious interactions in the Indian Ocean-extending from East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian sub-continent and Sri Lanka to the Southeast Asian archipelago. The broader aim is to connect these with ‘Information Silk Route’ where telecom connectivity between the countries would be made possible. Partly propelled by the advancement in informational technology in India and partly by the fact that connectivity on the ground has been restricted by political connections these strategies need to be visualized as integrated aspects of both domestic and foreign policy.

It is here that the story of India’s natural connect to its immediate neighbourhood in South Asia comes into focus. Complicated by policy decisions and what C. Raja Mohan refers to as “inward economic orientation of socialist India and the neglect of connectivity and commerce at and across frontiers.”¹⁰ it remains the first of the concentric circle to which India would need to reconnect. Raja Mohan goes on to argue that Modi’s India has made an attempt to compensate but the scope of its initiative is no match to Chinese efforts to reconfigure the economic geography of the continent. The inclusion of both Sri Lanka and Nepal as dialogue partners in the SCO is a recent political expression of Chinese efforts at inclusion of the sub-continent and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor a classic geopolitical statement. While a change in mindset about visualizing its neighbourhood as a ‘backyard’ is a necessity there also remains the need to rethink its strategy of political involvement, learn to compete with other powers when its interests in the neighbourhood is challenged but also collaborate where necessary before India can hope to regain its leverage.¹¹ The prescriptive logic of this cannot be denied and leads to the question of why ‘regionalism’ remained a non-starter in the region?

While the fractured history of the subcontinent is part of the reason for the tenuous nature of South Asian connections, Partho Ghosh argues

that it also remains a fact that a clear concept of the region never emerged either in Indian academic and strategic thinking or in the West.¹² He goes on to argue that the fact that South Asia as a region has remained in the periphery of Indian concerns is evident in organizational set up of the MEA where there is no separate division for the region though one division called SB and BC Division deals with matters related to SAARC/BIMSTEC/and border connectivity. In an interesting table, Ghosh shows how the various South Asian countries have been divided among the PAI (Afghanistan and Pakistan)/BM (Bangladesh)/Northern (Bhutan and Nepal)/Indian Ocean (Maldives and Sri Lanka) Organizational divisions within the MEA which actually reflects geographic and strategic logic but obscures the concept of South Asia.¹³ Interestingly, this ‘geographic’ logic could be a precursor to a more useful ‘logistic’ strategy in the neighbourhood that would look beyond ‘regional’ connects to contacts that had been historically flourishing but also show future prospects.



Organizational Divisions in the Ministry of External Affairs, GOI.

With the recognition of the fragility of connects in the immediate neighbourhood connections were sought with regions to its north and west that go back to antiquity and where there had traditionally been exchange of populations at different levels – as traders, scholars, and religious preachers. Travel was facilitated by the large number of entry points. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Mohan Lal quotes forty routes between the two regions.¹⁴ By the beginning of the eighteenth century, four main exit points existed. The starting point for a journey to the northern most extremity was from the valley of Kashmir, to Leh, Yarkand, Kashgar, then onto the Ferghana Valley. The second exit point was Kabul, from where traders, principally from the Punjab, and generally known as Lahoris, assembled before going on to Balkh, Khulm, Kargan, Kunduz, and other cities on the Oxus. The third exit point was Multan. From Multan the merchants could generally go on to Kandahar in Afghanistan. From there they could go on to the Persian territory directly or take the Kandahar-Ghazni-Kabul route to Bukhara. The Indian merchants using Multan as the point of departure were known as Multanis, though they hailed from a much wider area, which roughly covered western and lower Punjab as also Rajasthan. Another group of Indian merchants were known as Shikarpuris, and derived their name from Shikarpur, a small town in Sindh. They either went to Multan or straight to Kandahar from where they took the road either to Persia or to the Uzbek territory.¹⁵ Trade flourished particularly for groups like the Shikarpuris who developed elaborate credit networks and letters of credit that was accepted across the entire region. Politically, many of these places are now no longer accessible to India, bringing to the forefront the necessity of connects with its immediate neighbourhood as a precursor to connectivity to a wider region.

The contemporary connect to the wider region has been visualized through the Connect Central Asia Policy launched in 2012 as an alternative infrastructure and transport connectivity plan that seeks to enhance trade and educational rights as also encourages more joint commercial and security initiatives with Central Asia. It is also part of the North South Transport Corridor on which there was emphasis in the Foreign Trade Policy 2015-20. The aim is to involve wider Central Asia wherever possible and with this in mind expand land routes to include Armenia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Although Central Asia is a significant part of the Belt and Road Plan India faces connectivity challenges regarding land routes to Afghanistan and Central Asia. This

limits direct communications and as part of the effort to relieve these connectivity bottlenecks there is today greater emphasis on participation in multilateral regional organizations, the SCO being an example. Quite apart from the concerns about connectivity adding to regional tensions rather than diffusing them¹⁶ there remain concerns about the practical delivery of enhanced connectivity. For example, when the Yiwu to Madrid train was launched in 2014, the cargo had to change tracks three times due to gauge differences. There also needs to be broader discussions on the interaction and harmonization of tariff systems (Such as those of the WTO, the Eurasian Economic Union and The European Union) and about the kinds of goods that will be transported. For freight to be cost effective it would have to focus on high value goods. There also remains the rationale behind the soft loans given by China for infrastructural developments. Given the fact that these are not necessarily based on commercial logic it could ultimately have an effect on common funding agencies like the AIIB.¹⁷ There also remains the possibility of access to infrastructure being blocked by countries with poor bilateral relations or internal political rivalries.

Alternative arrangements are also in the pipeline. The recent escalation of tension following the terrorist attacks in Uri on September 18 and the subsequent inability of Pakistan to hold the SAARC Summit in Islamabad on 15-16 November 2016 has led to suggestions from Pakistan about the possibility of creating an alternative greater South Asian economic alliance which would include ‘China, Iran and the neighbouring Central Asia states.’ Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed described the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as the key economic route linking South and Central Asia.¹⁸ The Gwadar port would be the nearest warm water port not only for China but also the landlocked Central Asia states. This new regional arrangement that would also suit Chinese plans could face obstruction from other south Asian states like Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka that would have little interest in a land route so far from their borders and Bangladesh and Sri Lanka which have their own ports. This arrangement would potentially benefit Afghanistan the most. However, Afghanistan has recently shown reluctance towards measures that restrict Indian privileges and would be hesitant to join arrangements that hurt Indian interests. It is interestingly Afghanistan’s presence in SAARC which justifies Pakistan’s argument that Central Asian states should be a part of greater South

Asia, and justifies American strategic thinking that has sought to create a greater South Asia as a viable unit for the region.

Conclusions

While the image that the Silk Road evokes is generally romantic visions of desert caravans carrying exotic commodities, the recent Chinese plan has been seen as an opportunity that needs to be carefully negotiated. While being cautious in endorsing what is presented by the Chinese as *fait accompli*, particularly because India feels that the Maritime Route is a repackaging of the 'string of pearls' strategy and is unhappy about the fact that part of the proposed China Pakistan corridor will pass through Pakistan held Kashmir there is also hesitance in criticizing a plan that is being projected as a trans Asian developmental alternative. And of course India is a part of the financial institution developed to support the initiative. The alternative seems to lie somewhat along the lines suggested by Samir Saran, "For every belt that they create and every road that we create can we create a slip road that connects Indian opportunities to the larger global market rather than reject it outright? Can we use their institutions for our advantage?"¹⁹ Unfortunately the BRICS Summit in Goa, which could have become a platform for discussing possibilities of connecting to larger Asian projects, was reduced to discussions of bilateral issues where India focused mostly on international terrorism. Logistic possibilities, however, took centre stage at the India-Russia summit where the possibilities of India's association with the EEU were emphasized and there were discussions on the Energy Bridge and the hydrocarbon pipeline between Russia and India. This pipeline can only take two routes, either via China or Central Asia-Afghanistan-Pakistan. Since these projects involve Russia, China and India who are BRICS members the Goa summit would have been an opportunity to further discuss them. Linkages between the INSTC and OBOR could also have been proposed. This limited understanding of Asian economic and security architecture would impact upon initiatives and organizations where India and China seek to future collaborate like the SCO and associated financial institutions.

Given the global reality of a China centered trade network overlapping with a Russian led economic community engulfing both Asian overland and maritime routes on the one hand and rules and regulations that could govern global trade on the other, either the

development of an logistic alternative or connecting with the existing frameworks would be an essential enabler for India's agenda of economic development and urbanization. However, one needs to take note of the fact that neither is a foregone conclusion and a great deal of uncertainty surrounds their future. Serious concerns about the ecological and social impact of connectivity seem to be clouding the future of the China centred trade network and the Russian led economic community. Similarly, India's Act East policy in a newly created Indo Pacific space is another work in progress that awaits conceptual clarity but also policy consensus among a large number of stake holders including sub regions, cities, ports, civil society actors and nodal. A meticulous balancing act between these realities call for recognition of India's pivotal geographic position enabling developments both on the South East and East but also towards the West and Northwest and would require an integrated and coordinated approach which would make use of past linkages, present assets and also the possibilities of future development. While the translation of logistic visions into strategic spaces cannot be taken for granted, taking note of changing global networks, linking with other Asian logistic frameworks, keeping in mind the 'slip roads' that local mobilities traverse are just some of the imperatives that India would have to keep in mind as it negotiates its own development in a future that belongs to fluidity.

Notes and References

- ¹ Gearoid O' Tuathail, "Introduction: Thinking Critically About Geopolitics," in *The Geopolitics Reader*, edited by Gearoid O' Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge. (London and New York: Routledge 1998).
- ² Richard Knowles, Jon Shaw and Iain Docherty (eds) *Transport Geographies: Mobilities, Flows, Spaces* (Wiley-Blackwell 2008).
- ³ See for instance Mathew P Goodman and David A Parker, "Eurasia's Infrastructure Rush: What, Why and So What?" *Global Economics Monthly*, 5: 1 (January 2016).
- ⁴ Alexander Cooley, *The Emerging Political Economy of OBOR: The Challenges of Promoting Connectivity in Central Asia and Beyond*, (A Report of the CSIS Simon Chair in Political Economy, October 2016):8.
- ⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).
- ⁶ Olaf Caroe, "Problems of Power Confrontation in Inner Asia" *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 56 (1969).

- ⁷ For details and map see Peter John Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game*, Sir Olaf Caroe, *India's Independence and the Defence of Asia*, Akron (Ohio: The University of Akron Press, 2005).
- ⁸ Halford Mackinder, "The round table and the winning of the peace," *Foreign Affairs* 21 (1943).
- ⁹ Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game*, Sir Olaf Caroe, *India's Independence and the Defense of Asia*.
- ¹⁰ C. Raja Mohan, "Raja Mandala: Regional India, Global South Asia," *The Indian Express* (31 May 2016) Accessed 13 August 2016.
- ¹¹ C. Raja Mohan Reconnecting the Subcontinent: India and the New Silk Roads public lecture organised by the Calcutta Research Group in collaboration with Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung on 24 July 2016. See recording at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yv0prS2BuuE>
- ¹² For a detailed discussion see Partha S. Ghosh, "Region Without Regionalism: Cooperation in South Asia", *Economic and Political Weekly*, LI: 3 (August 6, 2016).
- ¹³ Ghosh, "Region Without Regionalism", 117.
- ¹⁴ Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Punjab, Afghanistan and Turkistan to Balkh, Bokhara and Herat and a Visit to Great Britain and Germany*, first published in London in 1846, second revised edition (Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi, 1977).
- ¹⁵ Claude Markovits, "Indian Merchants in Central Asia, The Debate," in Scott C. Levi (ed) *India and Central Asia Commerce and Culture, 1500-1800* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- ¹⁶ Foreign Secretary, Subramanyam Jaishankar raised this issue when he argued that OBOR was a "national initiative" at the Raisina Dialogue in March 2015, See "Speech by Foreign Secretary at Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi" MEA, (2 March 2015).
- ¹⁷ For a detailed discussion see Raffaello Pantucci and Sarah Lain, *Workshop Report, China's Belt and Road: A View from Delhi*, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (June 2016).
- ¹⁸ Cited from Anwar Iqbal, "Pakistan seeks bigger SAARC to counter India's Influence," *Dawn*, (October 12, 2016) <http://www.dawn.com/news/1289685/Pakistan-seeks-bigger-saarc-to-counter-indias-influence/print> Accessed 14 October 2016.
- ¹⁹ Cited from Amy Kazmin, "India Watches anxiously as Chinese Influence Grows," *The New Trade Routes: Silk Road Corridor*, (May 9, 2016). www.ft.com/cms/s/2/e9baebee-0bd8-11e6-9456-444ab5211a2f.html#axzz4GoBv0t4g Accessed 9 August 2016

Silk Road and India: The Historical Perspective

Dr. B.B. Kumar*

Penti Aalto has mentioned about an inscription on the wall of the gate of Cuh-yung-kuan, a town on the road from Peking to Kalgan, in six languages, namely, Sanskrit, Tibetan, Hsi-hsia, Uigur, Mongol and Chinese, which reads: "the great and illustrious Cakravarti King Ashoka, having assembled the relics of Lord Buddha of great virtue, adorned beautifully the vast world with stupas, and made the great *Dharma* shine greatly throughout the world."¹ Kandahar inscription of 258 BC in Greek and Aramaik says that, as a result of Ashoka's activity, "everything prospers over the whole earth," Kanishka, who ruled over a vast region of India and Central Asia, like Ashoka, patronized Buddhism. Lord Buddha, according to Chinese tradition, understood Kanishka's Yueh-chi language.² These clearly indicate that wide linkages were already established between vast regions of Eurasia even before the Christian era and the barriers of languages did not prevent intra-regional communications between different communities. The network of land routes connecting the regions from China in the east to Mediterranean region and Rome in the west and India in the south, through vast Central Asian region, is known as the 'Silk Road.'

Importance of Silk Road: The Indian Perspective

The importance of Silk Road lies in (a) facilitating trade and economic linkages, and (b) spread of ideas by the diffusion of religion, art and culture, languages and scripts, etc. The importance of India for the

* Dr. B.B. Kumar, former editor, *Dialogue*, currently Chairman, ICSSR, New Delhi. The article had earlier appeared in the author's book *India and Central Asia – A Past* 2015.

Silk Road in the past may be judged from the fact that it remained the most important player under both the parameters. Moreover, Silk Road was never a trade route between the East and West only, as is projected due to Euro- and Sino-centric bias of history today. A deep time depth of India-Central Asia relations which will be discussed in this paper. Being the richest country of the world for centuries,³ its importance as trade-partner and linkages to the Central Asia and to the East and West is obvious.

India, with 32.9% share of the world GDP was the richest country in the world at the beginning of the Common Era (O CE). The share of other countries/regions at that time was: China – 26.2%, Western Europe – 10.8%, Former USSR – 1.5%, Japan – 1.2%, Rest of Asia – 16.1%, Eastern Europe – 1.9%, Total Latin America – 2.2%, Africa – 6.8%. The GDP share after a thousand years in 1000 CE was India - 28.9%; China - 22.7%; Western Europe – 8.7% and Africa - 8.7%. The US and UK were not born as nations by that time. India was slightly behind China during 1500 CE (India – 24.5%; China – 25%) and 1600 CE (India -22.7% ; China – 29.2%). However, it was again at the top with 24.4% of the world GDP share and China following with 22.3%. There was, however, steady decline in Indian economy after 1820 due to colonial exploitation and that of China after 1850; the share of the two countries declined to 4.2% and 4.5% respectively during 1950. On the other hand, there was tremendous growth in the economy of Western Europe, UK and US between 1820 and 1950. The UK's share was a mere 1.1% during 1500; it was 2.9% during 1700; 5.2% during 1820; 9.1% during 1870; after which it started declining and was 8.3% in 1913 and 6.5% in 1950. The same trend was seen in case of West European Economy which was at the peak during 1870 (33.6%) and 1913 (33.5%) and then declined to 26.3% in 1950. This was, however, not the case with US, whose economy exhibited drastic growth from 0.1% in 1700 CE to 1.8% in 1820, 8.9% in 1870 and 19.1% in 1913 to finally, 27.3% of the world GDP in 1950.⁴ The emerging economic scenario clearly indicates the importance of Indian linkages to the Silk Road as a trade route. The other aspects shall also be highlighted in this paper in detail.

Ancient Land Routes Connecting India and Central Asia

Takshashila and Purushpur (Peshawar) in the North-West corner of India – now in Pakistan, and located on either side of the Sindhu River

– were connected with Indian trade routes towards Indian side and Central Asian routes on the other. In reality, Takshashila, the strategically located capital city of Gandhar, was the terminus of several inland routes connecting India and Central Asia. The western route, connecting India to Central Asia, passed through Pushkalavati, Purushpur, Kapisha (now, Begram in Afghanistan) to Bactria (Balkh). The route from Kapisha to Bactria ran through Bamiyan and a number of passes – Robat, Dandan, Shikan and Karakotal; it then followed Dana Yousouf river route to reach Mazar-i-Sarif and then Bactria. Hiuen Tsang (Xuanzang), during his journey to India from China, reached Bactria from Samarkand and then followed this route to reach Bamiyan, Kapisha and Purushpur through Khaibar pass. The importance of Takshashila-Kapisha-Bactria route increased during Achaemenian period when Panjab was its satrapi and during Seleucid period when it became royal highway to the west.⁵

The northern route, connecting India to Central Asia, passed through Kashmir valley and Gilgit to Yarkand and Kashgarh in Central Asia with route connections to eastern and western Turkistan. This route was convenient for travel to Khotan and other cities of Tarim basin. Hiuen Tsang followed this route during his return journey to China.⁶

During the troubled days of 1880s, Indian traders started bringing goods to Central Asia through a new trade route in Persia, which was less dangerous and cheaper. The Indians asked for and received permission from the Russian authorities to use even a more advantageous route to Central Asia after the construction of Trans-Caspian Railway.⁷

Silk Road Linkages Within Central Asia and beyond

In Central Asian side, Bactria became very important converging point of several routes – Babylon, Susa-Heart, Samarkand-Tashkent, in the Oxus valley to the north, and to Kashgarh, in Tarim basin in present day Chinese Turkistan (Xinjiang) to the east, where a number of routes converged. Two routes connected Bactria to the Oxus valley. Strabo, Pliny and other geographers have mentioned about the Caspian Highway linking Caspian Sea. Taking advantage of the navigability of the Oxus River, Indians favoured this route for trade to the Black Sea ports. Bactria-Samarkand-Tashkent route passed through the northern parts of Tien Shan range towards the north-east through Kulja and Khojend to finally reach Turfan. From Turfan, Khojend is about 150 miles to the south-east of Tashkent. The route from Turfan onwards extended

eastwards to Hami, Langzhou and Chang'an, the ancient capital of China. The western route from Bactria also turned north-east from Merv to reach Bukhara and Samarkand; a branch of that road turned north-west from Bukhara to reach Khiva and New Sarai, north of Caspian Sea. While passing through Samarkand or Merchanda, Alexander suffered a military disaster. He, however, went upto Khojend, which was known as Alexandria Eschate (Farthest) at that time.⁸

Taklamakan desert lies in Tarim basin (in Chinese Turkistan) between Tien-Shan mountain range in the north, Kun-Lun mountain range in the south, Pamir in the west and Gobi desert in the east. Kashgarh is located on its western fringe at the southern foothills of Tien-Shan range. Two routes emerged from Kashgarh, which passed through the important places located in the series of oases on the outer periphery of the oval-shaped trough-like Tarim basin desert. The southern route, passing through Yarkand, Kharghalik, Keriya, Niya, Khotan, Endere, Charchan, Charkhlik and Miran, reached salty Lop-nor marsh, and then, after skirting it finally reached Tun-huang and An-hsi. The northern route, on the northern periphery south of Tiensan, passing through Uchcha-Turfan, Aksu and Kucha, reached Korla, where it bifurcated towards south-east and north-east. The south-eastern route, passing through Kuruk Darya, Lou-lan, etc., terminated at Tun-huang. The north-eastern route, passed though Kara shahr, Turfan and Hami, reached An-hsi. Tashkent-Kulja-Urunchi route met Aksu-Kucha-Karashahr route at Turfan.⁹

Hiuen Tsang, for reaching Bactria in his journey towards India, passing through Oxus valley, followed Hami-Turfan-Tashkent-Samarkand route. There was an alternative route from India to Kashgarh via Bactria through a route passing south of Pamir, which was used by Hiuen Tsang during his return journey to China in 644 and by Marco Polo for his journey to Cathay in 1273 AD. This route passed from Bactria to Badakhshan through open valley of Wakhan; then it goes to Sariqol, south of the peak Muz Tagh Ata, and Tashkurghan, and descends the hills to Kashgarh and Yarkand in the Tarim basin. This route meets Kashmir valley route via Gilgit, Darkot and Baroghil passes at Sarhad.¹⁰

India and Central Asia: Pre-historic Links

Pre-historic links between India and Central Asia have been well-established by leading pre-historians of Russia – V. Ranov, Kh. A. Alphasbayev and others – who have discovered large remains of Sohan

culture across difficult mountainous terrains of Hindukush and Pamir in the valleys of Oxus and its tributaries in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and other countries. The first stage of Palaeolithic or old Stone Age culture of Central Asia, named Borykazghan culture after the type site in Southern Kazakhstan, was named Sohan culture of Central Asia by Ranov. Diffusion of culture continued during Neolithic and Bronze culture periods also. Marked similarity between Kangra valley Neolithic cultures of India and Gissan (Hissar) culture of Central Asia have come to light. Altin Depe, Khapuz Depe, Namazga Depe, Tahirbai Depe, Anau, etc. in southern Turkmenistan bear unmistakable stamp of Indian civilization.¹¹ According to T. Shirinov, “Cultural and trading relations between Central Asia and Indian subcontinent in the III-II millennium BC were closer than they are described by many contemporary researchers.”¹²

Many other scholars also highlighted India-Central Asia relations also in historical, commercial and cultural perspective. V.M. Mason, in his paper on *Central Asia and India: Five Millenniums of Cultural Relations and Characteristics of Creative Interaction* mentioned about the migration of groups of people from India to Central Asia and their cohabitation there. He wrote:

“There is no doubt about the establishing of Geoksyur outpost in Sarasm. Since North-West Hindustan suffered from shortage of metallurgical raw materials, most likely, groups of people from North-West Hindustan came to this area, though not in large numbers. These people's earliest pottery, found in Sarasm, is identical to the ceramics produced in their native land. Afterwards, as the local pottery production developed, even though the pottery made was of rougher forms, traditional ceramic patterns were retained. In any case, this process was the first case of significant interaction between two ancient cultures in the two vast regions and, probably, evidence of the cohabitation of the two ethnic groups in the same settlement.”

A.S. Sagdullaev, in his paper on *Central Asia and India: The Formation and Development of Early Historical and Cultural Relations* mentioned: “A real sensation which no one could expect was the discovery of the Shortugay settlement in North-East Afghanistan, on the bank of the Panj River, more than 1100 km from Mohenjo-Daro, which was the centre of the Indus civilization. The ceramicware, seals and other findings, which were discovered in this place, were clear evidence of the fact that Shortugay was founded by the people belonging

to the Indus valley civilization. This settlement served as a trading station in an area where mining industries were located.” He mentioned about the discovery of cowries in abundance in Central Asia as a proof of long distance trade between the two regions. G.M. Maytdinova, in her paper on *Synthesis in the Costumes of the People of North India and Central Asia in the pre-Islamic Period* described certain cultural influences of India on the costumes and ornaments of Central Asian people.

Massive reference of the Central Asian land and the people in classical Indian literature, as discussed below, confirms India’s relation with Central Asia during pre-historic days and takes it to remote antiquarian depth.

Central Asian Geography in Indian Classical Literature

There is ample mention of the land and people of Central Asia in Indian classical literature, especially the Puranas and the epics, which divide the earth into seven *dwipas*. The word, ordinarily, means an island. Panini derives it from *dvi + ap* (*dvi* = two; *ap* = water), meaning ‘land between two arms of water.’¹³ However, the Puranic *dwipas* stand for continents or tribal or national territories; it signified all types of natural or human regions – big or small.¹⁴ The barriers may be water, sand, swamps, high mountains or thick forests.¹⁵ Based on the details of the mountains, rivers, vegetation, climate, etc. of the *dwipas* given in most of the Puranas, some scholars have tried to identify specific geographical regions. One such study is *The geography of the Puranas* by S.M. Ali. Al-Beruni, for example, based on Puranic geography, placed Pushkardvipa between Cina and Mangala (perhaps China and Mongolia).¹⁶ According to Puranic geography, India and Central Asia form part of the Jambudvipa, which is at the centre of the earth. Mount Meru, which is the Pamir knot, is at the centre of the Jambudvipa, which has six mountain ranges and nine zones (*varshas*). Jambudvipa, also known as the Sudarshandvipa, is said to be circular in shape and surrounded by sea on all the sides.¹⁷ As stated in the *Markandeya Purana*, Jambudvipa is depressed on the south and north and elevated and broad in the middle.¹⁸ Mount Meru (Pamir) is at the centre of the elevated region, known as Meruvarsha or Illavrita. Out of the remaining eight divisions of Jambudvipa, according to *Matsya Purana*, three (Harivarsha, Kimpurushavarsha and Bharatavarsha) lie to the south; three regions (Ramyaka or Ramanaka, Hiranmaya or Hiranyaka, Uttar Kuru

or Shringashaka) to the north, *Bhadrashva* to the east and *Ketumala* to the west of the central region.¹⁹ Apart from various Puranas, Bhishma Parva of Mahabharata also details the geography of Jambudvipa. *Markandeya Purana*²⁰ and *Brahmand Puranas*²¹ divide four regions of Jambudvipa like four petals of a lotus. Four rivers flow from Mt. Meru in the four directions – Sita (Tarim river) to the Bhadrashva (Xinjiang) region, Chakshu (or Vakshu or Oxus) to the western Ketumal region, Alakananda to India to the south and Bhadra through the mountainous regions of Uttar Kuru to the north to the sea.²²

Vayu Purana describes the geography, detailing the regions, mountain ranges, valleys, river systems, etc. of Jambudvipa, making it possible to identify some of their geographical features. Description of its northern regions, according to S.M. Ali, “covers a very vast area, from Urals and the Caspian to the Yenisel and from the ‘Turkestan Tien Shan ranges to the Arctic. It describes the topography of the whole land very accurately and in some cases picturesquely....’²³ Bhadrashva, in the east, is identical with the Tarim basin and Hwangho river basin, i.e., the whole of Xingjiang and northern China.²⁴ Ketumala, to the west of Pamir, through which river Chakshu (Oxus) flows, corresponds to western Turkestan.²⁵ It is believed to cover ‘practically the whole of the ancient Bactria which included the whole of the present Afghan Turkistan (north of Hindukush), the lower Harirud valley, the basin of Murkhab Kashka system (all south of the old bed of Amu Darya) and the basins of Surkhan, Kafirnigan, Vakshu and Yaksu rivers...’²⁶ Hari²⁷ and Bharata represented Tibet and India. Uttar Kuru extended from Pamir to the Arctic region, which was known as ‘Somagiri’.²⁸ The Indian epics also give graphic picture of Uttar Kuru and Somagiri.”²⁹

As per Valmiki’s Ramayana, Sugriva, while commanding the monkeys to go to the north in search of Sita in the lands of the Dardas, Kambojas, Yavanas and Shakas³⁰, describes the difficulty in journey and mentions that there is the sea and the Somagiri in the extreme north; that region is without the sun and yet very much lighted; there are no national boundaries there.³¹ Mahabharata hero Arjuna brought water from the northern sea for the coronation of Yudhisthira.³² Arjuna also brought tribute from Uttar Kuru³³ There is yet another mention of Yudhisthira receiving tribute from Uttar Kuru.³⁴ The name of Tushara-Giri (Tushara mountain; Tusharas were Kushanas what Chinese called Yueh-chis) finds mention in *Mahabharata*, *Harshacharita* and Rajsekhar’s *Kavya Mimansa*³⁵ Chakshu river (Oxus or Amu Darya) flows through Tushara, Lampaka, Pahlava, Parada and Shaka countries.³⁶

The decision of Churning of the sea was taken by the Devas (gods) at Mt. Meru.³⁷

S.M. Ali's *The Geography of the Puranas*; Kuningham's *Ancient Geography of India* edited by S. Majumdar Shastri, *The Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Medieval India* by N.L. Dey and D.C. Sirkar's *Cosmography and Geography in Early Indian Literature* has contributed in the advancement of our knowledge of the geography of the Puranas. The study should be carried further.

The Central Asian People in Indian Classical Literature

There is numerous mentions of the people of Central Asia in the epics, Puranas and other classical literature. Many communities of Central Asia took part in Mahabharata war. There is mention of Shakas (Sythians), Pahlavas (Persians), Kambojas (Galcha speaking people of Tajikistan), Rishik (Kushanas or Yueh-chi) at one place in Mahabharata.³⁸ At another place, the names of China, Huna and Shaka are mentioned together.³⁹ Kanka (Kangyu or Sogdian), Shaka and Tushara (Tokharian) are also mentioned together.⁴⁰ *Mahabharata* and *Manu Smriti* describe Shakas and Yavanas as degraded Kshatriyas. Shaka, Darad, Pahlava, Kirata and Parada are said to be Kshatriyas of good birth.⁴¹ It was suggested to invite Shaka, Pahlava, Rishik and Darad kings to participate in Mahabharata war from Pandava side.⁴² Nakula defeated Hunas, Pahlavas, Yavanas and Shakas in a war.⁴³ Shakas, Hunas and Tusharas paid tribute to Yudhisthira.⁴⁴ Tusharas participated in the *Rajasuya Yajna* of Yudhisthira;⁴⁵ they fought Mahabharata war from Kaurava side.⁴⁶ The inhabitants of Uttar Kuru seem to be legendary ones in the epics and latter literature, but as historic ones in *Aitareya Brahmana*, according to the author of Vedic index. Uttar Kuru is mentioned as a divine land (Devas' region) for Vasistha Satya Havya, but Atyarati wants to conquer it. Apart from the classical literature cited above, numerous other sources, such as Kalhan's *Rajatarangini*, Gunadhya's *Brihatkatha*, Somadeva's *Katha-Saritsagar*, Kshemendra's *Brihatkatha Manjari*, and its Jaina adaptation, *Vasudeva-Hindi*, Kalidas's *Meghdoota* and *Vikramorvashiam*, Ashvaghosh's writings and some other literature may also prove to be insightful.

Two-way Migration and Ethnic Linkages

As far as India is concerned, there was two-way migration of people between this country and Central Asia. Mahabharata (Sagara legend)

and *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali indicates out-migration of Shakas and Yavanas (Greeks) from India.⁴⁷ Varahamihir was a Maga Brahmin; Shakadvipi Brahmanas are equally respected. The Aryan Aggression (now Migration) Theory is a colonial fabrication. The immigration of Shakas, Hunas, Kushanas, Moghals etc., is a known historical fact. What is less known is that certain dynasties and kings of Central Asia claimed descent from Indian regal families.⁴⁸ Khotan was founded during Ashoka's time (269-231 BCE) by his son Kunal. It had tempestuous history until the Muslim invasion in 1006 CE; was twice under Tibetan control. The names of the kings, dynasties and places, especially in Tarim basin, were Indian. For example, names of the kings of Vijaya dynasty of Khotan were Vijaya Sambhava, Vijaya Sangram, Vijay Kirti, Vijayasingh, Vijaya VikramVijayajaya, Vijaya Vahan, etc. Suryabhadra and Suryasena were the princes of Cokkuka. Kucha had Pushpa and Deva ending ruler; in Agnidesha (Karasahr), they had Arjuna suffix. Personal names, such as, Ananda, Biddhamitra, Dharmapala, Punyadeva, Vasudeva; epic names like Arjuna, Bhimasena, etc., royal titles, like *maharaja*, *rajatiraj* and *avijitasimha* (unconquered lion), mixed names like Vasu Mogiya, Vasu Kekeya, etc. obviously indicate Indian links.⁴⁹ Central Asia has many great Viharas and Centres of Buddhist learning where Vedas, etc. were also taught. Kumarjiva learnt Vedas, five sciences, Brahmanical shstras and astronomy at Kashgarh.⁵⁰

The suffix 'stan' of the numerous names of the countries and regions is Sanskrit *sthan* and Persian *stan*. (Here, it needs to be noted that Sanskrit and Old Persian differed little and only phonetically they were sister languages). Suffix 'kent' and 'kand' forming part of the names of cities like Tashkent, Samarkand, may be derived from *kantha* of Panini's *Asthadhyayi*; meaning 'town' or 'city.' Tashkent and Yarkand were also known by their Sanskrit names, 'Dakshikantha' and 'Yahvarkantha' respectively. It needs mention that the names certain places like – Kubha (Kabul), Gomal (Gomati), Oxus (Vakshu), Kandahar (Gandhar) – , community names –Shaka, Huna, Kushana –items of import from the region during Mahabharata days have remained unchanged. Certain derivation – Phrigia (Greek, Phrugia) from Bhrigu; Phoenician from Phoenic (Banik, trader) may be useful.⁵¹

Sanskrit and Prakrit languages and Brahmi and Kharoshthi scripts were widely used in East Turkistan. The vast treasure of Sanskrit and Prakrit books in Indian scripts and Sanskrit and Prakrit inscriptions have been discovered. Aurel Stein writes: "At the Niya site, I found

hundred wooden documents...all written in that Sanskrit language and the Kharosthi script which during first centuries before and after Christ were used on the Indian north-west frontier and in the adjacent portions of Afghanistan. The coins, struck in Khotan and neighbourhood, were also of the same period. Bower manuscripts discovered at Kucha were medical texts. Manuscripts of Ashvaghosha's books, *Saddharmapundarik*, etc. were also discovered from Central Asia.⁵²

Ellsworth Huntington favours the nomenclature of Lop basin for Tarim basin. He uses the term 'Chento' for the inhabitants of Tarim basin, as the Chinese call them. He is of the opinion that the inhabitants of Lop basin (Lop Nor basin; Xinjiang or Chinese Turkistan) are ethnically Indians. He writes:

"The name "Chento" or "Chan-teu," as Younghusband gives it, is a Chinese word, meaning "Turban-wearer." It is applied by the Celestials to non-Chinese Mohammedans of the Lop basin, Turfan and a few oases to the north and east. The Mohammedans, though they belong to a single race and number from one and a half to two million, have no name for themselves other than local designations, such as Kashgari, Khotani, Turfanlik, and so forth, derived from the names of their cities."⁵³

About them, he further writes:

"The Chentos, as it seems most fitting to call this nameless people, are generally supposed to be an Indo-European race,...They have, to be sure, become more or less mixed with various invading races, Huns, Chinese, Tibetans, and Turks; but the main stock still persists, as appears from Stein's anthropometric observations, and from the general appearance of the Chentos....Ancient tradition relates that original inhabitants of Lop basin, the probable ancestors of the Chentos of today, migrated from northern India. The tradition is confirmed by the fact that earliest specimens of writings found in the ruins of the Takla-Makan desert are in the Kharosthi tongue, a language akin to Sanskrit, and spoken in northern India not far from the beginning of the Christian era. Since Mohammedan invasion of the tenth century, the ancient tongue has been displaced by the Turki language of the conquerors, which is spoken in several dialects."⁵⁴

Religious and Cultural Continuum

Rigveda and Avesta differ little. Their gods *Mitra* (Rigvedic; Avesta – *Mithra*; Sun God), *Varuna*, Agni (Fire god) are the same. *Indra*, of course, is demonic in character in Avesta. Rigvedic *Athar* (Fire, RV 7.1.1) is *Atar* in Avesta; Rigvedic *Atharvan* (priest for Fire worship) is *Athravan* in Avesta.

Avestan *Yathu* from which the word 'jadu' (magic) is derived is *yatu* in Rigveda; *yatuvid* (knower of magic; *Shatpath Brahman* 10.5.2) is magician. *Yatudhan* is demon or *asur*. This information is relevant in the light of the fact that both Shakas (Sythians) and Turks were fire-worshippers and idol worshippers on one or other time. Vambéry quoted Professor Spiegel "that in the seventh century after Christ, Turkish tribes in the north of the Tien-Shan were fire worshippers. He further quoted Spiegel: 'from the death of Keikhosru,' emphasis was laid upon the fact that the Turanians were worshippers of idol. The Turanian king is called Peghu nekad that is, derived from Peghu and, it is added, he writes with Peghu letters, which has doubtless reference to his Buddhist origin."⁵⁵ As Hiuen Tsang wrote, the big Buddhist Vihara at Djemu-ket was constructed by a Turk and the town received Turanian name Bokhara, for Bokhar is Mongolian name for Buddhist temple or monastery, a Vihara.

The statements depict both the pictures of conflict and co-existence between fire-worship and Buddhism. Vambéry further writes about the religious situation:

"We may conclude that the doctrines of Buddha found adherents on the banks of the Zerefschan in the first centuries after Christ....Nay, long after the spread of Islam Buddhism lingered in the memory of the inhabitants of Central Asia. Narshakhi tells us that two great fairs of dolls or images were held yearly at Bokhara, and that often at one of these fairs as much as fifty thousand dirhems of toys changed hands. This, the Arabic author observes, comes from the old practice that prevailed, in the times when the Bokhariots were idolaters, of purchasing their idols at these fairs...firmness with which Iranian population resisted the later assaults of Islam, we shall not be surprised to find that the teaching of Zoroaster spread from the fire-altars of Transoxania eastwards to the Turkish nomads of the mountains of Tien-Shan, and to the north-west as far as the shores of the sea of Aral."⁵⁶

Different religions – Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Christianity and Manichaeism – co-existed in Central Asia in the atmosphere of religious harmony and continuum before the Arab conquest, especially Kutaib's expeditions. Of course, Hinduism preceded all of them in Central Asia. It should not be inferred, as Rahul Sankrityayan rightly points out about Kushana kings, "that these rulers were converted to Buddhism or Hinduism only after coming to India, for it had to be remembered that the influence of Hindu culture already extended to the homelands of the Scythians in Central Asia."⁵⁷ Buddhism remained the predominant religion of Central Asia, but it was not without the impact of Brahmanism, Buddha's statues were adorned with auspicious vaishnavite symbols; Brahmanism, Bhagwatism, Shaivism, Narayana cult, Rama and Krishna cult, worship of Vishnu, Shiva, Surya, Ganesha, legends of Hariti and Lokapalas/Vaishnavana, statues of Hindu gods, etc.⁵⁸ image of Shiva on Vim Kadphish's gold coin,⁵⁹ etc. point to the existence of Hinduism.

Role of Central Asia in Spread of Buddhism etc.

Kanishka's role in the spread of Buddhism need no elaboration. Among the translators of Sanskrit Buddhist literature into Chinese, there were 6-7 Chinese, six Indians and 16 Central Asians, including six Yueh-chi, four Parthians, three Soghdians, two Kucheans and one Khotanese. Central Asians popularized Indian music and Indian musical instruments in China. The Central Asian scholars should be credited for the introduction of decimal system and the concept of zero of Indian origin to the Europe.

Big Power Intervention, Conflict, Peace and Stability

Emperor Wu Ti of China (140-87 BC) sent his officer Zhang Qian to the Yueh-chih rulers of north-western India to persuade them to join the Chinese against the Huns. He failed to elicit their support, was captured and jailed for 10 years, returned after 13 years in 125 BC with valuable information about the economic benefits of silk route. Thus, the door for big power intervention was opened. The rivalry on the Silk Road were witnessed between Ancient Turk and Chinese dynasties (6th-7th centuries), Ancient Turks and Sasanids (6th centuries), Chinggis and Khwarezm Shah (13th century), Mongols and Mings (14th-17th centuries); Kalmuks and Manchus (17th-18th centuries); and finally

the Great Game of 19th century between Britain and Russia. There were, however, periods of peace, non-intervention and stability, when trade flourished; there was all-round development. The nations may derive maximum benefit from the Silk Road if normalcy returns to Af-Pak region.

References

1. Penti Aalto, *On the Role of Central Asia in the Spread of Indian Cultural Influence*, in "India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture" by Professor Lokesh Chandra (Ed.), Madras (1970), p. 249.
2. Ibid.
3. Angus Madisson, *The World Economy – A Millennial Perspective*, Overseas Press (India) Limited, New Delhi, 2003.
4. Kanagsabapathi, P., *Bharatiya Economic Model* in Dialogue, vol. 13, no. 1, July-September 2011, New Delhi, pp. 37-42.
5. Kumar, B.B., *India and Central Asia: Links and Inter-actions*, in 'India and Central Asia: Classical to Contemporary Periods' by J.N. Roy and B.B. Kumar (Editors), Astha Bharati, Delhi and Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi (2007). p. 9.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid, p. 10.
9. Ibid.
10. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. VI; Calcutta (1991); pp. 221-23.
11. Gupta, S.P., *Pre-historic Indian Culture in Soviet Central Asia*, in India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture, Professor Lokesh Chandra; pp. 239-40.
12. Paper in the Seminar on *India and Central Asia: Pre-Islamic Period*, organized by Indian Embassy with the help of local scholarly bodies in Tashkent on 1-3 March, 2000.
13. Panini, *Ashtadhyayi*, V.4.74; VI.3.97.
14. *Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. VI, p. 8.
15. Ali, S.M., *The Geography of the Puranas*, New Delhi, 1996, p. 37.
16. Ibid.
17. *Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. VI, p. 11.
18. *Markandeya Purana*, LVI.12ff.
19. *Matsya Purana*, CXIII.26.31.
20. *Markandeya Purana*, LV.20ff.
21. *Brahmanda Purana*, XXXV.50.
22. *Ibid; Shri Vishnu Purana*, 2.2.34-38.

- ²³ Ali, S.M., op. cit., p. 87.
- ²⁴ Ibid; H. Raichaudhary, *Studies in Indian Antiquities* (Calcutta, 1932), pp. 75-76.
- ²⁵ Raychaudhuri, op. cit., p. 75.
- ²⁶ Ali, S.M., op. cit., p. 97.
- ²⁷ Dev, N.L., *The Geography Dictionary of Ancient and Medieval India*, London (1927), p. 74; quoted in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, p. 12.
- ²⁸ Kumar, B.B., *Central Asia: The Indian Links*, Dialogue, 3:4, April-June, 2002, Delhi; p. 175.
- ²⁹ Valmiki, *Ramayana, Kiskindha Kand*, 43.39-69.
- ³⁰ Ibid, 43.12.
- ³¹ Ibid, 43.55, 60.
- ³² *Mahabharata, Sabha Parva*, 53.17.
- ³³ Ibid, 28.11-15.
- ³⁴ Ibid, 52.6.
- ³⁵ Ibid, *Karna Parva*, 77.19; *Harshacharit* 760; *Kavya Mimansa*, last part of chapter III.
- ³⁶ *Vayu Purana* 4.7.44; *Matsya Purana* 121.45-46.
- ³⁷ *Mahabharata, Adi Parva*, 17.
- ³⁸ *Mahabharata* 5.4.15.
- ³⁹ *Mahabharata* 2.47.19.
- ⁴⁰ *Maha*, 2.47.1850.
- ⁴¹ Ibid, *Sabha* 52.13-17.
- ⁴² Ibid, *Udyog Parva* 4.15.
- ⁴³ Ibid, *Sabha*, 52.13-17.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid, 51. 23-24, 30.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid, 78.60.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid, *Bhishma*, 75.21.
- ⁴⁷ Kumar, op. cit., p. 14; Prabhu Dayal Agnihotri, *Patanjali-Kalin Bharat*; pp. 92-93.
- ⁴⁸ *Buddhism in Central Asia*, B.N.Puri; Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1987.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 108-09; 322-23; 332.
- ⁵⁰ B.N.Puri, op. cit, p. 322-23.
- ⁵¹ Kumar, op. cit., pp. 14-16.
- ⁵² Ibid, p. 26.
- ⁵³ *The Pulse of Asia*, Ellsworth Huntington, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston and New York, 1907; p. 13.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid, pp. 138-39.
- ⁵⁵ *History of Bokhara*, Arminius Vambery, pp. 13-footnote, 14-15.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ Rahul Sankrityayan, *History of Central Asia*, p.106.
- ⁵⁸ B.N. Puri, op. cit., pp.129-135.
- ⁵⁹ Rahul Samkrityayan, op. cit., p. 106.

The Legitimation of Empress Wu and the Northern Colossus of Tun-huang

Nirmala Sharma*

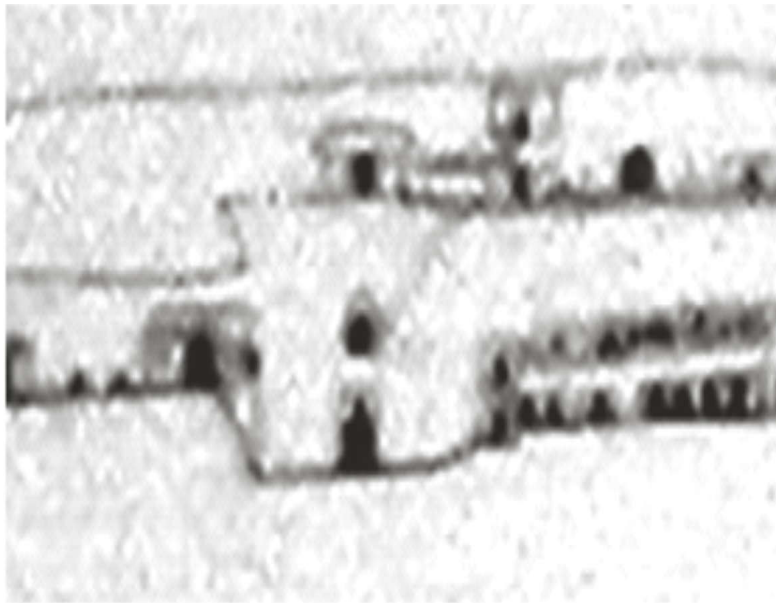
We come across colossal Buddhas in several historical places. Why were the Buddhas created in colossal size and what do they represent? Two Buddhas are represented as colossi in the Tun-huang caves: Maitreya and Vairocana. Both represent sanctified imperium, splendor shared by the ruler and the people, stabilization and prosperity of the state in a common cultural syndrome with neighbouring kingdoms, in the awesome majesty of the colossus, the pyromenon of the within lording over the beyond.

The oasis town of Tun-huang is situated at the edge of the Gobi desert in the west of the present day Chinese province of Gansu. Just near this town of Tun-huang are the world's most beautiful Buddhist Mogao caves. It is a gallery of stucco images and murals endlessly painted over a period of thousand years. The town was founded by Emperor Wudi of the Han dynasty in 111BCE as one of the four garrison commandaries to assure Chinese control over the trade routes to the western regions. For several hundred years after the collapse of the Han Empire (206 BCE-220 CE), the area was subjected to successive waves of invasions, which often caused great upheaval.

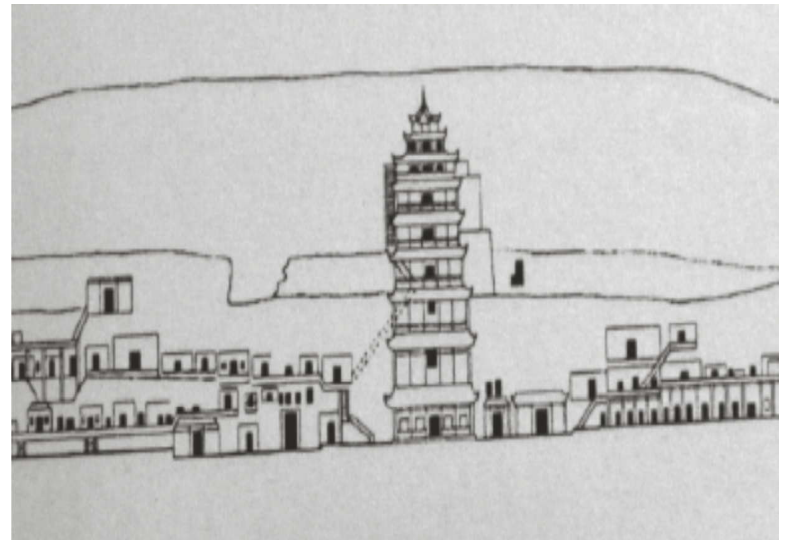
In the Mogao cliff, three large caves are prominent from a distance. From south to north is the first large Cave 130 that houses the Southern

* Prof. Nirmala Sharma is an Art Historian and Professor of Buddhist studies at the International Academy of Indian Culture, New Delhi. Presently she is working on the Tibetan scrolls in the National Museum as a Tagore National Fellow. She held the ICCR chair as a distinguished Professor at Shenzhen University, China. Mobile No. 9871006114/9818942568.

Great Buddha, and the next large Cave 96 is a nine storey pavilion over the Northern Great Buddha. The third large cave is the north Cave 17 which is a three storey pavilion and shelters the library. There are several large Buddhas in the Mogao caves, but only the two colossi in caves 96 and 130 are the subject of this discussion. The caves are square and large at the bottom, tapering and small at the top. The giant statues are roughly hewn out of stone, sculpted with clay and painted. A horse shoe shaped passage leads behind the statue and is used for worshipping. Large openings on top and central part of the front wall allow light to pass. Tiered wooden eaves are built on the outside as in Bamiyan. The colossal images have stone cores while most of the statues at Mogao caves have a wooden skeleton, padded with reeds and surfaced with two to three layers of straw and clay to provide a surface for painting.



Cave 130



Cave 96

The two colossi represent the statement of Mahamaya, the mother of Sakyamuni Buddha. She says: I will be the mother of all the Tathagatas of the Bhadrakalpa yet to come, beginning, with Maitreya upto Rocana (*Maitreyasya tathagatasya anabhilapyair guna-visesair janani bhavisyami, evam anabhilapya-guna-visesaih Simhasya, evam yavad Rocanasya tathagatasya janani bhavisyami*).

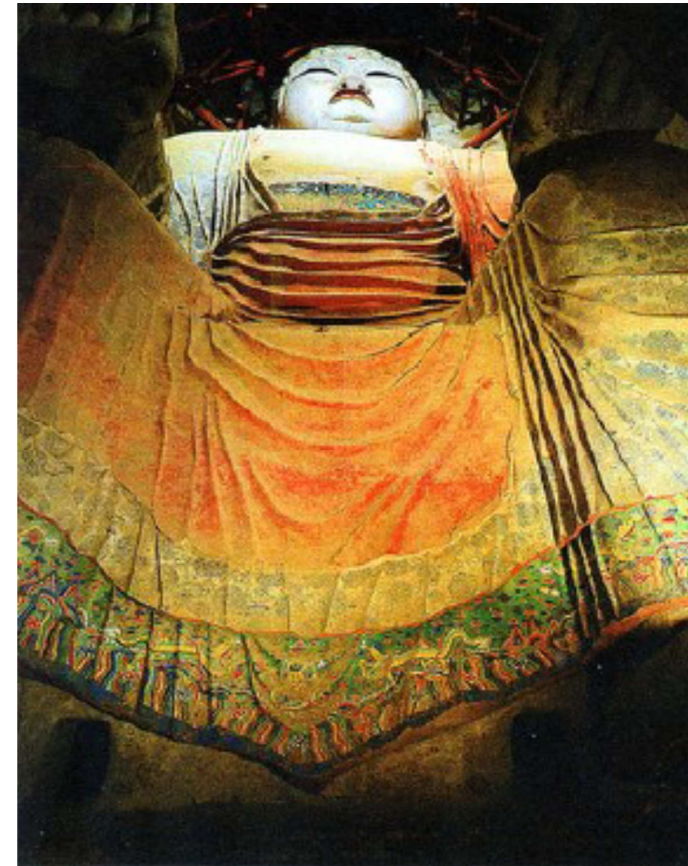
The Textual Bases of the Colossi

Avatamsaka Sutra or The Flower Ornament Sutra (*Huayan* in Chinese) is a major text in Buddhism. It is the richest and most grandiose of all Buddhist scriptures. It was preached by Buddha immediately after attaining enlightenment, hence directly conveys the context of his vision. The Avatamsaka sutras represent *ojas* or *augustus* 'divine favour,' awe-inspiring majesty of the dharmadhatu, impressive magnificence, imposing sublimity, stately solemnity, and awesome grandeur. The word avatamsaka means a large number in Divyavadana and Avadanasataka.¹

The Avatamsaka sutras are vaipulyasutras as is clear from their Chinese title ta (maha, or better collection of) *fang-kuang* (vaipulya) *fo* (buddha) *hua-yen* (avatamsaka) ching (sutra) (Nj 87, K79). The Vaipulyakas are termed Uttarapathakas or those of the north-western region. The origin of Avatamsaka lies in the NW. The last sutra of the Avatamsaka is the Gandavyuha. Its partial translation is the Ramyaka-sutra done by *Aryasthira as early as AD 388-407 (K 102, Cleary 1983:205). Nj 106 reconstructed the Chinese *lo-mo-chieh* as Ramaka (? the name of a man). Cleary adopts the same restoration. Akanuma Chizen, *Indo Bukkyo koyu meishi jiten* (Nagoya 1930:542) restores the name as Ramma, Rammaka in Pali and Ramyaka in Sanskrit. The work of translating the Flower Ornament sutra into Chinese begun in the second century AD. Renditions of the complete scripture were made in the early fifth and late seventh centuries. The original for both translations were brought to China from Khotan which was located on the silk route and was a major centre for the early spread of Buddhism into China. The first translation of the complete *Flower Ornament Scripture* was done under the direction of an Indian monk named Buddhahadra (359-429) from a Sanskrit text obtained from Khotan. The second under the direction of Khotanese monk named Shikshananda (652-710) with the help of I-tsing and others, in 80 rolls. Empress Wu had sent a special envoy to Khotan for the Sanskrit text and herself took part in the translation.

Four early sutras dedicated to Maitreya in Chinese dilate on the plenty and beauty of the age into which He will incarnate. His will be the Golden Age. The world will be ruled without the need of force by a Cakravartin. His capital will be splendid. The deposits of treasures will be distributed as alms. His crown will be decorated with millions of jewels: a symbol of royal splendour. His feet will hang down the throne in *bhadrāsana*, as in images of emperors from the NW. Maitreya has an immense body.² The last Panchen Lama was exceptionally tall and he attributed it to his pre-incarnation's setting up a gigantic statue of Maitreya at Tashilhumpo. In the age of Maitreya men will be taller than they are now. This concept of Maitreya was conducive to his iconography as a colossus.

Cave 96 Northern Great Image of Maitreya



Cave 96

Cave 96 houses the colossus called Bei Da Xiang, or Northern Great Image of Maitreya in a seated posture. He is the thousandth of the Thousand Buddhas of the Gandavyuha. This is the earliest of the two large Buddha caves. It was originally constructed in 695 AD by a Zen Buddhist master Yingyingong, Yinzu and others, during the reign of Empress Wu Zetian. The original figure was damaged in an earthquake and has been reconstructed several times, the latest in 1987 when the

Tun-huang Academy repaired its hands.^{2b} The cave is a nine storeyed structure. It has been repaired at least five times. It was originally four stories, but an additional storey was added between 874 and 885. It was repaired later in the Guiyijun period under the patronage of the ruler, Cao Yuanzhong, and his wife, Madame Zhai, pictured in corridor 220. The third restoration was in 1898 and sponsored by a merchant who added further two storeys. The fourth repair was between 1928-1935, with funds raised by a local monk. It became nine storeys high. The final repairs were done in 1986 when the Tun-huang Academy discovered that one of the crossbeams was broken.³

Excavation of the space in front of the statues was carried out by Tunhuang Academy in late 1999 which revealed remains dating from early Tang onwards. This showed that the floor of the original cave was lower than the current ground level, revising the height of the Buddha statue to 35.5 m.



Etching by Lajos Loczy

The dedicatory inscription Mogaoku ji, the record of the Mogao caves, describes how the figure 35.5 metres high was made by the Zen master Yingyingong, Yinzu and others in the second year of the Yanzai period (695). The impressive images of the Four Heavenly Kings in the

entrance hall, each some 6 metres in height, add to the grandeur of the cave. Initially the construction to protect these images was four storeys high, but was increased to five storeys when the refurbishing was carried out and finally to nine storeys around 1940.

The first European traveller Lajos Loczy along with his troupe visited Mogao caves in 1878. His etching of the site is important, as showing the colossal image without the canopy.

The earliest known colossus of Maitreya was at Darel, made in the third century. It was a sandalwood statue, 60 English feet in height. The Chinese pilgrim Pao-yun saw it in AD 397, covered with gold plates. Fa-hsian visited it in AD 400 and said that the monarchs of various kingdoms vied with each other in making offerings to Him. In AD 404 monk Fa-sheng paid homage to this image. Around AD 632 Hsuan-tsang the great pilgrim-scholar came to the river valley of Darel (Chin. Ta-li-lo), once the capital of Udyana, and saw the wooden statue of Maitreya: "It is golden coloured and very dazzling in appearance....." about 100 feet high, and is the work of Arhat Madhyantika.⁴

Continuing the tradition of Darel, the kings of Bamiyan must have created a still more impressive image of Maitreya at Bamiyan. The gigantic image of the Sun God in his chariot, directly above the head of Colossus, is a reference to the solar aspect of Maitreya, a patronymic from Mitra. The sun-god in the guise of a 'Tokaharian-Hephthalite Mihira-Surya,'⁵ is an indication of a royal solar cult. Mithraic royal cults were widespread in the area. The location of the colossus at the centre of the facade was meant to be the centre-point of the entire complex for homage being paid by kings, as they did to the Darel image. A colossus showering inexhaustible blessings, was a saviour against all attacks and a power overcoming enemies. Maitreya in the vault of the ceiling in Bamiyan is the originating Tathagata, who evolved further in the Avatamsaka sutras.

In China the *Mahameghasutra* is known as the *Dafengdeng wuxiang jing*. It contains the teachings given by Buddha to the Bodhisattvas on the inconceivable means of attaining liberation, Samadhi, and the power of Dharanis. The Buddha also declares that Tathagatas remain forever present in the dharma and the sangha despite having entered Parinirvana and that they are always endowed with four qualities of Nirvana mentioned in the Mahparinirvanasutra, namely permanence, bliss, purity and selfhood. Its influence on the Mahameghasutra can also be witnessed in the story of the goddess "Pure Light."⁶ Having heard the

Mahaparinirvanasutra in her past life, the goddess is told by the Buddha that she will be reborn as a universal monarch (Cakravartin).⁷ The sutra is often cited for its prophecy of the advent of Nagarjuna as well as for its injunctions against meat-eating. It was also recited in order to induce rain. In China, commentators on the Mahameghasutra identified the newly enthroned Empress Wu Zetian as an reincarnation of the goddess, seeking thereby to legitimize her rule. As emperor Gaozong (r. 649-683) of the Tang dynasty suffered from increasingly ill health, his ambitious and pious wife Empress Wu took over the imperial administration. After her husband's death, she exiled the legitimate heir Zhongzong (r. 683-684, 705-710) and usurped the throne. One of the many measures she took to gain the support of the people was the publication and circulation of the Mahameghasutra. Two translations by Zhu Fonian and Dharmaksema were available at that time. Wu Zetian ordered the establishment of monasteries called Dayunsi (Great Cloud Monastery) in every prefecture.

Cave 96 is also called Da Yun Si, Great Cloud Monastery, a clear reference to the Great Cloud Sutra favoured by Empress Wu. The construction of this cave followed when Empress Wu Zetian decreed in 694 the construction of Great Cloud Monasteries in every Prefecture. A further decree in 695 ordered the making of a colossal dry-lacquer image. The dedicatory inscription *Mogaoku ji (Record of Mogao Caves)* describes how the Chan master Lingyingong Yinzu and others created this colossal image in the reign of Empress Wu.

The Bhadrakalpika-sutra speaks of Maitreya as the first and Rocana as the last Buddha-to-be. The Chinese translation of the sutra by Dharmaraksa was completed in AD 300⁸ and its Tibetan rendering by Vidyakarasiṃha and Dpal.dbyans around AD 755. A Khotanese scroll of the eighth century, over 70 feet long, was recovered by Aurel Stein from the Tun-huang library. Its lines 199-754 contain the recitation of the thousand names of the Bhadrakalpika-sutra. It was edited by Sten Konow, *Saka Versions of the Bhadrakalpika-sutra*.⁹ It has two colophons: the first on line 729: *buddhapitai suttra usapura samnsye II* and the final colophon on line 754: *buddha-pitai bhadrakalpaya suttra uspurra samasye*. The Khotanese scroll is the oldest manuscript giving Sanskrit names of the thousand Buddhas in their Khotanese form. The last of them is Raucau or Roca.

The smaller colossus of Maitreya of Bamiyan evolves into the larger colossus of Vairocana, though the two are at a distance of more

than half a mile. The Larger Western Colossus at Bamiyan is known as *Surkh But* 'The Red Buddha' in Iranian literature. He wore a red drapery and Hackin recovered fragments of red-painted stucco at His feet. There are countless allusions to the *but-e araste* 'adorned Buddha' by early Persian poets. They also detail the ceremonies of presentation of gold-threaded draperies, bejewelling and crowning of the colossus. Situated in a region dominated by Iranian Light-cults, the colossus was the Supreme Light-God who endowed the King with His spirit. His peculiar glory or *hvareno* reflected the indwelling light from which issued a radiance so brilliant as to dazzle ordinary men. He was in *Bami-yan* 'the resplendent metropolis' from Avesta bama, Pahlavi *bamik*, Afg. *bam*, Skt. *bhama* 'light, brightness, splendour' in the Rgveda, *bhamani* 'bringing light (said of Purusa in the eye) Chandogya-upanisad (MW), from the root *bha* 'to shine, be bright or luminous.'

Cave 130 Southern Great Image of Vairocana.

This colossal figure is Nan Da Xiang or the Southern Great Image. It is situated on the southern-most side, 160 metres away from the first cave. It houses a 27 metres high seated Vairocana, seven metres shorter than the Northern Great Image. Its head alone measures 7m high. The cave is 16 m deep and 21 m wide.¹⁰ It was cut directly from the stone of the cliff, covered with clay and fine layer of plaster for being painted. The staircase leading to the top of cave 130 also leads to cave 156 in which there is an inscription in ink on the wall, "record of the Mogao caves." The record of the Mogao caves can be found in two versions, one written in ink in cave 156, and another in a manuscript in the Pelliot collection. The text of the mural inscription is transcribed in Jiang Hengfu,¹¹ with missing characters (including the date of 695) added in smaller type from the manuscript in the Pelliot collection,¹² which is itself dated to the sixth year of Xiantong (865). Although the right hand is a later replacement, the colossal Maitreya image is well-preserved. The halo has two overlapping rows of lotus petals, followed by a complex floral scroll, a band of full and half floral rosettes, and an outermost border of flames.

The east wall has two windows to admit light. The image on this wall, covering a nirvana scene of the High Tang period, were repainted in the Western Xia, when the Bodhisattvas on the North and South were also painted. The roof has a floral design with image of dragons

in the centre. Originally like the northern image it was accompanied by Four Heavenly Kings in the front hall. The four heavenly kings stood on either platforms against the west wall, two on either side of the broad entrance (4 metres wide at the base and 7.3 metres high). Today the remains of the eight demons that supported them (one under each foot) remain in front of the cave. Excavations in 1979 and 1980 revealed the original extent of this constructed hall.¹³ The Bodhisattvas on the north and south walls were painted in the Tanggut period.¹⁴ The *apsaras* at the top of these walls are the largest at Mogao caves. An important document, the Laba randeng fenpei kukan mingshu (numbers of lamps assigned to the caves and niches for the eight day of the twelfth moon) written on back of a fragmentary sutra manuscript states that four lamps were dedicated to the worship of the great images of heavenly kings in each of the two caves, which can only have been those containing the Northern and Southern images.¹⁵ The manuscript bears a cyclical date only, but it can be dated to the Tang dynasty by the language and writing style. In the original layout of this cave, three steps led down from the entrance into a paved area, the largest of all those found at Mogao caves, 16.3 meters wide by a 21.6 meters deep on which stood a hall of eighteen columns, five bays wide and three bays deep.

Most of the tiles paved in this area are of a single type, decorated in relief with a eight-petalled lotus blossom and corner motifs. There are sockets on the floor for a great pair of doors. Three steps lead down into the hall containing the colossal Buddha, where another eighteen bases of pillars or holes for them exist. The exterior view gives an idea of the extent of the construction, with some of the pillar bases clearly visible after the Western Xia period: the hall was abandoned and layers and layers of windblown sand and alluvial deposits accumulated above the original floor level, to a depth of over 3 metres. The excavation revealed that a new front hall was built at a higher level in the Qing dynasty.¹⁶

Vairocana is also called Abhyucca-deva in Gandavyuha 443.9. Abhyuccadeva means a colossal image. Classical Greek influences, through the Romans, Parthians, Scythians, Tocharians, and others gave rise to the concept and representation of Buddha as Cosmocrator, the Vairocana of the Avatamsaka sutras. Monumental Apollo of Delos in the seventh century BC and frequent references to *kolossoi* by Herodotus in the fifth century BC, the 50 feet high statue for Apollonia by Calamis in 460 BC (six times life-size), Athena Parthenos and Zeus at Olympia

sculpted by Phidias in 438 BC (seven times life-size), Zeus for Tarentum done by Lysippus in 320 BC (ten times life-size) had made colossus a living tradition. Zenodorus made a 106 feet high statue to represent the emperor Nero as the Sun-god (nineteen times life-size). The most famous colossus was the bronze statue of the Sun-God Helios, 105 feet high, made from melted down weapons of a defeated enemy. It stood astride the entrance to the harbour of Rhodes in AD 653, and the broken up metal totalled 900 camel loads. The Greater Colossus of Bamiyan surpassed them all by being thirty times life-size (5.83 x 30 = 175 feet).

Hsuan-tsang refers to the Great Colossus: “its golden hues sparkle on every side, and its precious ornaments dazzle the eyes by their brightness.” He was Vairocana, from the root *ruc* ‘to shine’: the style and splendour, the security and surety of the state. The Chionites ended Sasanian rule in Afghanistan in AD 358. Bactria was invaded by the White Huns in AD 425, the Hephthalites swept over the Kabul Valley and Gandhara after their repulse from Iran in 465, and the decisive action of the Gupta armies annihilated the Huns in 532 and Mihiragula fled to Kashmir. Bamiyan escaped the terrors of these aggressions. The Great Colossus seems to have been sculpted and sanctified, empowered and dedicated very early in the fourth century to ensure security of the State: *Dharmo raksati raksitah*.¹⁷ Rowland opines that “the drapery, molded in string-like ridges, reflects the style of the fifth century Buddhas of Mathura, and the fragments of wall-paintings which cling to the sides of the niche and the soffit of the vault are a provincial version of the style of the Indian wall-paintings of Ajanta.”

Conclusion

The long reign of Empress Wu spanning 21 years (684-705) was in contravention of the Confucian negation of an Empress ruling over China. She ordered ten monks to write a commentary on the Great Cloud Sutra stating that she had received the Heavenly Mandate to be the Empress. She changed the dynastic denomination of T’ang to Chou, and assumed an imperial title on 19 October 690. She was an incarnation of Maitreya and would govern over all Jambudvipa according to the Great Cloud Sutra. Her sacral and political unity was again confirmed by the Ratnamegha-sutra in 693 as the Cakravartin and as Bodhisattva. The dominance of Buddhism played a decisive role in her political

leadership. In the same year of 693 Cintamani of royal blood came from Kashmir to China, and cultivated the wonders of astrology and of dharani in particular (Forte 1984: 306). He translated the dharani of Cintamani Cakravartin, and Ushisa-cakravartin. It was to emphasize that Cakravartin was the symbol of sovereignty. Empress Wu had sent a special envoy to Khotan to get the original Sanskrit text of the Avatamsaka. Its translation was completed on 5 November 699. A memorial was presented on the occasion to confirm Empress Wu both as Cakravartin and as Bodhisattva by the monks.

Among them was Siksananda and I-ching who had just returned from India. She had personally presided over the translation of the Avatamsaka, wrote an imperial preface, and invited Fa-tsang (643-712) from Sogdiana who built up an elaborate and well coordinated system on the simple ideas of the Avatamsaka-sutra. About 704 he lectured before the Empress at the palace. As the philosophy was too abstruse for her to comprehend, he used the figure of a lion in the palace architecture to illustrate his points. His famous treatise goes by the name of the lion. Lion is Hari in Sanskrit and represents the state. I-ching completed the translation of the Golden Light Sutra on 17 November 703. It was a Sutrendra-raja or imperial sutra of the Great Chou dynasty of Empress Wu. Tun-huang was a military commandery established by the Han emperor in 111 BC. The Han dynasty had established Confucianism as the state policy and the Confucian Classics were the basic curriculum of the civil service examinations in China till 1911. She echoed the policy of the Northern Wei dynasty which had carried on the construction of the Lung-men caves for four centuries beginning around AD 493. The Annals of the Wei dynasty (ch.114) say that T'an-yao petitioned the fifth reigning Emperor to carve five colossi for the five emperors: (i) T'ai-tsu 386-408, (ii) T'ai-tsung 409-423, (iii) Shih-tsu 424-452, (iv) Kung-tsung, (v) Kao-tsung 452-465 that is the reigning emperor himself. This statue was modelled after his actual body to benefit him. Empress Wu is also sculpted as a colossus at Lung-men. The colossus of Empress Wu as Maitreya at Tun-huang is an apt symbol of the empress as the political controlling head as well as the religious sway. They represent the sovereignty of the nation in a harmony of the Empress and her people on the deeper spiritual levels of a shared consciousness. The colossus of Empress Wu at the commandery established by the Confucian Han were a macro-scale manifestation of dominion in the perenniality of devotion. They were

to sustain and perpetuate the state of Empress Wu, to objectify and institutionalize her authority in a divine symbolism. As the eyes wander over the immensity of the colossi, they are animated with splendor in their silent vibrations as they evoke the voice of the deeps of Avatamsaka. Across the illusionary silence of sublime centuries, they are in the words of an inscription

*And here among these stones
The culmination of a dream.*

They are amazing exfoliations of an Empress beyond the dogmas. She transcended the Realm of Principle (Li) which is spaceless and formless, to the Realm of Facts which is dynamic and constitutes the phenomenal world. Both interact and form a Perfect Harmony in the Avatamsaka system.

1. Edgerton 1953.
2. Mahanidanasutra, Taisho Tripitaka T14.419c-420a.
- 2b. Ibid 1:124.
3. Ibid 1:124.
4. Beal 1884:1.134.
5. Carter 1986:122.
6. Jingguang.
7. Buswell Jr & Lopez Jr, Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism: 2014.
8. K387.
9. Konow 1929.
10. Fan 2010: 160.
11. Jiang Hengfu 1985: 406-7.
12. Pelliot 1920: 37.
13. Pan & Ma 1985: 6-7.
14. Ibid 1: 124.
15. Ma De 1988: 7, Wu Mangong 1959: 49.
16. Ibid. 3: 6.
17. Rowland 1966, p 97.

Literature cited

Bailey 1951
H.W. Bailey, *Khotanese Buddhist Texts*, London.

Beal 1884

Samuel Beal, *Si-yu-ki, Buddhist Records of the Western World*, translated from the Chinese of Hiuen-Tsiang (AD 629), London (Trubner & Co).

Buswell 2004

Robert E. Buswell, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Gale, USA.

Carter 1986

Martha L. Carter, Hsuan-tsang and the colossal Buddhas at Bamiyan, in *Studies in Buddhist Art of South Asia*, ed. A.K. Narain.

Edgerton 1953

Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, vol. II: Dictionary, New Haven (Yale University).

Fan 2010

Fan Jinshi, *The Caves of Dunhuang*, Dunhuang Academy.

Jiang 1985

Jiang Hengfu, *Mogaoku nianbiao* (Chronology of the Mogao Caves), Shanghai, Ancient Monuments Press, Shanghai.

Keown 2003

Damien Keown, *A Dictionary of Buddhism*, Oxford Press.

Konow 1929

Sten Konow, *Saka Versions of the Bhadrakalpika-sutra*, Oslo.

Ma De 1987

Ma De, Shi Siji Zhongqi de Mogao anmian gaiguan, (A survey of the Cliff Face of the Mogao Grottoes in the Middle of the tenth Century), in *Dunhuang yanjiu*, no. 2.

Pan & Ma 1985.

Pan Yushan and Ma Shichang, *Mogaoku kuqian diantangyizhi* (Ruins of frontal buildings added to Mogao Grottoes), Wenwu Press, Dunhuang Research Institute, Beijing/Dunhuang.

Pelliot 1921

Paul Pelliot, *Les Grottes de Touen-Houang*, 6 vols, Paris.

Rowland 1966

Benjamin Rowland Jr, *Ancient Art from Afganistan*, Treasures of the Kabul museum, New York (The Asia Society, Inc).
Taisho edition of the Tripitaka, ed. Takakusu Junjiro and Watanabe, Kaigyoku, Tokyo, 1924-1929.

Whitfield 1995

Roderick Whitfield, *Dunhuang Caves of the Singing Sands*, Textile and Art Publications, London, 2 vols.

Theo-Cosmological Issues in Gandhian Thought

Sanjay Kumar Shukla*

It is truism to state that of all the great thinkers that India has produced in the modern age, Gandhi is in some ways the easiest to understand and expound. But in some other ways he is also the most difficult. His thought lends itself to easy exposition because it is woven around few cardinal convictions, none of which involve complicated ideational processes. The emphasis on spontaneity, faith and devotion, the acceptance of love as the supreme value, the demand for service and sacrifice, the insistence on the divinity of truth, all these are connected with the basic conviction which makes the human spirit the highest repository of reality and power. The difficulty regarding proper understanding and appreciation of Gandhian thought is that the ideas and the doctrines which he has formulated are not mere theoretical constructions but largely the outcome of felt realization or experienced truth. It can be stated that Gandhi's thought has an originality and a freshness of treatment towards socio-political, cultural and economic issues, but it also carries on it the stamp of several influences. One of the earliest influences that provided to Gandhi's thought its backbone was that of ancient Hindu tradition. At a very early age he had studied the *Gita* and *Ramayana*, and also the *Vaishnava* and the *Jain* literatures. He had a tremendous respect for the life and personality of Jesus Christ. He was highly indebted to Tolstoy, who in his *The Kingdom of God is within you*, gave almost a new interpretation to Christianity. He left his mark on the mind of Gandhi in various ways, specially his emphasis upon the power and dignity of suffering gave Gandhi an

* Sanjay Kumar Shukla, Associate Professor, Philosophy Department, Ewing Christian College, Allahabad.

inspiration for developing his own notion of *satyagraha*. Thoreau also influenced Gandhi a great deal as his idea of civil disobedience revealed to Gandhi the possibility of using non-violence as a technique for solving even the major problems of social and political life. Besides these, he had also a first-hand knowledge of Zoroastrianism and Islam and also of the works of Ruskin and those of some theosophists of his time. Gandhi carried on experiment after experiment on moral, religious and existential issues both in his inner and in outward existence; and his thought is nothing but a product of the series of experiments that he carried upon.

I

The fundamental basis of Gandhism is the conception of God or an omnipresent fundamental spiritual reality. God is a self-existent, all knowing living force which inheres every other force known to the world. Gandhi feels that God is needed not merely for the satisfaction of reason or intellectual curiosity, but also for providing strength and solace. He frankly admits that "He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if He ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it."¹ This is possible only where interpersonal relationship is conceived, and only when theistic conception of God is formulated in which God is presented as a person. In Gandhian philosophy, God can never be divorced or separated from the notion of truth, which prompted him to state that 'God is truth.' This statement is metaphysical in import, and therefore it is the outcome of a search for a name or category for the universal reality, that is God, which appears to defy all descriptions and categorizations. God is described as truth because He alone is real (*sat*). Truth, according to Gandhi, is not an attribute of God, rather God is uniquely identified with truth. He makes a revision of his earlier statement 'God is truth' by 'Truth is God.' The rationale behind this change is that the objective validity of the concept of God may be doubted and even denied, but the objective validity of the concept of truth cannot be. The statement 'Truth is God' is axiological in nature, having pragmatic and religious significance. The distinguished implication of this assertion is that the object of worship is not God but truth. It is the worship of truth that can bring persons of every caste, creed and nation together. By enthroning truth on the highest pedestal, Gandhi thus truly became a catholic, and lost all traces of separateness from every other honest man who worshipped gods other than his

own.² If Truth is God, the *Buddhist* and even Marxist can become the partners of the most devout Hindu, Muslim or Christian in the search for absolute value. Truth becomes a unifying factor in life and therefore deserves precedence even over the idea of God. Hence, it has the potential of becoming a basis for universal religion. He further upholds that when you want to find truth as God, the only possible means is love, that is non-violence. Gandhi regards means and ends are convertible terms, and therefore he has no hesitation in saying that God is love. He strongly believed that God was not there outside of ourselves, rather he pervades everything and is immanent in all beings. However, as a concession to the spiritual need of the common man, he was willing to accept the concept of God with form and attribute.

Gandhi does not place the ultimate emphasis on rational demonstration of God's existence. He is convinced that God can be known only in a state of inner realization, that God's knowledge can only be revealed to an individual in some sincere and sacred inner experience. It is curious to note that at times he talks about evidences of God's existence. The causal argument for the existence of God makes its appearance, more or less, in the form of Cartesian cosmological argument. Gandhi argues in the following manner: We exist, our parents have also existed, and the parents of our parents have also existed. The question can be further extended that who originates the whole of creation? Who is the 'parent' of the whole universe? He feels that one can reasonably arrive at the concept of God in this way. We can easily find traces of teleological proof for God's existence, as Gandhi very often talks about the order and harmony of the universe. He also maintains that there is a law governing the universe. He argues that the order, harmony and the law cannot be explained unless an intelligent law-giver is presupposed. This belief requires a living faith in a living God who is the ultimate arbiter of our fate.³ Gandhi believes that a belief in God's existence is necessary because God satisfies a very important aspect of our life. If we survey our life we find that, over and above the wants and needs of everyday existence, we do have an urge of a different kind, which cannot be satisfied with the materialistic fulfilments of life, and which demands a spiritual satisfaction. Hence, we clearly realize that we are in need of a supreme object of love, by having a faith in which, we can derive strength, solace, peace and happiness. This supreme object of love is nothing but God. This line of argumentation is designated as pragmatic proof. But the proof that appears to be most convincing to Gandhi is the

moral proof. He seems to be convinced that the voice of conscience carries a dependable testimony for God's existence. The call of conscience is a representative of Being who is at once the embodiment of Supreme Goodness that is none other than God himself. Thus, it appears that, according to Gandhi, God not only transcends senses but also defies rational proof. God finally turns out to be a matter of inner realization and an article of faith.

Gandhi has conceived God as all-pervasive. He is also described as Law. Although this description creates the impression that God is an impersonal principle, but Gandhi rises above such impression, when he says that God's Law and God are not different from each other, rather God himself is the Law. He very often calls God 'Love.' There can be no other way of apprehending God than the way of love. God is present in every one of us, and therefore, by a gradual process of extending love we can love everybody and thereby God himself. This kind of love demands a kind of self-sacrifice – a sacrifice of the egoistic and selfish ways for the love and good of others. Love demands a going beyond, a self-transcendence. For Gandhi Love never claims, it ever gives. Love ever suffers, never resents, never revenges itself. A sincere faith in God will make man see that all human beings are fellow-beings and essentially one. Thus, the love of God would ultimately turn into love of entire humanity and which can be easily extended to biotic and a biotic components of nature. He further pointed out that the only way to find God is to see Him, in His creation and be one with it. He refuses to seek God in a region with which human life has no concern or connection at all.⁴ According to Gandhi, God's reality is multi-faceted, and therefore he is not prepared to pin it down in definite terms. Although he has made several remarks regarding the notion of God, as God is truth and love, God is fearlessness, God is the source of life and light, God is conscience, and yet He is above and beyond all these. He is a personal God to those who need His touch. He is the purest essence and He simply is to those who have faith. God is therefore in us and yet above and beyond us.

II

Gandhi has given serious thought towards the nature of man. He treats man to be a complex being. The bodily man is the apparent man, his body is natural in so far as it is akin to other objects of nature. The body grows and decays according to the law of nature. Man is not

merely a physical being as he is endowed with the power of self-consciousness, reason, conscience, will, emotion and similar other traits. He has an aesthetic sense, a feeling-sensibility, and insight into the nature of good and bad. All these are expressions of the real man – of the spirit or soul present in him. For Gandhi, both the physical and spiritual aspects of man are expressions of God. Evolution, according to him, is a change from the physical to the spiritual, aiming ultimately at the complete realization of spirituality that is divinity. The presence of reason, conscience and free will etc. is an evidence of the presence of Divinity in man. This belief in the essential spirituality and goodness of every man leads Gandhi to believe further in the essential unity of mankind. Being rooted in the *Advaitic* vision, Gandhi firmly asserted that every man carries a speck of divinity within himself. Hence, every man within his own personality possesses immense potentiality and even practical possibility for attaining spiritual growth and enlightenment. In other words, he strongly believed in the idea of human perfectibility. The veil of ignorance (*avidyā*) comes in the way of self-disclosure of man. But that can be easily overcome by going through the process of personal practices (*sādhnā*). In this process, Gandhi rejects the concepts of man afflicted by the ‘original sin’ of Christianity as well as that of man as ‘economic being’ associated with Marxism. In other words, he rejects both these Western concepts of ‘fallen’ and ‘economic being.’

Gandhi’s concept of man is undoubtedly coloured by his religious ideas. He believes in the authority of Hindu scriptures and in the *Varna-ashram dharma*, accepts cow-protection as an inalienable duty and believes in rebirth. Further, in accordance with the *Vedāntic* tradition, he believes in the unity of all existence, in the oneness of self (*Ātman*), in the goal of self-realization that is to be achieved through an arduous process of self-restraint, discipline and purification through which the chain of rebirth would be snapped.⁵ He had firm conviction that human existence is grounded in truth. Gandhi came to identify truth with law and maintained that nothing in the universe could be independent of the law. But this law which holds all things together can only be a cohesive force, without which the universe would crumble to pieces and we would cease to exist.⁶ It can be stated like this that universe is grounded in truth understood as law, while human existence is grounded in truth understood as love. Gandhi proceeds to maintain that man nevertheless alienates himself from this basis of his existence. But this alienation can never amount to total severance and the goal of human

life is the overcoming of this alienation. Non-violence (*Ahimsā*), for Gandhi, is the means for the achievement of this end. He pointed out that for shaping one’s life in accordance with truth, one must know the truth. Gandhi distinguishes between absolute and relative truth, and maintains that so long as one does not know the former, the latter should be the guide. The relative truth is an indispensable guide – but only as subject to two conditions: 1. A votary of truth must keep his mind open to correct himself when the occasion arises. 2. One should undergo the appropriate self-discipline which more and more lessens the gap between relative and absolute truth. This is what Gandhi means when he says: ‘If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of truth you must reduce yourself to a zero.’⁷ To reduce oneself to zero means to make oneself receptive to truth by cultivating humility and what Indian philosophical tradition calls ‘*cittasuddhi*.’

Gandhi’s concept of man oscillates between the Christianity and the *Vedāntic*, between the awareness of man’s imperfections, depravity, finiteness and sinful nature, and the promise of his perfectibility through self-discipline. His consciousness of sin persisted, but under the influence of the *Vedāntic* tradition, it never became an obsession. His concept of man is characterized by another oscillation: that is between a strict dualism between body and spirit and a position which overcomes this dualism. It is true that he looked upon the body both as a prison house and a gateway to freedom. But he never came to the notion of body as a form of the spirit. Gandhian conception of ‘bread-labour’ is quite insightful to the above mentioned dualism. According to the ‘bread-labour’ theory, every one should perform physical labour, which is atleast enough for his daily bread. The need of the body must be supplied by the body.....Mere mental, that is, intellectual labour is for the soul.⁸ This is a clear cut mind-body dualism. The ‘bread-labour’ theory can be consistently interpreted as freed from this dualistic basis. Physical productive labour of course leads to production of economic good and earns daily bread, but this act of producing economic good, it may be said, is not merely physical act meant for sustaining the body regarded as a physical organism, but it is a spiritual activity meant to enhance one’s total spiritual well-being. Some thinkers have made attempt to define man as an economic animal engaged in producing value through labour. The phenomenon of value producing labour is one of man’s essential spiritual functions.

We come across different views regarding the nature and status of man in the history of philosophy. Freud and his followers have tried to

paint a complete picture of man on the basis of unconscious urges and impulses. There are thinkers like Hobbes who seek to determine man in terms of self-centered nature. Man is basically conceived as a selfish individual, who, for the sake of his own pleasure, feels the need of making adjustments with others, and consequently enters upon a social contract. Sociologists have interpreted the nature of man entirely in terms of social conditions, since man being defined as a social animal, because apart from society he cannot even exist. Metaphysicians have their own ways to characterise man as a rational animal or self-conscious being. For existentialists no description of man can be adequate unless it gives due regard to the peculiarities of man and this sort of analysis hinges upon their dictum 'existence precedes essence.' For Gandhi, all these picture of man are superficial and partial because they do not emphasize the basic truth (essence) about man. In fact, Gandhian conception of the nature of man is based on his metaphysical conviction. Gandhi is a monist as he believes in the reality of one Supreme God. Man is an expression of that one reality. Thus, both the bodily and spiritual aspects of man are expressions of God, but Gandhi feels that the spiritual aspect of man represents true nature, simply because it is akin to Divine nature. Hence, in spite of the fact that the bodily aspect of man also has its own importance, but man's essential nature, consists in his spirituality. The most illuminating description of man that Gandhi very frequently offers is the essential goodness present in everyman. Although outwardly man appears to be selfish and even brutish, inwardly and essentially he is good. He says: "I refuse to suspect human nature. It will, is bound to, respond to any noble and friendly action."⁹ The belief in the essential spirituality and goodness of everyman leads Gandhi to believe in the essential unity of mankind. He upholds that I believe in absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity.....though we have many bodies, we have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction, but they have the same source.¹⁰ This unity is expressed both in individual and collective life of human beings.

III

Gandhi transcended the age-old debate between whether the world is real (*Yathârtha*) or illusory (*Âbhâsa*). He rejected both the extremes of an ego-centric man totally immersed in the phenomenal world or in other words self, deeply engrossed in worldly discourse (*Pravrtti*) and

the life of ascetic only working for his personal liberation (*Moksa*), far away from the vagaries of the world (*Nivrtti*). The approach of Gandhi towards the world can be easily compared with the middle path (*madhyama mârگا*) of *Buddhism* and the golden mean of Aristotle, as we find here that both self-indulgence and self-mortification are suicidal in nature. He embraced the idea of a cosmic order marked by interdependence which is akin to the doctrine of dependent origination (*Pratitya Samutpâda*) of *Buddhism*. He endorses the symbiotic relationship amongst different components (biotic and abiotic) of nature. According to Gandhi, a man is not only responsible for his own action but also for the actions of his fellow beings. Taking the world as being manifested and pervaded by God, and taking man himself as a microcosm of the divinity, man has to ceaselessly work to realize his true self, on the one hand, and also to continuously engage in the task of making the world a more livable place on the other. This is possible only through love, compassion and service towards mankind. This reminds us that to serve humanity is to serve God. Hence, Gandhi maintains that we should not engage ourselves in the debate, whether God is with form and attributes (*saguna*) or without them (*nirguna*) and whether the phenomenal world is real or unreal.

It is difficult to outline precisely Gandhi's view on the nature of world because his remarks about it is casual and scattered. But still serious attempt can be made to organise his thoughts into systematic exposition of the nature of world. Nature, according to Gandhi is the expression of God, as it is an evidence of the all pervasive reality. He says that God manifests himself in innumerable forms in this universe and every such manifestation commands my reverence.¹¹ Metaphysically speaking, the world is an expression of God and therefore it is both real and finite. It is real because it is God's creation, it is finite for the reason that world is not itself God and God alone is infinite. World is not chaotic and disorganised, rather each and every part of the universe is law governed. All things in the universe including the sun and the moon and the stars obey certain laws. Without the restraining influence of these laws the world would not go for a single moment. It seems that here Gandhi is influenced by *Vedic* notion of *Rta*. He perceives in the inexorable laws of nature nothing but the force or the will which maintains the world in harmony and puts order, and which saves it from destruction. This force for him is nothing but God, and the laws are nothing but the ways of the working of that force.¹² This approach of Gandhi bears similarity with Leibnizian doctrine of pre-established

harmony. Thus, God is the beginning of the world and also its end. This confers to the world its reality. The emphasis on the reality of the world has a practical implication too. If the world has a reality, then it is suicidal to deny the reality of anything. It hinges upon the principle of 'live and let others live,' and therefore Gandhi would never favour a 'denial of the will to live,' on the other hand, in accordance with his conviction he recommends a return to Nature. He feels that Nature provides to man a field for action (*Karma-sthala*), where man can discipline his soul (self) by leading a religious and moral life. Although Gandhi talks about a synchronized and harmonious world repeatedly but at the same time he is not blind to the discordant notes evident in the world. The presence of such elements does not negate the reality of the world but merely proves its finitude and limitedness. It is neither Nature nor man that is free from imperfection, and so, what is required is an attempt to transcend this finitude and imperfection.

It is from the above mentioned theo-cosmological views of Gandhi that we are in a position to make a categorical statement that is Gandhism is not merely a political creed, it is a message – a philosophy of life. It wants to bring about a transformation in human life by the supremacy of self-suffering love. Gandhi has vindicated the age-old wisdom of Asia by inculcating truth, non-violence, chastity, philanthropy and a sense of devout respect for the religious views of others. Hence, humanity will have to turn to his teachings if the devastation of civilization is to be avoided.

References

- ¹ Gandhi, M.K., *Young India*, 31-12-31, p. 427.
- ² Bose, N.K., *Studies in Gandhism*, p. 269.
- ³ Ibid, p. 26.
- ⁴ Narvane, V.S., *Modern Indian Thought*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1967, p. 178.
- ⁵ Gandhi, M.K., *My Religion*, edited by B.Kumarappa, Ahemdabad: Navajivan, 1955, p. 44.
- ⁶ Gandhi, M.K. *Truth is God*, edited by P.K. Prabhu, Ahemdabad: Navajivan, 1955, p. 17.
- ⁷ Gandhi, M.K., *My Religion*, p. 42.
- ⁸ Gandhi, M.K., *Truth is God*, p. 135.
- ⁹ Gandhi, M.K., *Young India*, 4-8-20.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, 25-9-24.
- ¹¹ Ibid, 17-11-21.
- ¹² Datta, D.M., *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 60.

Demonetisation and After: A Discursive Review

Prof. Durgadas Roy*

“A Moment comes, which comes but rarely but rarely, when we step out from the old to the new” – Mahatma Gandhi.

Macroeconomic analytical picture, change with events and they are unable to explain. It is instructive to study how macroeconomic conceptual framework evolve after anomalous economic outcome after many global crisis. Many global events cannot be properly explained with basic macroeconomic theories. Many global events cannot be properly explained in a normal way, e.g., stagflation of the 1970s and the Unemployment of 'The Great Depression.' None of these events could be understood by the prevailing analytical economic frameworks. In this economic background, we will introduce our “Demonetisation Issue” along with other subsidiary issues, introduced by the Prime Minister of India, in a historic announcement on November 8, 2016 and withdrawal of the high denomination currency notes of Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 500 as legal tender.

The Prime Minister came on National Television to announce, what has been called a “Surgical Strike” against 'black Money.' The stated objectives of this demonetisation of high value notes of denomination of Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 as per the Gazette notification (Ministry of Finance, 2016) are (i) to curb the menace of fake currencies, (ii) to wipe out unaccounted and tax evaded money, stored in such high-value notes; and (iii) to prevent use of high denomination notes for terror financing.

* Durgadas Roy, former Emeritus Fellow, University Grants Commission, India and formerly Professor of Economics, Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta, Honorary Research Director, Loka Kalian Parishad, Kolkata.

One of the enduring mysteries of the demonetisation exercise ended, when the Reserve Bank of India, released its Annual Report, 2017, which said that about 99 per cent of high value notes that were stripped off legal tender status on November 8, 2016 had been returned to the banking system. That is, Rs. 15.20 lakh crore of the erstwhile Rs.500 and Rs. 1000 had come back. This has raised a lot of controversy regarding the exercise's efficacy. Here we should remember that a single indicator such as 'notes deposited' cannot capture the full impact of a blunt tool like 'demonetisation.' It requires a broader and long-term approach.

It is true that demonetisation, as envisaged by the Modi government, relied on surprise to flush out black money and fake currency notes. It was bound to be disruptive. Granted this caveat, the exercise was not managed well. The inherent vibrant disruption was further worsened by frequent change of rules governing demonetisation. We shall take up the matter in detail later on, at the end of the discussion. It is true, cumulatively the disruption intensified a slow down in the economy, which is highlighted by the fact that the GDP growth in the April-June quarter was 5.7 per cent, a dip of over two percentage points compared to the previous year. This has really hurt job creation and also undermined agricultural growth in a year when rainfall was adequate (we shall take up this controversial picture, item-wise, later on, as a sort of factual cross-examination of the whole issue).

It has been further stated, that the nature of demonetisation process was a hasty decision and its overall costs would go up in due course. But we should also remember that it has its benefits also, which will show up over a period of time. Perhaps the most important benefit has been its signalling. The message sent was that tax compliance would be prioritised. When demonetisation is juxtaposed with the transition to GST, India has taken an important and bold step towards greater monitoring of the economy, which is essential. It is aptly pointed out by India's Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley that demonetisation will widen the tax base. In this context, 'The Economic Survey' estimated that demonetisation by itself added 5.4 lakh taxpayers.

Much more work and research survey would be required to actualise all potential and legitimate benefits. To move digitisation forward, as rightly pointed out by the Prime Minister, India's network quality needs to significantly improve. Tax authorities' data mining skills need to be enhanced to make the most of the bank data, thrown up by

demonetisation, and transition to GST. We should also remember that the present government cannot afford to take its eye-off the economy in the midst of its slowdown. We should analyse it more critically, step by step, in the subsequent pages.

Demonetisation Measures in the Past:

The first demonetisation happened in India, in January 1946, when Rs. 1,000, Rs. 5,000, and Rs. 10,000 notes were taken out of circulation. Incidentally, we like to mention that at that time Dr. C.D. Deshmukh was the Finance Minister. But, unfortunately, it was not successful and, finally it was withdrawn in 1954, when again higher denomination bank notes were reintroduced in 1954. Than again, in January 1978, higher denomination notes were reintroduced. The current demonetisation is the third in row. In 1978, the Government of India had a specific legislation called the "High denomination bank notes Act, 1978." This Act laid down procedures for exchange of demonetised notes with other denominations and allowed refusal of exchange if the authority receiving the application for exchange is not satisfied with the declaration made by a person tendering a high denomination note for exchange. (Ref. Ashok K. Nag, EPW, 2017, pp.18-19).

For the current demonetisation, no such specific act has been legislated and there is no provision for refusal of exchange as long as the person tendering demonetised notes can provide proof of identity. It is true that the common thread for the two measures of demonetisation, in independent India, is the respective government's effort to curb the ill effects of black money. Here, in this context, we should reproduce some remarks by Dr. I.G. Patel, the then Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. Some scathing remarks he pointed out, "such an exercise seldom produces striking results. Most people who accept illegal gratification or were otherwise the recipients of black money do not keep their ill-gotten earnings in the form of currency for long. The idea that black money or wealth is held in the form of notes tucked away in suit cases or pillow cases is naïve." (Ref. Nag, EPW, Nov. 26, 2016, p.18). We shall take up the black money case again at the concluding portion of the article.

But the basic difference between 1978 demonetisation and 2016 episode is the definition of what constitutes 'high notes' chosen to be mentioned. We should remember that in the year 1978, demonetized

measure received limited public attention and had little impact on the daily lives of poor people. High demonitised notes then formed just a minuscule fractions about 0.6 per cent of the total currency in circulation. Further, the demonetized notes were of significantly high value, having little use for common people. The current situation is different, the demonetized Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 notes constitute over 85 per cent of total notes in circulation in value. Its overall impact on the economy will be discussed later on. (Ref. Rajkumar & S.L. Shetty – EPW, Nov 26, 2016 p. 13).

Let us to take up Monetisation Issues, step by step, along with other economic variables, connected with the current demonetisation measures. (a) Demonetisation and illusion of GDP Growth:

While demonetisation (combined with other measures aimed at crunching the size of the black money/economy) will yield benefits in the long-run, but it has been mentioned that the move (demonetisation) undeniably affected the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate adversely in the short-run (mentioned earlier). According to the Central Statistics' Office (C.S.O.), 28 February press release in Q3, in real terms, gross domestic product (GDP) grew at 7 per cent along with a 11.2 per cent rise in private final consumption expenditure over corresponding estimates in the previous year. The Q3 growth rate is only marginally lower than that in Q2. Many predict that the true effect of demonetisation will be evident in the next quarter's (Q4) estimates. The Chief Statistician of India has said: results of one quarter are inadequate to judge the effect of the policy In the real world, especially in a developing country will end Q4 with households engaged both in production and consumption in self-employed enterprises; with a large unorganized informal sector, where enterprises do not maintain proper audited books of accounts, and where workers are under-employed or disguisedly unemployed. (Ref. N. Nagaraj – EPW, March 11, 2017, p. 17). On the basis of that, we can safely conclude that the much debated Q3 estimates for assessing the impact of demonetisation remain only partial. Since the proper methodology underlying the estimation of quarterly data is seriously flawed and does not connect properly between demonetisation and GDP growth.

It could be argued that the deceleration in the growth, seen in the past two quarters, reflects only a temporary impact of demonetisation, and that is unlikely to spillover into the medium term. Given the inherently informal nature of the Indian economy, there are serious

issues with estimation procedure adopted by the CSO to measure its contribution to GDP. Therefore, it is not possible to understand the impact, demonetisation has had on employment in the informal sector, or the earnings of workers and enterprises in those sectors at macroeconomic level.

Niti Aayog's vice-chairman, economist Rajiv Kumar said that demonetisation had 'no role' in the GDP growth rate falling to 5.7 per cent over the April-June quarter of 2017-18, and it would rise to 7 to 7.50 per cent in the second quarter.

(b) Demonetisation and its impact on the Black Money:

Of the multiple objectives for demonetisation, announced by the government, two important ones were – first reducing the extent of black money in the system and, second, reduce dependence on cash for transaction by promoting digital payments. Black money was expected to decline as many in the government believed that a large chunk of currency with the public would not be deposited with banks and would be extinguished. However, 99 per cent of the currency has been deposited with banks.

While the extinguishment of black money did not happen, the second objective of reduced dependence on cash seems to have been achieved. At the current level, currency in circulation is 88 per cent of peak levels before demonetisation. According to the Reserve Bank of India's Deputy Governor, Viral Acharya, one way of identifying stability in currency level was when it bounces around its level. "I think it is only recently that this has started happening, otherwise we have just been demonetising at an increasing rate and currency in circulation has been going up," said Acharya, we expect this trend to continue in Fy 2018 and estimate financial savings/GDP at around 8.5 per cent with strong flows in shares and debentures and life insurance along with pick-up in currency and lower flows in deposits.

Estimates of the black economy analysis points to, two major difficulties, in estimating the size of the black economy. First, the lack of official studies that can provide additional data points. Second, the lack of proper econometric technique to incorporate the missing or mis-specified variables required to carry out the estimation. All the official data series are in 'error' due to the existence of the black economy, and all the studies using such official data suffer from this. New methods of estimation of the size of the black economy are needed.

(Ref. Arun Kumar, Estimation of the size of the black economy – EPW, Nov 26, 2016, pp. 41-42).

Demonetisation may destroy a tiny part of the black money, but it would not stop black money generation. In the case of real estate, white and black prices may both fall. However, it is possible that the white price falls more, leaving the price (black) more or less unchanged. Thus, black wealth may remain unaffected while white wealth falls. It may be mentioned here that one of the arguments given in favour of demonetisation is that tax collection would go up, allowing the government to spend more on pro-poor schemes. It is also argued that the banks are now flush with funds and they can lower the lending rates and thereby benefitting production. This is unlikely to happen in a hungry situation and banks are too busy dealing with the existing currency shortage to have time to lend etc. (Ref. Arun Kumar ‘Economic consequences of Demonetisation’ – EPW, Jan 7, 2017, pp. 16-17).

Remonetisation?

We have mentioned earlier that publicity showing publicly available data suggests that 98.8 per cent of demonitised currency was returned to the RBI by 13 Jan, 2017. It is obvious that the data suggests a sharp slow down in the ‘remonetisation process’ in mid-Dec 2016, which returned only 80 per cent of what was demonetised by the end of April. It is obvious that remonetisation has been far too slow, and its effect on the informal economy, though not transparent, are a matter of serious, economic, political and social concerns.

Outgoing RBI Governor, R. Rajan reiterates: “It is very hopeful about the government’s performances. I think that the government has done some very important things such as the ‘Goods and Services Tax’ reforms because, politically, a difficult task has been done. This is one situation where the dividends will pay off in the longer run even though there might be short-term disruptions. It will also help in curbing tax evasion in addition to uniting the country as a single market and reducing transactions. This is a major reform.” (The Times of India, Sept.3, 2017).

Concluding Observations:

Reforms are moving on many fronts and they will continue to move. In certain areas, they will move slowly, and in other areas, they would

move very fast. But as long as we are making progress, I think they are on the right track. Even on privatisation on your hand, you can say that no single privatisation has happened but, on the other hand, nobody would believe it. In India, The Prime Minister’s declaration for reforms has only increased, not diminished. The Prime Minister has been keen on reforms, and we are sure to get the results very soon.

Former RBI Governor, Sri Bimal Jalan is optimistic about the future of economic reforms of P.M. Modi, but argues ‘more decentralisation’ for better implementation of policies. All the measures that are being taken are very positive and topical and they should be implemented on the ground. It is also extremely good that some priority is being given to the “Make in India” concept. The ‘Goods and Services Tax (GST)’ is an extremely good step.

Let us conclude our discussion in this way. In the last decade, the ‘Left Front Government’ in West Bengal introduced many reforms relating to Land Reforms, Operation Barga etc. So long it was an economic proposition, for the welfare of the masses, it went on smoothly with immediate results. But, ultimately it evolved into a political strategy only for manoeuvring to capture political power. And, ultimately, It ended in nothing and Left Front government was thrown out by the people. But, how, we sincerely believe that ‘Monetisation Issue’ is basically a hold, economic strategy and, barring a few initial political hiccups in the short-run, It will succeed ultimately in the long-run. And we sincerely believe and hope, that in the ultimate analysis, it will be good for the common masses. Let us hope for the best.

References

1. ‘Monetary Policy in a Globalised Economy,’ Rakesh Mohan.
2. Kumar, A (2005), India’s Black Economy, The Macro Economic implications – ‘Journal of South Asian Studies.’ Vol. 28, No. 2.
3. Ministry of Finance (2016) “The Gazette Notification, No. 2652, No. 8, 2017.”
4. Timberg, Thomas A and C.V. Aiyas (1984), “Informal Credit Markets in India.” ‘Economic Development and Cultural Change,’ Vol. 33, No. 1.
5. C.S.O. (2017) “Press note on Second Advance Estimates of National Income 2016-17” and Quarterly Estimate of Gross Domestic Product for the third quarter (Q3), 16-17.
6. The Reserve Bank of India ‘Annual Reports,’ 2016, 2017.
7. Economic and Political Weekly (EPW), Various issues, 2016, 2017.

Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal and His Work

Dilipkumar Mohanta*

1. Preamble

This article is meant to introduce the readers to Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal (03.09.1864-03.12.1938). It is limited to enlist with details, as far as possible, the works authored by Acharya Seal and subsequently published in different Journals/Anthologies. I am aware that a large portion of Seal's writings in the form of manuscripts was not published and was subsequently lost. Still whatever I could gather, I am trying to enlist here with the sole hope that the future researchers on Seal may get a ready list for initiating their further investigations. In addition to this, a very short informative account of the contents of some of his distinguishing works on Philosophy and Religion is included. Here apart from pointing to the importance of Seal's work for further research, I also hope that this introduction will prepare some ground for reading Seal's hermeneutic interpretation of the *Gîtâ* and four other philosophical essays on *Positive Sciences of Ancient Hindus*. The common feature underlying some of his essays seems to be Seal's rational belief in Universal Humanism.

2. Some Views About Brojendra Nath Seal

Let us begin with some observations about Brojendra Nath Seal by his contemporaries. Sir Michael Sadler wrote about Seal in the following words:

* Prof. Dilipkumar Mohanta is Vice Chancellor, The Sanskrit College and University, Kolkata and former Vice Chancellor, Kalyani University, e-mail: dkmphil@gmail.com

"I know of no one either in the East or in the West equal to Sir Brojendra Nath Seal in point of width, depth and originality of scholarship. ... May one of his pupils (for pupil I was during the years 1917-19 and shall always revere him as Guru) express in a few words love and admiration for Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal, and gratitude, which grows with the years, for his guidance in my thought and for what he taught me during many long and intimate discussions about education and about the needs and genius of India. He was, indeed, guide, philosopher and friend to me. More than fifteen years have passed since we last met in the flesh. But the feeling of his presence is still strong in my mind. So close was the friendship which he allowed to grow up between us, that I can still turn to him as if I were at his side and can hear the kindly tone of his voice. Guru indeed he was to me, and I bless his name. There are streets and lanes in Calcutta, there are paths and terraces in Darjeeling, which were the background of our talks. And, as if I were still in Bengal, I can see what I saw then and hear once more what I then heard.

... We salute him with reverence and gratitude."

"Brojendranath perceives the world and the arena of knowledge with an open mind and only by a person gifted with the richness of wisdom can do this." – Rabindranath Tagore

"Seal was as great as an educationalist, philosopher, political theorist, but the impressive most was his simplicity of disposition and largeness of heart." – S. Radhakrishnan

Albert Einstein in 1905 wrote about Seal: *"Most philosophers are indebted to Hindus and to remember also that Dr. Seal was one of the foremost exponents of Hindu Philosophy to our age."*

Dr. Saroj Kumar Das quoted..... Seal is reported to have said to his students in the following self-explanatory words:

"You see I have been a seeker after flawless, full orb'd perfection throughout and always has baffled me in all my endeavour to accomplish anything worthy of mention. Whatever I have been haunted by the fear that I may have thereby committed myself to the keeping of some closed system of truth and this is precisely what I am constitutionally incapable of doing."(Obiter Dicta in ABNS BCCV, 1965:43).

3. Unfortunately Forgotten in Academics Today

Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal was a torchbearer of the era of enlightenment in India, a living Encyclopaedia of modern sciences and oriental *vidyas* in his time, apart from being a world-famous philosopher. Philosopher J.N. Mohanty (in *Between Two Worlds: East and West* 2002:64) informs us that Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee reportedly said to Dr. S. K. Maitra (who was “known to have been a favourite student of the late Sir Brojendra Nath Seal” and who was known to have received from Dr. Seal, before the latter’s death, most of his unpublished manuscripts)”on appointment as the King George V Professor (later renamed Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal Professor), ‘Dr. Maitra, I have supported your appointment because I know that Dr. Seal’s manuscripts are with you, and I hope that after becoming a Professor you will edit and publish them.’ Then, after a pause, he is reported to have added, rather ironically but prophetically, ‘But I know you will not do it.’ Shyama Prasad Mookerjee was right; the manuscripts were eaten by termites in his (Dr. Maitra’s) Serampore house. Almost the same will be the fate of the rare copies of important and unpublished works of Seal unless these are not urgently taken for preservation in the National Library and compiled for publication for making these available to the academics of today.

4. Narendra Nath and Brojendra Nath a Common Sita Nath

It is sometimes wrongly believed that Narendra Nath Datta (later known as Swami Vivekananda) and Brojendra Nath were classmates in college. As a matter of fact, Narendra Nath was one year senior to Brojendra Nath in age and one year junior as a student in the college. This is mentioned in Seal’s own essay titled *An Early Stage of Vivekananda’s Mental Development* written at the request of Sister Nivedita, and published in the *Prabuddha Bharata* in 1907. They had a common friend named Sita Nath Nandy. By that time Narendra Nath had become restless after reading J.S. Mill’s ‘*Three Essays on Religion*’ and David Hume’s *Sceptical Philosophy* and Herbert Spencer’s *Doctrine of the Unknowable* and ‘his unbelief gradually assumed the form of a settled philosophical scepticism.’ At that time, Sita Nath introduced Narendra Nath to Brojendra Nath with the expectation that only Brojendra Nath could satisfy Narendra Nath’s academic thirst. This is an indirect

recognition of Seal’s scholarship among the contemporaries. Brojendra Nath recorded this event in the following words:

“*The sovereignty of Universal Reason, and the negation of the individual as the principle of morals, were ideas that soon came to satisfy Vivekananda’s intellect and gave him an assured conquest over scepticism and materialism. I gave him and Sita Nath (as pure, as lovely, as gold-like a soul as ever visited earth) a course of reading in Shelly’s Hymn to the Spirit of Intellectual Beauty, his pantheism of impersonal love and his vision of a glorified millennial humanity moved him as the arguments of the philosophers had failed to move him. The universe was no longer a mere lifeless, loveless mechanism. It contained a spiritual principle of unity”.... – (see, An Early Stage of Vivekananda’s Mental Development, 1907:65).*

5. B. N. Seal’s Philosophical View

Acharya B. N. Seal has been compared by Michael Sadler with Aristotle of Greece, Nāgārjuna of India and Thomas Aquinas of Medieval Europe. Seal is a votary of free thinking, and as a philosopher, used to believe in the right to dissent, criticize and think afresh. Unfortunately, Seal’s Works have not been given proper attention by Indian academicians. Seal on several occasions speaks of Cosmic Humanism which is not at all antagonistic to science. Ramakrishna, according to Seal, represents a form of Cosmic Humanism, where spiritual discipline (*sādhanā*) is being seen as a stepping stone towards the final realization of ‘God-in-Man and Man-in-God.’ Ramakrishna’s teachings, according to Seal, consists of “syncretic practice of Religion by being a Hindu with the Hindu, a Moslem with the Moslem, a Christian with the Christian and a Universalist with the Universalist.”(1938:9). About Ramakrishna’s syncretism, Seal has said that “the Paramahansa would experience each cult and religion in its totality or as one whole experience. ...Ramakrishna was a cosmic humanist in religion and not a mere nationalist. He gave the impulse initiative to universal human and this must be completed in our age.” Seal considers religion in a broader sense as different from religions ‘in the concrete.’ It is, for Seal, a force that ‘organizes life and life’s activities’. ... All cultures and in fact, all concepts are dominated by the idea of religion.’ [Presidential Address of the birth centenary of Ramakrishna published in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, 1937:170]. Another essay in this series of Cosmic Humanism

is “An Early Stage of Vivekananda’s Mental Development.” This essay narrates the first hand understanding and an eye-witness account of Narendra Nath Dutta’s attitude as a young and keen student of Vedanta and Hegel, as well as the spiritual transformation of him due to the influence of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna to emerge as Swami Vivekananda of later days. Seal considered his first meeting with Ramakrishna as a “thrilling experience of saintliness.” He considered Narendra Nath as a free, a creative thinker, and a person of dominating intelligence. For Seal, our experience in science and philosophy, ‘better scientific philosophy,’ to coin Seal’s words, is also important like our religious experience. He advocates cosmic humanism. He believes that it can free mankind from its limitations of outlook “by finding man in universe and the universe in man. And we must seek it to be free not of this or that state but of the solar system and stellar systems and beyond, in one word, of the universe.”[*Prabuddha Bharata*, 1937:171]. In the same essay, Seal discusses the difference between the Brahma advocates and the Religious Pluralism practiced by Ramakrishna. Seal was also attracted to the philosophy of non-violence and non-co-operation advocated and practiced by M.K. Gandhi in the twenties of the last century. He termed it as the ‘*New Gospel of Deliverance for Universal Humanity*.’

Another interesting addition in this line of thinking is Seal’s essay on Rammohun Roy. It has two parts, first being “Rammohun Roy: The Universal Man”- and the second “Rammohun’s Universal Humanism.” *Rammohun Roy: The Universal Man* is the compilation of two Addresses delivered by Acharya Seal at the Death Anniversary of Rammohun Roy (Bangalore 27th of September, 1924 and at Calcutta on the 31st December, 1933) on the occasion of centenary celebration and later on published by Sadharan Brahma Samaj, Calcutta. This is different from Rammohun Roy memorial anniversary Address, which was published in the *New India*, October. 9, 1902 (pp.117 – 118). Seal has seen sufficient characteristics of the Universal Man in Rammohun. After developing his thesis in and through the narration of inner growth of Rammohun, Seal tries to locate the foundation of Rammohun’s faith on the reconciliation of Reason and Scripture and points to the transition from Comparative Religion to a holistic synthesis in Universalism.

Seal was an advocate of Humanism based on Science. And here Seal is on the same footing with Bertrand Russell, Eddington and A.N. Whitehead. Like them, Seal thought that this kind of Humanism will

liberate man ‘from the dominance of the old creeds and dogmas’ (p.38). Seal is at pains when he sees that Voltaire and others, though brought to humanity, “A glimpse of rising sun of Humanism, they distorted the view by putting the East against the West. Theirs was a militant humanism.” Instead, Seal is fond of synthetic and universalistic point of view. Seal speaks of the Cosmic Humanism, and believes that it will be the future of humanity at large.

Though Seal himself, as a philosopher, seems to be a dedicated advocate of reason and science in life, Seal cautions us about the blindness of admitting science as the whole of life. He has pleaded for “other phases – the emotional, the socio- ethical and the spiritual,” and he has put emphasis on the other phases, that they be given “a proper foundation and the structure in the organization of life.” According to Seal, this new Humanism will make us free from our total and blind obedience to scripture (*shastra*). Of course, he does not say that ‘what is old is necessarily good and what is new is necessarily bad.’ It is undeniable that the greatest bondage is the slavery of thought, and therefore, for our betterment, we are to enjoy freedom in ideas. What is reasonable must be accepted and what is unreasonable must be rejected as an ideal, Seal would say. Seal’s Addresses and essays contain immense resources for further research. The most distinguishing essay in this series of Seal’s thought is “Comparative Studies in Vaishnavism and Christianity with an Examination of the Mahabharata Legend About Narada’s Pilgrimage to Svetadvipa and An Introduction on the Historico-Comparative Method.” Seal has rejected with historical evidences the Euro-centric interpretation of Philosophy of History. For him, “every code of language, myth or system, has its own history – its own growth and development – a study of which is essential to a proper understanding of its function in society, its place, meaning and worth.” Apart from these comparatively unknown essays by Acharya Seal, his work titled ‘Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus’ is significant.

Seal is a worshipper of free thinking. According to Seal, unfinalizability and openness are important for philosophy and for the development of human science and culture. At 1 the first International Race Congress was held in London in 1911. Seal delivered the lecture titled ‘*Science of Anthropology*.’ His lecture was applauded by the scholars across the world. To illustrate the originality of Seal’s thinking let me quote a few lines from his self-explanatory speech. “*If modern civilization is distinguished from all other civilizations by its scientific*

basis, the problems that this civilization presents must be solved by the methods of science. Modern Science, first directed to the conquest of Nature, must now be increasingly applied to the organization of society. But, in this process, Science is no longer in the merely physio-chemical, or even the merely biological plane, but is lifted to the sociological and historical platform.” (p.36). A famous anthropologist of India is of the opinion that Seal ‘examined some of the basic findings of the science of anthropology, and also made a few very original comments of his own.’

On the 22nd December 1921, being invited by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, Seal went to Shantiniketan and presided over the first meeting of Visva-Bharati Parishad. What he said there is a masterpiece of social philosophy for a dignified world. Very often, we see, mere scholarship creates discrimination. But Acharya Seal was an exception. He was interested to see the inner rhythm of the kingdom of learning with his inner eye. As a visionary, Seal said: “*Each can realize himself only by helping others as a whole to realize themselves — others can realize themselves by helping each individual to realize himself.*”

In 1899, Seal was invited as the representative of India, in Oriental Conference held at Rome. In that International Conference the theme of Seal’s lecture was ‘*Comparative Studies in Vaishnavism and Christianity with an Examination of the Mahabharata Legend about Narada’s Pilgrimage to Svetadvipa and an Introduction on the Historico-Comparative Method.*’ (pp. XI + 103). It is perhaps the first philosophical approach by any Indian in modern language what we call today inter-religious dialogue. He has stressed on the fundamental spiritual unity between two religions on the basis of **LOVE**, in spite of the outward differences. He has argued against the Eurocentric thesis that Vaishnavism was influenced by Christianity. There is not a single element in Vaishnavism that was derived from Christianity, according to Seal. In his own words: “I have accordingly applied comparison and analogy under the necessary corrections, with the result that, while Vaishnavism and Christianity are seen to have originated and developed in practical independence of each other and along different lines, they must be acknowledged to be different manifestations in different, race-histories, of the same Religious Idea or type; in other words, that they represent, with more or less of specific and racial differences, the same stadium in the development of the Absolute Idea, or the history of universal culture”[concluding paragraph of the paper CVC]. For Seal,

the points of difference and historicity are considered in any comparative study. Religion of love creates a bridge among human beings of different religions instead of creating difference, discord and unrest. It is one of the wonderful experiments to show how philosophy and sociology of religion can meet at a certain point. The question of superiority and inferiority among religions is irrelevant and are creations of priest-craft and politics in guise of spirituality. The goal of all religions is to establish the bond of love among human beings and welfare of the world. There is no conflict between pure spirituality and pure reason. Pure reason helps us to reconcile the conflicting views of religion and also helps us to get rid of superstitions in guise of religion. The sad part of cultural history is that very often, the missionaries of religion, willingly forget this truth and do the contrary. In today’s world scenario, Seal’s approach to inter-religious understanding through an examination of Christianity and Vaishnavism deserves our attention for protecting humanity from the danger of communalism, bigotry and bloodbath in the name of religion. Seal has taught us that religion teaches *love* and *not hatred*. This small treatise needs special attention of researchers in Philosophy and Social Sciences. It is, perhaps, an Indian experiment for the first time on the basis of practical socio-ethical aspect of religion, in what we call today ‘Sociology of Religion.’ R.K. Mukherjee’s observation about this book is interesting and important. According to Mukherjee: Seal’s “*Historico-comparative study in Vaishnavism and Christianity is the most original work that goes far beyond the European science of religion, whether the schools of Spencer, Taylor and Lang or the German schools. Seal advocates a comparative historical study of the speculative conception of the Godhead and the socio-ethical or practical attitude of religion blended together in the context of the world view of the cultures and of the relation of man, society and cosmos. Comparative history of religion in the West more or less overlooks the practical socio-ethical aspect of religion which is organically, if not also logically, related to the speculative element.*”

Seal considers his own philosophy largely as an exercise in philosophy of Pure Reason. In his essay titled ‘Neo Romantic Movement in Literature’ (1891), Seal has strongly criticized Hegel and expressed the view that if we accept Hegel’s ‘anti-thesis’ as only ‘negation,’ then it would stand as not more than a ‘logical fiction.’ Another internationally reputed Hegelian scholar, Mc Taggart has openly recognized the importance of Seal’s opinion, and said that there are many difficulties

in calling ‘anti-thesis’ as ‘abstract negation.’ Seal sometimes used to call his philosophy ‘Synthetic Philosophy.’ According to Seal, abstract and logical analysis is the principal method of doing philosophy. Seal seems to believe that knowledge is always subject to change and modification. There cannot be any final and sacrosanct word in the arena of knowledge; it is always open-ended. Our power of reasoning is dependent on the subtle functioning of our brain and so unfinalizability always characterizes our philosophic enterprise in the context of knowledge. And whatever number of value we assign to our explanation of the nature of the world it is not the final explanation. A philosopher, for Seal, cannot ignore the knowledge of science and history of his time. Seal does not believe in any qualitative difference between scientific pursuit and philosophic pursuit. He used to believe that it is possible to have a bridge between the information and insight provided by scientific discoveries and philosophic adventures of thought. But unfortunately, he has not given any clear picture of his philosophical view.

Seal had also written an *Introduction* at the request of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray for Ray’s ‘*Hindu Chemistry*’ and later on this *Introduction* was published into book form under the title ‘*The Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus*’ in 1915 (x). Seal wrote in the preface: “*The progress of Indian Algebra (mainly in Southern India) after Bhaskara, parallel to the developments in China and Japan, is a subject that remains for future investigation.— My direct aim in the present work is to furnish the historians of the special sciences with new material which will serve to widen the scope of their survey. – I have not written one line which is not supported by the clearest texts.*” This *Introduction* is recognized as a masterpiece of outstanding research. According to Seal: “*Philosophy in India in its rise and development is necessarily governed by the body of positive knowledge preceding or accompanying it ... Indian Philosophy and Religion have been based on speculative Thought and Metaphysics, it has a clear and direct relation to life and earth.*”

Originality, depth and richness of information – all three qualities simultaneously characterize Seal’s writings. In today’s academic activities – either in philosophy or in the history of Science in India – Seal’s contribution remains forgotten. Seal argues that the Hindu’s inductive method or methods of algebraic analysis and scientific ideas “*have deeply influenced the course of natural philosophy in Asia – in*

the East as well as the West – in China and Japan, as well as in the Saracen Empire. A comparative estimate of Greek and Hindu science may now be undertaken with some measure of success and finality.” (p. vi of x above).

Seal has not explicated his philosophical ideas in any comprehensive written form. But we can gather a rough idea of his philosophical thought from his recorded conversation with some of his former students, especially D.M. Datta. As I understand, according to Seal, when man goes to explore the deep level or meta level meaning of his variety of experiences and engages himself in search of time, pictures of the world in a meaningful way, and both science and philosophy come into being as necessary consequences. It is true that in the same time in the same society the same experience might be grasped by different people in different ways, interpret it in infinite ways using multiple means. Different pursuits accordingly come into being about the relation of individual to the world, origin and death, evolution, sustenance and destruction of the world. As result, there may be different theses that contain the final state of many positions. For Seal, these may be called different philosophical positions.

According to Seal, Philosophy in the basic sense of the term is Metaphysics. But whatever is known by human beings in and through the body-mind complex, becomes the subject of critical examination in philosophy and philosophy determines the proper implication and meaning of all such experiences of life. Seal considers the social aspect of human beings as very important. The external world with all its furniture and the internal world of mind and its states – both are designated by a single word ‘This’ (*idam* in Sanskrit). But the self of man is designated by the word ‘I’ (*aham* in Sanskrit). All experiences are gained on the basis of these two. But where lies the origin of these two fundamental categories? Where lies the sustenance of this? What is the direction of motion? What is called the fate or the ultimate? What is active? What is value? – All these questions initiate philosophical investigations, according to Seal, from different standpoints. In way of answering those questions, for Seal, metaphysics has arisen and established. Seal often refers to ancient Indian thought as “Hindu” thought. So he said that the most distinguishing feature of the philosophy of Hindus is, “The Hindus not only start from experience as a homogenous whole, but always in investigating the manifold in the real world, returns to the actual synthetic unity in the Atma.”

According to Seal, the Gitâ advocates the theory of *Graduated Synthesis*. As a master of interpretation, Seal would say that as a student of philosophy one should not have any blind commitment to any particular interpretation. In a sense, Seal seems to be a precursor of Gadamer and Dilthey for his insightful ideas about historicity of man and society on the one hand, and of knowledge on the other. About his methodology of interpretation he is independent and does not care what the commentators or sub-commentators say. And Seal is crystal clear in disclosing his logical ground for *not-considering* the so-called *commentaries* on the Gitâ. In his own words: “*I have left un-discussed the views of the various commentators and the various schools of Theology. Each commentators accept those passages of the Gitâ which support his own preconceived dogma (siddhanta) and distorts the meaning of the conflicting passages to harmonize them with his dogma. On the other hand, if one studies the Gitâ independently, one is hopelessly puzzled at first by internal contradictions of a serious character, as well as by irrelevancies and meaningless repetitions.*”

The question is: Is all this contradiction, irrelevancy, prolixity real? Or is there a coherent and definite teaching in the Gitâ?”

I would call it the philosophical reading of the Gita. Seal’s interpretation goes at length to find an answer in a noble way and this deserves the attention of today’s researchers. Seal’s analysis is very precise and logical in methodology and very rich in philosophic depth and insight of content. Seal refuses to be guided by any kind of preconceived dogma in his interpretation. I would call it a philosophical interpretation of the text. Seal seems to admit that for a *single* question many answers are possible from alternative standpoints. In philosophic interpretation reason dominates over belief. A philosopher is a truth-seeker and a dogmatist is a partisan who has vested interest or preconceived dogma, who has uncritically accepted *siddhanta*. A dogmatist uses logic only to justify his preconceived belief. He is called ‘*agrahi*’ by Haribhadra. Many commentaries on Indian texts of Philosophy or Religion sometimes are not open-ended. On the other hand, a true philosopher is always open to examination and ready to accept which comes out of free enquiry. An unexamined theory is not acceptable just as an unexamined life is not worth living. And in philosophical examination, one has to be careful about the necessary and sufficient conditions for advancing any claim. Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal represents a way of philosophizing in this sense of free and

critical enquiry. And his interpretation of the Gita is a vivid example of such philosophic interpretation. According to Seal, the most distinguishing teaching of the Gita is the synthesis of ‘more and more elements by successive stages.’ In short, the Gita represents a ‘graduated Synthesis’ of disciplines. Seal himself has characterized his interpretation as “not only a Synthesis, Synthetic Interpretation of the varied contents of the Gita, but also a synthesis of the various schools of interpretation themselves.” It is a matter of astonishment and a question of seriousness of researchers on the Gitâ today that most of them have almost totally overlooked this interpretation of the Gitâ by Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal.

Seal’s only book of poems ‘*The Eternal Quest*’ was published in 1936, two years before his death. According to Benoy Kumar Sarkar, it “bids fare to be appraised as such by students of poetry and philosophy. The work formally aims at being a versical summary of philosophical outlooks, ancient, medieval and modern. But its merits are likely to carry it beyond the range of a mere versification of three different types of philosophy. Seal has succeeded in creating a number of artistic situations and clear-cut-characters, and these are well-calculated to furnish poetic delights to readers such as care to ignore or forget the history of philosophical ideas. ... Those readers who do not know that Seal is a philosopher or was a professor of philosophy will not take long to enjoy the dignified verse as some very brilliant and beautiful creations of our own times in the realm of poetry.” [cf. Pramathnath Paul, Mahamanishi Brojendranath, 1984, 95—103] His views on Aesthetics can be found in *New Essays in Criticism*. It is interesting to note here before completing this *Introduction* what Seal had to say on Art.

“*Pure Art is sincere and disinterested, no less than the ‘Will to Good,’ but in appraising either or in laying down the norm, it would be ‘pathological’ to appeal to any emotion other than the emotion of contemplating the beautiful or the good. No doubt, all emotions are proper plastic stuff for constructions in aesthetics as well as ethics; but as building material, experience in all its forms is intrinsically valuable, — ideation, imagination, instinct, no less than emotion. But none of these enter into the norm.*”

What does enter into the norm and test of Poetry is not emotional ‘exaltation,’ imaginative ‘transformation’ or disinterested ‘criticism,’ but in and through them all, the creation of a Personality with an individual scheme of life, an individual outlook on the universe.

Judged by the above criterion, Tagore's poetic achievement is characteristically complete. His early poems are an exercise in emotional 'exaltation.' To this he soon added the art of imaginative 'transfiguration' (as in Urvasi). In his mature achievement, he developed this criticism of life without sacrificing either exaltation or transfiguration. Finally in his consummate later art, he has summed up all these elements and achieved the supreme mastery, — the creation of a Personality with an individual scheme of life, an individual outlook on the universe."[In *The Golden Book of Tagore*, 1931: 233]

I would like to conclude this introductory essay with the following:

"Whatever worthy and good is contained in this *Introduction*, it is because of the teaching, I inherit, of my revered teachers; but whatever is the short-coming of this I myself humbly owe the responsibility for that."

[*"yadatrastausthavamkincittadguroreva me nahi/
Yadatrastausthavamkincittanmamaivagurornahi!"*]

— (Madhusudana Saraswati's *Siddhanta-bindu-tika*)

Rest Houses for Travellers and Pilgrims in Ancient India

Dr. Bachchan Kumar*

Introduction

The paper discusses historical background, structure and nature of the rest houses for the travellers and pilgrims in ancient India. The main aim is to bring to light the design and facilities provided in the rest houses in ancient India. The rest houses fulfil basic need to the travellers hence it was an important welfare scheme. The royal houses were also concerned as they used to travel frequently for the sake of their people. So far, no serious study of the subject had been undertaken. There are sketchy references in literature and epigraphs throwing light on subject.

The rest houses have been a matter of discussion among the scholars. Efforts have been made to study on the subject on the modern period. Linderman¹ has made study of the archival data on the chatrams of the Maratha Kings of Tanjavur (Tanjore) in South India, especially during the reign of Raja Serfoji II (r. 1798 1832). He mentions the chatram institution as a variety of social groups and its charitable mandate. His study reveals the manner in which such practices could sustain aspects of the traditional relationship between the ruler and the subject while creating newly responsive forms of social outreach to wider constituencies by an indigenous court that had been reduced to titular status by the British East India Company after 1798.

* Dr. Bachchan Kumar, In charge, South East Asian Studies, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi; e-mail : bachchan_kumar@yahoo.com

Design/Methodology/approach

This paper is based on archival research. The references are from the primary and secondary data. The classical literature, mention the pilgrimages in ancient India and also provision of the rest houses made for them.

Spread of Buddhism gave impetus to the setting up of rest houses in ancient India. Emperor Asoka of Mauryan dynasty has taken lead in spreading the message of Buddha to far off places. He travelled far and wide for the welfare of his subjects. The rulers of ancient India realised the need of the travellers and provided facilities to them. They bestowed some sources of revenues such as villages, taxes and valuable objects to pilgrim destinations. Foreign emperors have also contributed in this direction. They also patronised to build and repair access roads, constructed rest houses, maintaining them by regular employees. Special care was taken of the health needs of the travellers. Emperor Ming Ti of the Han Dynasty (China) sent a goodwill mission to India in 65 A. D to gain first-hand knowledge of Buddhism. Chinese pilgrims to India namely Fa Hien, Hiuen Tsang and It-Sing were the prominent figures in this regard. These Chinese travellers have provided in their travel account authentic information on the subject.

In ancient India, there were two kinds of rest houses 1. Dharmasala and 2. Margasala. Both the rest houses were made for the comfort of the travellers. Some rest houses were built for a specific community, caste, ethnic group, profession or persons of specific region also but they were meant for the rest of the travellers.

The word *Dharmasala* is composed of the two Sanskrit words *Dharma* and *Sala*. Sir Monier-Williams in his dictionary refers that “*Dharma*” has a wide range of meaning. This word in the older form of the RgVeda means established or firm, steadfast, decree, static, ordinance, law, usage, practice, customary, observance or prescribed, conduct or duty, right, justice, virtue, morality, religion, religious merit, good works etc.² *Sala* means a house, mansion, building, hall, large room, apartment, shed, workshop etc.³ Thus its literary meaning is “Spiritual Dwelling” or more loosely ‘sanctuary’. But in India, the word Dharmasala is commonly used for a shelter or rest-house for the pilgrims and other kinds of people.

The word *Margasala* is also composed of Sanskrit’s two words i.e. *Marga* and *Sala*. Sir Monier has translated the word *Marga* as a Road,

way or course. *Sala* has the same meaning as used for *Dharmasala*. Thus, *Margasala* means place for shelter or the rest on the road side.⁴ Both the words *Dharmasala* and *Margasala* are used for the rest houses. *Dharmasala* is generally a structure used by the people for rest travelling for different purposes. It may be a part of or adjacent to the temple or other spiritual places. Precisely, dharmasalas are resting place for the pilgrims. Some of the rest houses were also made for the specific community, caste, ethnic group, professional or person from the specific region. On the other hand *Margasalas* were made on the trade routes for the convenience of the traders and royal officials when they travelled for specific purposes.

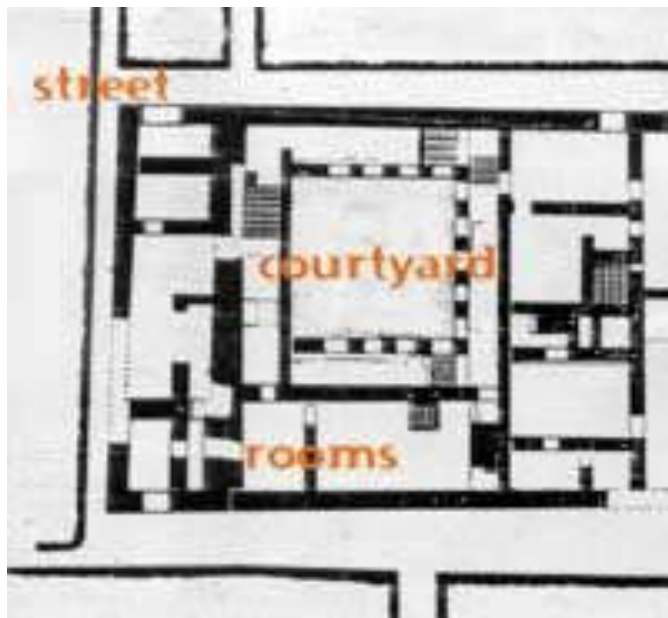
Origin and Development of the Rest Houses in Ancient India:

It is very difficult to say when the rest houses building in ancient India begin. Although we have some reference in the legends. A legend tells about a traveller who faced torture when he went to get shelter with a the family.

The earliest civilization in India, known as Indus Valley Civilization also called as Harappan and Mohenjo-daro, flourished about 4500 years ago. It was spread over vast plains in the North-Western India that include now Pakistan. It developed from farming and herding communities that carried trade with each other. Based on archaeological evidences, G. C. Pande⁵ counters the notions of Wheeler and Woolley and opines that the idea of town planning reached a fully developed stage at the time of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. R.S. Bist who excavated Dholavira and Banawali sites believes that the pre-Harappan culture was fairly advanced and some of the elements were adopted and refined by the succeeding Harappans. All these cultures had strong, comparable socio-economic infrastructure and there were regular interactions and exchanges among them. Many preceding cultures indicate the existence of fortification system and inner planning. Mohenjo-daro and Harappan people were civilized and educated. They had regular trade relations with other parts of the world too. The Navigation was developed that connects through sea.⁶

The excavations at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa revealed a highly developed urban civilization. Till 1999, 1056 cities and settlements have been located of which 96 have been on the banks of rivers. It was unique in many respects: Territorially it was more extensive than the

ancient civilizations of Nile, the Tigris and Euphrates (Babylonia) and of Assyria. It was also the earliest urban civilization. The cities or towns were well planned whose civic amenities excite admiration: brick houses with bathrooms, elaborate and covered drainage system, wide roads aligned to the direction of the winds.⁷ Artisans were skilled as they used technology in their crafts such as the potter's wheel and wheeled carts. Trade, including import and exports was a major activity. Massive citadels protected the city from flood and attackers. All houses had access to water and drainage system. All houses opened to inner court yards and smaller lanes.



Rest House in Indus Valley Civilization

The extensive town planning means that Harappan and Mohenjodaro people had well developed civic society. They had trade and commercial relations with the other parts of the world. Also they had welfare programmes for their people. Large halls in the town may be rest houses for the travellers. The rooms of the rest house were made around the courtyard. Sir John Marshall describes:

“To the right of the lodge a short passage led to the central courtyard of the house, which was open to the sky and provided light and air to the rooms grouped about it on both the ground and upper floors. The principle of the open court encompassed by chambers just as fundamental to – Planning at Mohenjo-Daro as it was throughout the rest of prehistoric and historic Asia, and as it has continued to be in India until the present day.”⁸

Jatakas informs the construction of the rest houses during 6th century B.C. It mentions that during the time of Buddha roads were repaired, wells were dug and rest houses were built for the comfort of the travellers.⁹ King Bimbisara, ruler of Magadh, when heard that the Buddha was proceeding from Vaishali to Magadh, he requested him to postpone his journey temporarily to give him time to repair the road. The road from Rajagriha to the extent of five *yojana* was levelled and at every *yojana* a rest house was set up. Across the river Ganges, the Vajjis also did the same thing. When all the arrangements were made, then Buddha set out on the journey.¹⁰

A Jataka katha gives a very interesting story about the erection of such a rest house. It mentions that a devotee of Bodhisattva had decided to build a rest house in the city square. But he decided that in the performance of such religious act he would not take help of any woman. A woman approached him and came forward to erect a pinnacle at the rest house. The carpenter made a pinnacle of the wood at the rest house. But next day he did not find that pinnacle. Again he built the pinnacle. But next day he did not find it. Later he made the pinnacle of the women and the carpenter succeeded in his work. That rest house provided *Chowkies* (couch) for rest and water pot for drinking water. The rest house was fenced with a wall which had a gate. In the open space inside the rest house sand was spread and outside rows of palm trees were planted.¹¹

In another Jataka story, it is mentioned that the citizens of Ahga and Magadh empires always travelled from one place to another and on the boundary of those states they stayed at the rest house. Those travellers who reached the city gate at night were not allowed to enter the city. They had to pass their night either in the gate keepers lodge or forced to take shelter in some dilapidated house.¹² But it is stated that the city of Taxila had a rest house outside the city gates where travellers could stay even after the royal gates were closed.¹³

Megasthenes (350 BC to 290 BC), a Greek traveller, geographer and Ambassador to the court of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya, in his work *Indica*, has described the capital city of Patliputra as a great city of India.¹⁴ Megasthenes further states that the king spent much time outside his palace hearing and judging the cases. The existence of rest houses has been mentioned in the Megasthenes work. There were rest houses for the travellers and pilgrims in the Kingdom of Mauryan Empire. He mentions, “rest houses are built for the convenience of the different groups of travellers for which people had to pay taxes”.¹⁶

For the stay of travellers in the city, Kautilya in his *Arthashastra* mentions *dharmavasatha* or hospice. It is the duty of the managers of the rest houses that they should keep informed the city officers about the merchants and any fraud committed to them.¹⁷

The *Arthashastra* also gives importance to the construction of rest houses for the public welfare. The text mentions travel infrastructure for the state, classification of routes and types of vehicles. This is an indication that there was a well developed mode of travel in India for the military, the commercial traveller and the civilian. Travel on inland waterways was also under state protection and regulation.

Emperor Asoka (270 BC. to 233 B.C.), was well known for his administrative and welfare works. Asoka declared that all men were his children.¹⁸ He strongly supported the doctrine of *ahimsa* (non injury to men and animals), banned animal sacrifices, at least in his capital, and regulated the slaughter of animals for food, completely forbidding the killing of certain species. He took pride in the fact that he had substituted pilgrimages to Buddhist holy places for hunting expeditions, the traditional sport of the Indian kings, and he proclaimed that he had reduced the consumption of meat. His Pillar edicts mention his welfare works.

They are as follows:

1. Regulations restricting slaughter and mutilation of animals.
2. Grant to Governors independent jurisdiction as regards law and justice (P.E. IV)
3. The judicial reform granting reprieve of three days to convicts sentenced to death.
4. Institution of jail-deliveries on the anniversaries of the emperor's coronation (P.E.V).
5. Completion of the full programme of public works which comprised :

- a. Planting of shade-giving banyan-trees and groves of mango trees on the roads.
- b. Providing well at every half-kos of the roads.
- c. Construction of rest-houses.
- d. Providing watering-places for use of man and beast (P.E. VII).¹⁹

Asoka sanctioned building rest houses and wells for the public welfare. In the early days, pilgrimage or pilgrim travel assumed great importance. He himself travelled a great deal in his eagerness to spread the doctrine. Throughout his travels from Patliputra to Lumbini, Kapilavastu, Sarnath and Gaya, Emperor had special memorials set up at each spot and also rest houses where traveller could rest. Trees were planted along the road sides so that the traveller would be protected from the harsh sun.²⁰

During Gupta empire (240 to 550 CE), also rest houses were built for the travellers and pilgrims. At that time, Indian civilization was at the height of its glory. It is also known as “Golden Age” of India. Indian science, astronomy, religion and philosophy were at its climax. The peace and prosperity prevailed²¹

During the reign of emperor Chandra Gupta II (375 to 415 AD.), a celebrated Chinese Pilgrim, Fa-hien, visited India. He lived in the imperial city of Patliputra, for three years where he learnt Sanskrit. He was deeply impressed by the sight of King Asoka's palace. His travel account gives a glimpse of the general condition, characteristics and tendencies of the Imperial Gupta administration. According to him: “the subjects enjoyed peace and prosperity. People have not to register their households or attend to any magistrate and their rules. The king governs without decapitation or other corporal punishment. His middle kingdom enjoyed numerous facilities and were happy. Certain parts of the Empire, specially Magadh and Sankasya enjoyed exceptional prosperity.”²² Fa-hien mentions that Gupta rulers looked after the comfort and prosperity of their subjects. They never faced discomfiture and molestation.²³ B.N.Puri opines that internal trade, with free movement of traders and artisans from one part of the empire to another, was secured and external trade contributed to the prosperity of the country and its people.²⁴

According to Fa-hien, “throughout the country, people do not kill any living creature, nor drink intoxicating liquors. In the market, there are no butcher's shops and no dealers in intoxicating drinks.”²⁵ Arun

Srivastava mentions significant achievements of Gupta Period. The achievements included the fields of religion, education, mathematics, art, Sanskrit literature, drama, and Kama sutra, the art of sex. The rulers established free hospitals and rest houses.²⁶

King Harshavardhan (630 and 645 A.D.) was another great emperor of ancient India. During his reign, he showed marked inclination to the peaceful teachings of Buddhism, first in its Hinayana, and afterward in its Mahayana form. He led the life of a devotee, and enforced the Buddhist prohibitions against the slaughter of animals life with the utmost strictness. "He believed that "to plant the tree of religious merit to such an extent that he forgot to sleep and eat," and forbade the slaughter of any living thing, or the use of flesh as food throughout his domain. He followed the Asokan model of public welfare works. For the benefit of travellers, the poor, and the sick, he built throughout the empire rest-houses (*dharmasala*). They were built in towns and villages. In both the towns and rural areas, rest houses were provided food and water. Physicians were stationed at them to supply medicine to those who needed them.²⁷

King Harsh a had appointed one permanent officer to look after the establishment and maintenance of free board, lodging and medical facilities along the highways for travellers and poor people.²⁸

Hieun-tsang, a devout Chinese Buddhist traveller reached India in 633 AD. During his journey to India, he faced no problems. His accounts reveal that in India, chariot roads were well laid out and horses, elephants and camels were a common mode of transport. Trees for shade, wells, rest houses and security were also well organised.²⁹

In cities, bazaars provided access to goods brought from the hinterland. Travellers were accommodated in overnight places of stay at the rest house located at the city gates where all facilities were provided to them. State regulations insisted on travellers carrying with them a note for safe passage from one Territory to the other. Entertainment and dancing halls were allowed; gambling was licensed and was a source of income for the state. Travelling for pleasure on the rivers and to the hills was a tradition started by the royal courts. However such movement attracted all those who had business at the court to move with it from the heat and dust of the cities to the calm and serenity of the retreat. During the rule of the Mughals, the emperors travelled extensively and contributed towards resort development. Even today the remains of the past like the mile stones, *sarais* and a network

of roads and paths that make all corners of this vast country accessible. With the fall of the great empires, there was a setback in trade and commerce. This reduced the mobility of the people with the exception of pilgrims. The sea side resorts hill stations and spas which were the centres of recreation and pleasure declined the early medieval period. Over the years however the scenario changed and a complex character of tourism emerged.

Structure of the Rest Houses

A classical Indian text called as *Vastusastra* (science or architectures) gives unique description of the rest houses. It literally means a shelter to take rest or sleep at night for the pilgrims and travellers. The rest houses and armed out-post shall generally be built at every *Kosa* (A kos is about 2.25 miles; A mile is equal to 1760 yards). They are built at the main road side or forest areas. A rest house may be a pillared hall with walled enclosures, platforms for taking rest and cooking rooms. These rest houses shall be beautified by paintings of scenes from the *Epics* and *Puranas*. The frontage shall be ornamented by turrets. The *Silpasastra* mentions that the care should be taken that there should not be mansion or other construction for the public. By the side of the rest house there shall be adequate plantation of fruit plants and trees. Ponds and wells, cart stands and sheds for bulls, horses and elephants with supply of provisions shall be arranged.³⁰

The *Vastusastra* has made some rules for the construction of rest houses.³¹ They are:

- Entrance for the rest houses must be on Eastern side having huge entrance door.
- The rest house must be constructed in such a way that people resting or sitting face North or East.
- Toilets should always be constructed in North-West or Western side of the rest houses but make sure it should not be adjacent to the temple.
- Large windows in rest house must be given on Eastern side.
- If there are separate rooms in the rest houses then they must be constructed on North-west side.
- North-eastern side should be kept open and empty to maintain the flow of energies or worship is ideal in this place.
- If there is an owner of the rest house, then he must stay at the South-western room.

- Under-water tank in rest houses must be constructed in North-east and over-head tank in South-west only.
- Open garden of the rest house must be in North-eastern zone.
- In the Margsala, there has been provision of reading space which would be fenced by iron.

The rest houses should have space for bathing and changing of clothe. There should a separate room for eating.

Rules for Staying in the Rest Houses:

The Arthashastra reflects the protection given to merchants and their high status in the Indian society. Insurance and safe passage for goods, regulation of prices, weights and measures and the use of gold, silver and copper as rates of exchange also indicate a well developed mode of trade and travel.

Kautilya mentions rules for staying in the rest houses. It is mentioned that no *pasandas* (travellers) could be accommodated in the rest houses without the permission of the city officer (Gopa), and their abode should be searched for suspicious character.³² Fa-hien says: "Hither come all poor and helpless. They are well taken care of and a doctor attends them; foods and medicines are supplied to them as per their need. Thus rest houses were made quite comfortable."³³

Impact of building rest houses in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, rulers used to build rest houses for the pilgrims and tourists too. It seems quite possible that this welfare scheme was taken from ancient India. Sri Lankan kings patronized to build and repair access roads, provide resting and cleaning facilities for pilgrims. According to Pujavali and Mahavamsa access roads to Sripadashrine was very difficult and in bad condition due to water sources, forest and Mountainous nature and pilgrims had to confront severe difficulties. In 13 C A.D. Minister Devapatiraja cleared access roads, built bridges and rest houses under patronage of the king Parakramabahu II. The rest houses were made for taking rest, food and sleep at night and were essential during pilgrim tours.

Ancient rests houses still survive at various places like Mangalagama, Ambekka, Godamunna, Marassana, Sirimalwatte, Naranvala, Panavitiya, Karagahagedara can be given as examples. King Senasammata Wickremabahu constructed flight of steps consisting seven

hundred steps at Adams peak. Iban Batuta says about flights of steps and iron chains set by ancients to climb the Sri pada Mountain. For up keep, make of the rest houses, the kings used to donations in shape of revenue of villages, taxes and jewelleryes. According to inscription of Ambagamuca of King Vijayabahu I, villages named Vilbawa, Makulumula, Ambagamuva, Veligampola, Ulapana and are cut trees of some certain villages have been assigned for Sri Pada shrine.³⁴

Conclusion:

In ancient India, there existed a system of rest houses for traveller and pilgrims. They were known by *dharmasala* and *margsala*. They were mostly commissioned by rulers. In some cases, the rest houses were built for certain privileged people. In ancient India, rest houses were made on routes to the religious places or on the main roads. They are spacious and of facilities provided. In the rest houses, free medical services provided to the pilgrims and travellers.

Notes

1. Michael C. Linderman, 1989, "Royal accommodations: Pilgrim rest houses in early colonial South India", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 25, issue 2, abstract <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/09596111311301596> downloaded on 15th May, 2017.
2. Sir Monier Monier-Williams, 1986, *A Sanskrit – English Dictionary*, Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, p. 510.
3. *Ibid*, p. 1067.
4. *Ibid*, p. 812.
5. G. C. Pande, ed. 1997, "History of Science, Philosophy and Culture of Indian Civilization, the Dawn of Civilization upto 600 B.C.", *Vol. I, pt. I, PHISPC*, Delhi, p. 104.
6. Ashvini Agrawal, ed., 2005, *The Search of Vedic Harappan Relationship*, New Delhi, p. 130.
7. Y. Krishan, 2005, "The People of India and the Dawn of Civilization in the Indian Subcontinent" (in) Ashvini Agrawal, *In search of Vedic Harappan Relationship*, Delhi, p.122.
8. Marshall, John, 1996, "Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization," Asian Education Service. (in) Kranti Kumar Myneni, 2013, "Courtyard as a Building Component" Its Role and Application in Developing a Traditional Built Form, Creating Comfort: A Case of Athangudi Village, India,

International Journal of Chemical, Environment & Biological Sciences, Vol. I Issue 4, p. 633.

9. Moti Chandra, 1977, *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India*, New Delhi, p. 54.
10. *Dhammapada Attakatha*, Vol. III, p. 170.
11. *Jataka*, Vol 1, p. 201.
12. *Jataka*, Vol 2, p. 12.
13. *Dhammapada Attakatha*, vol. 2, p. 31.
14. S.R. Goyal, 2000, *The Indica of Megasthenes: Its Contents and Reliability*, Jodhpur. pp. 28-29.
15. *Ibid*, p. 30.
16. Radhey Shyam Chaurasia, 2008, *History of Ancient India: Earliest Times to 1200 A.D.*, New Delhi, p. 102.
17. Bhandarkar, *Asoka*, p. 276.
18. A. L. Basham, 1954, *The Wonder That Was India*, p. 89.
19. Radhakumud Mookerji, 1972, *Asoka*, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna, p. 39.
20. *Ibid*, p. 149.
21. Arun Srivastava, 2008, *Soul of Indian History: Ancient India*, Delhi, pp. 240-251.
22. B.N. Puri, 1990, *The Gupta Administration*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, p. 98.
23. *Ibid*, p. 63.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.
25. *Ibid*, pp. 65-66.
26. Arun Srivastava, 2008, *op. cit.*, p. 250.
27. www.ibiblio.org/britishraj/jackson/chapter13.html, downloaded on 13th May, 2017.
28. Shankar Goyal, 1993, *Aspects of Ancient Indian History and Historiography*, p. 107.
29. <http://www.gourkanjilal.com/India-Tourism-part2.pdf> downloaded on 14th May, 2017
30. D.N. Shukla, 1967, *Royal Arts: Yantras and Citras*, Part I: Royal Palace—Palace Architecture and Establishment, Lucknow, pp. 24-27.
31. www.vaastuinternational.com/vastu_shastra140.html, downloaded on 9th May, 2017.
32. Radhakumud Mookerji, 1972, *op. cit.*, Foot Note 8 at page 149.
33. Sailendra Nath Sen, 1999, *Ancient Indian History and Civilization*, 2nd edition, Delhi, p. 216.
34. M.K. Amila Indika, "Pilgrims and Merits: History of Buddhist religious Tourism and related Cultural Aspects in Ancient Sri Lanka" (in) *Kulatilaka Kumarasinghe- Critical Gaze*, pp. 259-269.

Bibliography

- Basham, A.L. (1954), *The Wonder that was India*, London: Sidgwick and Jackson
- Bhandarkar, R.G. (1983), *The Early History of Deccan and Miscellaneous Historical Essays*, Poona, BORI.
- Chakravarti, Ranabir (2013), *Exploring Early India*. New Delhi: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
- Chandra, Chandra, 1977, *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India*, New Delhi
- Dasgupta, K.K., Bhattacharyya and Choudhury, R.D. (1988), *Sradhanjali: Studies in Ancient Indian History (D.C. Sircar Commemoration Volume)*, Delhi : Sundeen Prakashan.
- Goyal, S. R. (2000), *The Indica of Megasthenes: Its Contents and Reliability*, Jodhpur.
- Goyal, Shankar (1993), *Aspects of Ancient Indian History and Historiography*, New Delhi Herman Publishing House.
- Majumdar, R.C. (1960), *An Advanced history of India*, New Delhi: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
- Majumdar, R.C. (2007), *Ancient India*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- Marshall, John, 1996, "Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization," Asian Education Service.
- McCrimdell, J.W. (1877), *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*. Calcutta: Thacker Spink Pub Pvt Ltd.
- Mookerji, R. K. (1972), *Asoka*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass.
- Puri, B.N. (1990), *The Gupta Administration*, Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation.
- Sharma, R.S. (2012), *India's Ancient Past*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Srivastava, Arun (2008), *The Soul of Indian History: Ancient India*, New Delhi: Maxford Books.
- Thapar, Romila (2012), *Asoka and the decline of the Mauryas*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Thapar, Romila (2008), *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, New Delhi: Penguin India.
- Thapar, Romila (2013), *Readings in Early Indian History*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Tripathi, Ram Shankar (2014), *History of Ancient India*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- Smith, Vincent, (2010), *Asoka: The Buddhist Emperor of India*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services.
- John Marshall, 1996, "Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization," Asian Education Service.

Cattle Smuggling: A Menace to the Indian Society and Public Health in Bangladesh

Bimal Pramanik* & Jayanta Kumar Ray**

Cattle protection and trade have presently become a hot issue in India, though cattle smuggling to Bangladesh is not any new phenomenon in West Bengal. During the Left Front regime (1977-2011) cattle smuggling was important to political parties in West Bengal, for accumulation of funds for the party. This practice has since continued, because demand for cattle in Bangladesh is not decreasing at all. We can examine in this context the role of various Central and State government agencies.

Role of West Bengal Government and Central Government.

The Border Security Force (BSF) has repeatedly advised the West Bengal government for closure of 41 cattle *haats* adjoining the Indo-Bangladesh border, because these *haats* are openly being used to smuggle cattle to Bangladesh. The Chief Minister of West Bengal, openly ordered that cattle smuggling be stopped by hook or crook. But in reality, cadres of the ruling Trinamul Congress ignore the order, and remain involved in smuggling.

Sandeep Salunke (a 1990 batch IPS Officer), the Inspector General (IG) of BSF, South Bengal has observed publicly that a list of 41 illegal *haats* has been given to the State government for taking remedial action, because according to the Panchayet law, Panchayet authorities cannot give permission to run cattle *haats* within 8 kilometres of the border. Although all the aforesaid 41 *haats* are within 8 kilometre from

*Director, Centre for Research in Indo-Bangladesh Relations, Kolkata.

**National Research Professor, India.

the international border, the West Bengal government has refused to take any initiative to stop or remove these *haats* from the border region. Moreover, according to a West Bengal government report, all these *haats* are running legally by taking licence from the Panchayets. All these *haats* are the main centres of cattle smuggling business with Bangladesh.¹ Local leaders of political parties, Panchayet leaders, the Police and even the BSF cannot deny their role in this business.

We Can Now Present a Ground Level Report:

In Murshidabad district, total international border with Bangladesh is 151 kilometres long, of which 94 kilometres are riverine, 30 kilometres open land and only 27 kilometres are fenced by barbed wire. We have gathered from a first-hand source that Katlamari Customs officers (area: Jalangi and Raninagar police stations, Murshidabad) seized 2000 heads of cattle in 2015, which would cost about 2 crore 15 lakhs. In 2016, they seized 8000 with an approximate price of 7 crore.² The average auction price of a head of cattle is 8-10 thousand rupees; it is nothing but a throwaway price. One cattle trader Enamul Haq of Jangipur (Murshidabad), told us that the approximate cost for one pair of cows to cross over to Bangladesh is forty thousand rupees. Cattle smuggling networks operate in a complex manner. In order to comprehend how illegal cattle transfers to Bangladesh take place, one has to employ the methods of direct observation and interviews at places like Harudanga, Kaharpara, the sites of main BSF camps where large scale cattle smuggling occurs regularly. The number of cattle heads in possession of a particular smuggler group or party is written on a ten rupee paper currency, and this number is communicated over telephone to the Bangladeshi party along with the number of cattle heads. After the smuggler party crosses over to Bangladesh, the Bangladeshi party can identify the genuineness of the Indian smuggler party by the number on that currency note and the number of heads of cattle.

From our long research experience, we can realistically conclude that not more than five per cent of the smuggled livestock are seized by the officers of customs or BSF. Normally, cattle are assembled 15 kilometres away from the border, which is out of the jurisdiction of the BSF. This is an easy way of earning for the local population. It is observed that a lot of property has accumulated by the people of the area, particularly the Muslims from cattle smuggling during the last

two-three decades. Almost all the cattle smuggling business is being controlled by the ruling party leaders in the district. If anybody creates obstruction, he cannot escape persecution. For instance, he may be punished by the registration of a false case of non-bailable offence. Interestingly, he will be arrested in a “Pani-case.” What is this extraordinary-sounding Pani case? If a codeine phosphate tablet is mixed with distilled water, it is a narcotic liquid. Police officers arrest the person and send him to the court by manoeuvres to plant this liquid on him. If anybody possesses this substance, the court will reject his bail plea. It is often used to punish the opposition forces in Murshidabad.

“Cattle smuggling is the only activity that bothers the relationship between Bangladesh and India,” observed K.K. Sharma, Director General, BSF, South Bengal frontier. Since several years, cattle smuggling has been flowing freely, alongside the border of Bangladesh. However, initiatives by the BSF have reduced the number of smuggled cattle to half presently. According to Mr. Sharma, relationship between India and Bangladesh is very affable compared to that with other countries. “The only action that hinders the relationship is the cattle smuggling that the Bangladeshis are involved in. Although they call it a trade, we cannot allow anything that enters our border without required papers and approvals.”³

What is the Thinking of the Parliamentary Standing Committee:

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs, chaired by Congress leader P. Chidambaram, in its report on border security, presented to the Rajya Sabha in April 2017, noted that the West Bengal government was not making enough efforts to check smuggling to Bangladesh.

The Committee’s report observed, “the Committee is distressed to note that despite several measures taken by the BSF, the problem of cattle smuggling persists along the international border with Bangladesh. The Committee is particularly anguished to note that the West Bengal State government has failed to implement its own order dated September 1, 2003 that outlaws existence of any cattle *haats* within 8 kilometres of border area. The Committee recommends that the State government of West Bengal should take steps to cancel the licences of all cattle *haats* that are illegally functioning within 8 kilometres of border area

and hold the officials responsible for illegally issuing/renewing licences to these *haats*.”⁴

This report also points to a smuggler-official nexus in the border areas. The Committee found out that the seized cattle being auctioned by Custom officials were being bought back by smugglers, who again pushed the animals across to Bangladesh. “It recommended that in order to prevent this practice, the seized cattle should be transported to states that do not share a border with any country and that auctions should be conducted there. The other solution to check smuggling was to raise the minimum benchmark price of seized cattle to make it unaffordable for cattle smugglers. It also suggested cattle auctioneers be mandated to submit their PAN Card and Aadhar number before participating in the auction process.”⁵

Now the question is, the nearest states of West Bengal which have no border with a foreign country are Odisha and Jharkhand. If auctions take place there, who will purchase this large number of cattle? Who will bear the transport cost of cattle from the West Bengal border to those states at a distance of 200-300 kilometres? Is there no agent of smugglers there? If minimum benchmark price of seized cattle is unaffordable to smugglers or agents—who will buy this large number of cattle every week? Is it possible to accommodate this huge number every week in a cattle shelter (Goushala)? The government has to build Goushalas (cattle shelters) which can accommodate thousands of cattle before the plan can be implemented. Is it possible? Who will take responsibility to oversee this herd of cattle—the Central or the State government?

When the Committee wanted to know the primary reasons for cattle smuggling, the home ministry attributed it to three factors. First, the area was densely populated and had nearly 300 villages within 150 yards of the international boundary. Secondly, a section of the local population was deeply entrenched in cattle smuggling, and thirdly, the cattle seized by the BSF were finding its way back to smugglers. The Home Ministry stated that cattle smugglers and their agents from Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal, as also local carriers were the main perpetrators, and some sections of the border population also find smuggling a source of livelihood.

The first question is: why 300 villages are allowed to exist within 150 yards of the international boundary, after 70 years of independence?

This area should be a no-man's-land, according to border norms. But in the 1977-2011 period, when the Left Front Government ruled the West Bengal, they opposed barbed wire fencing and population shift from the borders. Not only the CPI(M) but other Left Front constituents such as the Forward Block were vehemently opposed to barbed wire fencing on the international border with Bangladesh. During the Left Front period, hordes of Bangladeshi infiltrators settled in the border region without any hindrance under the patronisation of the Left Front government. Now the same game continues. We can cite a survey report on how the ratios of Hindu-Muslim population in the border villages significantly changed due to infiltration from Bangladesh.

Table : I. Hindu-Muslim Population, Since Independence.

Period	Gunarajpur	Keutsa	Mathurapur	Hogolbaria	Routbati
1950s—1960s	2.3	2.3	4.6	7.3	4.6
1970s—1980s	2.3	2.3	5.5	6.4	5.5
1990s—2000	1.4	1.4	3.7	5.5	3.7

Source: ⁶ *Illegal Migration from Bangladesh*, B.B. Kumar (ed.), Astha Bharati, Delhi, 2006, p.143.

The above five border villages have been taken from P.S. Swarupnagar, Baduria (district North 24-Parganas), Karimpur, Hogolbaria and Murutia (district Nadia). It is mentionable that communal riots in North 24 Parganas in recent times (first week of July, 2017) severely affected the Keutsa village, burnt down and looted all Hindu shops at Keutsa bazaar. In the above villages, from 1990 onwards, Hindu population significantly came down and Muslim population soared up.

The Union Home Ministry has identified 300 villages in the border which are inhabited by Muslims. Consequently, almost both sides of the Indo-Bangladesh border region are intabited by the same people who are ethnically, culturally, linguistically and religiously identical. The illegal trade of smuggling is deeply entrenched over a large area, where India's social and cultural fabric stand jeopardised. Internal security also is in disarray. The Khagragarh (Burdwan) incident of blast in 2014 has opened the eyes of people, as to how Bangladeshi radical Islamic terrorists use the border region and cattle smugglers to

expand their bases. So, the existence of 300 villages within 150 yards of Indo-Bangladesh border is extremely dangerous to our internal and national security.

We should also refer in this connection to an observation by the Parliamentary Standing Committee of the Union Home Ministry. "The Committee agrees that mass movement of cattle occurs from all the states towards West Bengal and Assam and once they reach the border areas, it becomes extremely difficult to stop their movement across the border. The Committee feels that police forces of various states have failed to stop this mass movement of cattle to border states and West Bengal police has failed to intercept or stop the movement of the cattle."⁷

This is amazing that a Parliamentary Standing Committee did not even advise the Central government to send an advisory/order to the related State governments according to their observations and findings. On the other hand, they expressed disappointments to the concerned State governments and their administration for their inability to check the mass movement of cattle towards the Bangladesh border. Particularly, West Bengal police force has utterly failed to intercept or stop the movement of cattle because most of the political parties of West Bengal have always been supporters of cattle smugglers. They always try to argue that all these smugglers/traders are poor and unemployed persons, belonging to a religious minority. It is their livelihood. Actually, from this trade, ruling parties and their musclemen have earned a lot of money during the last two-three decades.

We think, mass movement of cattle towards Bangladesh may be checked if States, from which cattle are sourced, are subjected to rigorous rules of sale and transport of cattle. Police and administration may take help from voluntary organisations who are working to protect cows for social cause. From our experience, we can say, non-NDA-ruled States like West Bengal will never impose restrictions on cattle smuggling. If the mass movement of cattle stops before reaching the border of West Bengal and Assam, the number of cattle for smuggling can be slashed down from 5 to 10 per cent of the existing number on the Indo-Bangladesh border. Then the BSF can handle the issue effectively. West Bengal has no excess cattle for smuggling. We think, all States can easily impose restrictions on the cattle movement (already imposed in some States) towards Bangladesh. In that case, the cattle smuggling problem will be a non-issue.

Indian Cattle and Public Health of Bangladesh:

After collection of cattle from different *haats*, smugglers bring those cattle herds and gather them at a suitable place near the border, before they can crossover to Bangladesh. This process takes two-three days. During this time the cattle herd have become weak and thirsty for want of food and water. As a result, they become too weak to walk for crossing the border in a brief period of time, as directed by a collusive local authority. Smugglers feed them some tablets such as SUN, Hiptozen, Mandrake, etc. with local *chulai* (country liquor) to maintain a minimum level of strength. All these are intoxicating drugs. At the time of crossing the border, most of the cattle have become drug-addicted or drunkard. It has an impact on the quality of cattle flesh. Apart from that, a herdsman or smuggler, who drives away the herd for crossing the border, uses a kind of stick with iron sting full of rust which also infects the body of cows. It is also a source of disease. If a person eats this beef meat a number of times, he can suffer from a number of diseases, e.g. physical and neurological disorder, i.e. disorder of the brain, nerve, mind, and ailments of kidney, lung, gall bladder, etc.—this is the opinion of an experienced pharmacist.

One practice of *Mota tazakaran* (boost-up) of cows/oxen in Bangladesh is going on for a long time. Particularly, the cattle owner uses a drug at the time of *Idul Fitr* to attract and sell his cows/oxen at a high price in the cattle market. This is Dectrin powder of RENATA Limited, commonly used all over Bangladesh. Cattle traders also use this drug to get more profit from their cattle purchased much before the festival, because customers want fat cows. After eating meat of this fleshy cattle, human liver, kidney, heart and brain may be severely damaged. Since no awareness campaign has been launched by the government of Bangladesh or NGOs on this matter, public health in Bangladesh remains exposed to severe damage from such cattle meat.⁸ It is noteworthy that, most of the patients coming from Bangladesh to the Kolkata hospitals, suffer from the above mentioned diseases.

Many people in Bangladesh are deeply annoyed that India is trying to prohibit the smuggling of cattle to Bangladesh. In view of what has been noted above, the beef eaters in Bangladesh should welcome this prohibition as a blessing in disguise.

References :

- ¹ *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Bengali daily, Kolkata, 30.09.2016.
- ² Tapas Biswas, President, Sima Janakalyan Samiti, (Border Welfare Society), district Murshidabad.
- ³ *The Statesman*, Kolkata, 28.6.2017.
- ⁴ Mamata government failed to check cattle smuggling: Chidambaram-led panel. *Business Standard*, New Delhi, May 31, 2017, internet edition.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Original Source: *Cross-Border Migration—A Case Study of West Bengal, Bangladesh*, a project report prepared by Bimal Pramanik, Director, Centre for Research in Indo-Bangladesh Relations, Kolkata, 2002.
- ⁷ Ibid., *Business Standard*, New Delhi, May 31, 2017, internet edition.
- ⁸ *Apakarme Beparoa Renata* (Renata reckless in misdeed) a Bengali article *Kalerkantha on line*, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 4.7.2017.

Nationalism in India as Reflected in the Hindi Poetry

Dr. Shambhu Lal Verma*

The term 'nationality,' in its present sense, is a modern concept which refers to a country as a whole comprising all the races, regional territories and religious sects. India is a country where people of different ethnic groups, regions and beliefs live together, reflecting different dresses, food habits, rituals, etc., thus making it a complex whole. As such, the nature of nationalism in India differs from that in the most of the Western countries. Here is a unity in diversity. Thus, the true nature of the Indian nationalism ought to be understood in this context and for this purpose it is better to go through the Hindi poetry of India, as Hindi has been the language of a significant majority of the country and has witnessed the different phases of the Indian history.

The Earliest Phase: The Seeds of Nationalism:

The seeds of nationalism, in whatever form, are to be found in Chand Bardai's heroic poetry, *Prithvi Raj Raso*, an epic that deals with the life and adventures of Prithvi Raj Chauhan, the Hindu king of Delhi and Ajmer during the twelfth century, who fought with, got defeated and captured by the Muslim invader, Muhammad Sahab-e-Din of Ghor, and ultimately trickfully killed the Ghor invader in the latter's own native place, ultimately killing himself. The way in which the poet invokes all the Kshatriyas to stand unitedly against the Muslim invaders, so as to retain their glory and-self dignity is quotable: *Prathiraj Deo duvan gahau re kshatria kar khagga gahu na!* (Lord Prithviraj has been

* Dr. Shambhu Lal Verma, Associate Professor of English, Purnea College, Purnea (B.N. Mandal University).

captured by the bad man, O Kshatriyas! Why not you raise swords). Thus, in the adverse circumstances of the fall of the nation, the poet sincerely tries to arouse the nationalistic feelings, however limited be its appeal. Though vaguely expressed, this Aadi Kaal epic witnesses the early feelings of nationalism that can be termed as the Hindu nationalism.

The Middle Phase: The Sprouting of Nationalism:

But the sprouting of the seeds of the Hindu nationalism is to be clearly seen in the poetry of the seventeenth century, in the heroic poetry of such Ritikal poets as Bhushan, Lal Kavi, and Sudan. Bhushan was a court poet under different Hindu kings like Chhtrapati Shivaji, Shahuji and Chhatrasal Bundela. He wrote *Shivrajbhushan* and *Shivabavni* on the life and adventures of Shivaji, and *Chhatrasal Dashak* on that of Chhatrasal, the king of Bundelkhand. On the other hand, Gorelal Purohit "Lalkavi" composed *Chhatraprakash* on the heroic life of Chhatrasal, the Bundelkhand king, and Sudan wrote on his own patron, King Surjan Singh alias Surajmal of Bharatpur. Of all the Ritikal poets of heroic poetry, the most outstanding, especially in the context of the rise of nationalism, is undoubtedly Bhushan. The sense of nationalism is too vocally expressed in his heroic poetry, particularly in *Shivabavni*, to be missed. He describes the character and adventures of Shivaji in highly inspirational heroic poetry, making use of different figures of speech. Two extracts from his poetry may be enough to show his vigorous expression:

*Tez tam ansh par, Kanh jimi Kans par.
To Mlechcha vans par, sher Sivaraj hai.*

(As light is on darkness, as Krishna is on Kansa
So is Lion Sivaraj on the clan of the Mlechchas*.)

*Ref. to Aurangzeb and Adil Shah

*Bhushan bhanat bhagyo Kasipati Vishwanath,
Aur kaun ginati mein bhuli gati bhab ki.
Charon varna dharm chori kalama niwaz padhi,
Sivaji na hoto to sunati hot sabki.*

(Bhushan speaks (that)Vishvanath, Lord of Kashi fled!
What worse condition of you remains uncounted?)

Leaving their religion all the four *Varnas* recite *kalma*, offer *namaz* If Shivajee existed not, all would be circumcised.)

The quoted extracts reflect how Bhushan made use of the sentiment of heroism to develop national and ethnic pride. Here, it may be added that unlike the earlier writers of the heroic poetry, Bhushan and his contemporaries were not satisfied with only singing the glory of either their gods or patrons, but also took interest in the problems and issues of their nation and contemporary society.

According to Swami Vivekananda, Shivaji was a great king, reflecting true loyalty to India. He gave shape to future generations of Indians. He had a dream of uniting the kingdoms of India into Akhanda Bharat.

– **Swami Vivekananda**

The Modern Phase: The Growth of the Secular Nationalism:

In the modern phase of the Hindi poetry, the nationalistic feelings are to be clearly witnessed in the writings of Bhartendu Age (1868-1900) in such poets as Bhartendu Harishchandra, Pratap Narayan Mishra and Radhakrishna Das. Bhartendu laments the lost glory and miserable condition of his country in these terms:

*Rovahu sab mili, avahu Bharat Bhai
Ha! Ha! Bharat-Durdasha na dekhi jai.*

(Weep all together, come on brothers of Bharat
Oh! Oh! The predicament of Bharat is intolerable to see).

Here it is significant to note that for the first time the Hindu nationalism pitted against the muslim invaders is seen, giving way to the secular nationalism. He even asks his fellow countrymen to awake in order to protect their dignity: *Jago ab to khalbaldalan rakshahu apno Arya mam* (Awake at least now to crush the evil forces, o my nobles, save yourselves) and *Doobat Bharat nath begi jago ab jago* (Bharat is drowning, Lord, awake quickly, awake). (from Prabodhini). His contemporary, Pratap Narayan Singh, also expresses his concern in these lines: *Vidhva Vilpai nit dhenu katai kou lagat hai gohar nahin* (Widows weep every day cows are slaughtered nobody shouts for help).

These poets, concerned deeply with the miserable plight of their native land, often seek shelter in God, thus mixing their ethnic and nationalistic feelings with the devotional one, as in the following examples:

Kahan Karunanidhi Keshav Soyein (Bhartendu)
(Where is Keshava, the Compassionate, asleep?)

And Pratap Narayan Mishra utters:

Ham arat bharatvasin pai ab Deendayal daya kariye.

(On us suffering Indians, now O Compassionate! show mercy.)

And Radhakrishna Das writes:

Apne ya pyare Bharat ke Puni dookh daridai hariye.

(Take away the sufferings and poverty of this beloved Bharat of yours.)

It must be noticed here that as regards the journey of the Indian nationalism from the Hindu nationalism to the secular one, the Bhartendu Age is a transitional period.

[The feelings of nationalism and ethnic pride is to be seen in other genres too, especially in drama and prose. The playwrights depicted the miserable condition of the nation in such as plays as *Bharat Durdasha* (Bhartendu), *Bharat Arat* (Kharag Bahadur Malla), *Bharat Saubhagya* (Ambika Dutta Vyasa), *Desh Dasha* (Gopal Ram Gahmari), and *Bharat Haran* (Devki Nandan Tripathy), and sang the glory of the historical icons of nationalism as in the play, *Maharana Pratap* (Radhakrishna Das). In prose, writers like Pratap Narayan Mishra and Balkrishna Bhatta wrote on the miserable condition of their country, inspiring the fellow countrymen to rise for their country and do something for it as in Bhatta's inspiring essay *Desh-Seva- Mahatva*].

The Phase of Vocal Nationalism/the Phase of Resistance and Protest:

While the writers of the Bhartendu Age often limited themselves to the depiction of the misery of the Indian society and national humiliation that at most ended in the depiction of a state of helplessness and annoyance, the writers of the Dwivedi Age (1901-1917) went ahead to inspire their fellow countrymen to achieve freedom and sacrifice themselves for their country. In this regard, two facts are to be noticed: first, nationalism gradually changed its colour as the Hindu nationalism became more and more liberal, transcending the narrowness of communal and regional feelings, ultimately giving way to the secular form of nationalism; and second, a note of militancy developed in the

Indian nationalism. No doubt, there was a note of militancy in the Hindu nationalism of the Bhushan's time too, but it was different and rather limited in its appeal. Here to understand the changed mood of the nation, it would be proper to throw some light on the socio-economic scenario of the period under consideration. The Queen's proclamation that followed the 1857 Revolt, brought some expectation on the part of the Indians, but except a few initial reforms, no radical changes for the welfare of the suffering subjects were seen. As a result, a mixed sense of resentment and anger against the British rule developed among the Indians. Torn under the anti-people black laws and increasing poverty and helplessness, caused by the damaged Indian economy and famines, the Indians sooner or later realised that the rule of the foreigners was the root cause of all their misery and the freedom from it was the only solution. The condition was also favourable: first, the English-medium education made them able to understand the ideas of such philosophers as Burke, Mill, Spenser and Rousseau, and it added to their increasing feelings of nationalism and the need of achieving freedom; second, the reforms started in the field of culture, civilization, religion and society by such organisations as the Arya Samaj, the Brahma Samaj, the Theosophical Society and the Indian National Congress, also made the wind favourable; and third, the people found able leadership in the forms of Bal Krishna Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Swami Shradhdhananda, Madan Mohan Malviya and many others who were able to inspire in them a sense of self-pride and reverence for their glorious traditions. The people were inspired to fight for *Swaraj* (Self Rule) and freedom which they presumed was their birthright. Thus, the process of inspiring nationalism and cultural identity went on developing in the Dwivedi Age, and for this reason the dominant note of this period is the nationalistic one.

Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, who became the editor of the first Hindi monthly, *Saraswati* in 1903, encouraged poetry dedicated to nationalism and social reforms. The greatest exponent of the nationalistic and cultural trend of this period is undoubtedly Maithili Sharan Gupt (1886-1964) who started writing in the *Khari Boli* dialect and who was hailed by Mahatma Gandhi as the national poet. Other poets of the period include Thakur Gopal Sharan Singh, Gaya Prasad Shukla 'Snehi', Lochan Prasad Pandey, Nathuram 'Shankar', Roy Devi Prasad 'Poorna', Shridhar Pathak, Ram Naresh Tripathi and Giridhar Sharma 'Navratna'. As the list of the poets of the trend under consideration is very long, only a few extracts may serve the purpose of illustration. Gupt, like Bankim Chandra and Tilak

takes Freedom as some deity when he utters: *Hey Matribhumi! Tu satya hi sagun murti Sarvesh ki* (O Motherland! You are really God's image with attributes). He charges the common people with the spirit of nationalism in the most colloquial language, as in the following extract:

*Ham kya the, kya ho gaye hain, aur kya honge abhi
Aao vicharen aaj milkar, yah samasyayein sabhi
Bhoo-lok ka gaurav, prakriti ka punya leela-sthal kahan?
Faila Manohar giri Himalay, aur Gangajal jahan.
Sampoorna deshon se adhik, kis desh ka utkarsh hai
Uska ki jo rishibhumi hai, wah kaun? Bharatvarsh hai.*

(“Arya” in *Bharat-Bharti*)

(What were we, what have we become, and what will we be
Come, let's today think together, all these problems
Where's the glory of the earth, the holy sport-land of Nature?
Where the pleasant mountain Himalaya, and the water of the Ganga
are.

Which country is more exalted than all (other) countries
Who is that of who this land of Rishis is? That's Bharatvarsha).

Of other poets of the period, Sridhar Pathak is perhaps the most powerful. Of a number of quotable lines that appear in his different patriotic poems, only two extracts are given here to illustrate his poetic energy – one in the standard Hindi and the other in the *Braj-bhasha* dialect. He sings of the importance of self-respect as well as the sense of togetherness in these lines:

*Vandaniya wah desh, jahan ke deshi niz-abhimani hon
Bandhavta mein bandhe paraspar, parata ke ajnani hon
Nindniya wah desh, jahan ke deshi niz-ajnani hon
Sab prakar Par-tantra, parayi prabhuta ke abhimani hon.*

(Smarniya Bhaav)

(Adorable is that country, whose natives are self-respected
Tied with the thread of fraternity, are ignorant of otherness
Condemnable is that country, whose natives are self-ignorant
Dependant in all respect, proud of the sovereignty of others
Memorable Sense).

On the other hand, let us sense the rhythm of both words and sense in these lines written in *Braj-bhasha*:

*Bharat pai saiyan main bali-bali jaun
 Bali-bali jaun hiara lagaun
 Harwa banaun gharwa sajaun
 Mere jiyarwa ka, tanwa ka, jigarwa ka
 Man ka, mandirwa ka pyara basaiya
 Main bali-bali jaun
 Bharat pai saiyan main bali-bali jaun.*

(Bali-Bali Jaun)

Like Gupt, another poet, Gopal Sharan Singh, also laments the loss of the glorious past. He asks:

*Kya ho gayin kalayein Kaushal sabhi hamare?
 Kisne shatavdion ki chchin li kamayi?*

(What happened to of all our arts and skills?
 Who did snatch our earnings of centuries?)

Devi Prasad Poorna expresses his deep concern for trends prevalent among the Indians that led to their miserable condition:

*Bharatkhand ka hal zara dekho hai kaisa.
 Aalas ka zanzal zara dekho hai kaisa.
 Zara foot ki dasa kholkar ankhein dekho.
 Khudgarzi ka nasha kholkar ankhein dekho.
 Hai sheikhi daulat ki kahin, bal ka kahin guman hai
 Hai khandan ka mad kahin, kahin nam ka dhyan hai.*

(See for a moment how condition of Bharat is.

See for a moment how the mess/entanglement of laziness is.

See with wide eyes the condition of disunity.

See with wide eyes the intoxication of selfishness.

Somewhere is the boasting of wealth, somewhere is the pride of Strength.

Somewhere is the pride of family, somewhere is the care for name).

The poets of this period are not satisfied with only weeping over the miserable condition of the nation and its people and singing of the glorious past, but go beyond to arouse and inspire the citizens to fight and sacrifice themselves for the national cause, to be witnessed in Shankar's these lines:

*Deshbhakt veeron, marne se nahin darna hoga
 Pranon ka balidan desh ki vedi par karna hoga.*

(Sankar-sarvastra)

(O patriot valiant, you won't have to fear of dying
 You will have to sacrifice your lives at the altar of your country.)

The *Chhayavad* Period of the Modern Phase: The High Times of the Indian Nationalism:

The trend of the nationalistic and cultural poetry continued in the *Chhayavad* period too. Apart from earlier poets who were still writing, some other names also became prominent, like Makhan Lal Chaturvedi (1889-1968), Ram Naresh Tripathy (1889-1960), Balkrishna Sharma 'Naveen' (1897-1960), Subhadra Kumari Chauhan (1905-1948) and Siyaram Sharan Gupt (1895-1963).

Chaturvedi who also wrote under his pseudonym, 'Ek Bhartiya Atma', i.e. 'An Indian Soul,' wrote poetry which reflects his deep love for the nation and also the need of self-sacrifice for it. He wrote a lot on the nationalistic theme, and his most popular poems includes *Pushp ki Abhilasha* (Aspiration of a Flower), *Kadi aur Kokila* (The Prisoner and the Cuckoo), *Pyare Bharat Desh* (Beloved Country, Bharat), and *Amar Rashtra* (The Immortal Nation). Here is an extract which glows with the sense of sacrifice for the nation:

*Chah nahin main surbala ke gahnon mein gootha jaun,
 Chah nahin premi-mala men bindh
 Pyari ko lalchaun,
 Chah nahin samraton ke shav par
 Hey Hari dala jaun,
 Chah nahin devon ke sir par
 Chardun bhajna par ithalaun,
 Mujhe tord lena banmali,
 Us path par dena tum phenk!
 Matribhumi par sheesh chardhane,
 Jis path javein veer anek.*

(No desire to be braided
 In the ornaments of a goddess
 No desire to allure some beloved
 Getting bound in the lover's garland.
 No desire to be offered on the corpses
 Of kings, O God!
 No desire to be put on the heads of gods)

And feel exalted about my fortune,
You pluck me, O keeper of the forest!
And throw me on the path
Which is trodden by gallants numerous
To offer their heads to motherland.)

(The Desire of a Flower)

Thus, in an artistic way, the poet expresses his own desire of sacrifice for his nation through the desire of a flower. In another poem, titled *Kaidi aur Kokila*, too, he artistically gives expression to his nationalistic feelings in the form of the dramatic monologues. He utters:

What? Can't you see the ornament of chains?
Why handcuffs? This is the ornament of the British Raj,
The *churr-choon* of the crusher? – the music of life,
The fingers wrote song on the earth?

Balkrishna Sharma Naveen, on the other hand, aroused the dormant sense of nationalism indirectly by writing such memorable poems as *Viplav Gan*:

*Kavi, kuch aisi tan sunao,
Jis se uthal-puthal mach jaye;
Ek hilor idhar se aye,
Ek hilor udhar se aye.
(O poet! Sing to me some tune,
That can cause turmoil;
One surge/billow comes from this side,
One surge/billow comes from that side.)*

Makhan Lal Chaturvedi, in his essay, *Rashtriyata: Soojh ka Vaibhav* (Nationality: the Wealth of Insight), writes that that nation is not nation whose backbone is not made of morality. The soul of a nation is its culture, and therefore a writer has to make his countrymen conscious of their own cultural heritage from time to time, and inculcate certain moral values. As such, the writer has to sing of the nation's glory by recalling its historical personalities and incidents, and icons. Subhadra Kumari Chauhan did it dextrously to arouse nationalistic feelings among the people by writing a moving poem on Lakshmi Bai, the Queen of Jhansi; Shyama Narayan Pandey did it by writing his book, *Haldighati* on Rana Pratap of Mewar; and Gurubhakt Singh 'Bhakt' did it by writing *Vikramaditya*. Chauhan infuses nationalistic spirit in these moving lines:

*Bundele harbolon ke munh
Hamne sune kahani thi,
Khoob lari mardani wah to
Jhansi wali rani thi.*

(Thrones began to shake ...
From the mouths of the Bundel people
We had heard the story,
Fought a lot the masculine woman
She was the Queen of Jhansi.)

Under the able leadership of Gandhiji, India's struggle of independence was in its full swing, and a number of writers were engaged in developing the nationalistic feelings among the people in their different ways. Among others were Ram Naresh Tripathy, who wrote *Pathik*, *Swapna* and *Mansi*; Siyaram Sharan Gupta, who wrote *Bapu*, which clearly reflects his faith in such Gandhian values as truth, non-violence, compassion, fraternity, humanism and peace; Sohan Lal Dwivedi who came out with a number of patriotic poems, such as *Jai Rashtriya Nishan*, *Matribhumi*, *Bharat*, *Tumhe Naman* and *MeraDesh*. Uday Shankar Bhatta, who wrote *Takshila*; and Jagannath Prasad Milind who came out with his *Jeevan Sangeet*; Kedarnath Mishra Prabhat who published his *Jwala* (Flame); and Ramdhari Singh Dinkar who appeared with *Renuka*. Here, some lines may be quoted to show how emotionally Sohan Lal Dwivedi expressed his patriotic feelings in very simple, vigorous language. He utters in *Matribhumi*:

*Wah yuddha-bhumi meri,
Wah Buddha-bhumi meri;
Wah matribhumi meri,
Wah janmbhumi meri.*

(That battle-field mine,
That land of enlightenment mine,
That motherland mine,
That native land mine.)

It need not be added that Dwivedi can produce the maximum nationalistic feelings with the minimum of words. Here is one more example of his poetry, from *Tumhe Naman*:

*Hey yug-drasta, hey yug srashta,
Pardte kaisa yah moksh mantra?*

*Is rajtantra ke khandhar mein
Ugta abhinav bharat swatantra*

(O Visionary of the Age! O Maker of the Age!
What type of mantra of salvation do you chant?
In the ruins of monarchy
Rises India new and free.)

Apart from the poets of the nationalistic and cultural stream, the *Chhayavadi* poets were also writing. Though their orientation was different – they were more interested in writing poetry on nature and love, they were not aloof to the nationalistic concern. Jaishankar Prasad wrote poems like *Biti Vibhavari Jag ri* and *Himadri-tung-shring sein* which he asks his countrymen to awake as Mother India calls them:

*Himadri-tung-shring se prabbudh-suddh Bharti,
Swayam-prabha-samujjwala swatantrata pukarti.*

(From the top of the snowy mountain calls the
conscious and pious Mother India.)

On the other hand, Suryakant Tripathy Nirala also realises the importance of freedom in his song, *Nupoor ke chchand mand rahe*. He writes:

*Nupoor ke chchand mand rahe,
Jab na charan swatantra rahe.*

The Post-Colonial Period: The Notes of Frustration and Disillusionment:

The poetry of nationalistic and cultural consciousness continued to be written even in the post-Chhayavad period. Maithili Sharan Gupt came out with *Nakul*, *Kunal Geet*, *Ajeet*, and *Jay Bharat*; Makhnallal Chaturvedi wrote *Mata*, *Samarpan* and *Yugcharan*; Balkrishna Sharma 'Naveen' published *Apalak*, *Kwasi*, *Vinoba-stavan* and *Ham Vishpayee Janam ke*, Siyaram Sharan Gupt appeared with his *Nakul*, *Noakhali*, *Jai Hind*, *Atmotsarg*, *Unmukta* and *Gopika*; Dinkar came out with his *Hunkar*, *Dvandvageet*, *Kurukshetra*, *Itihas ke Anshu*, *Rashmirathi*, *Dhoop aur Dhuhan* and *Dilli*; and Prabhat contributed *Kal Dahan*, *Tapt Griha*, *Kaikeyi* and *Danveer*. They contributed in different ways and to varying extents to the Indian national and cultural consciousness, but things were changing.

There are two modes of perceiving life and the world – emotional and realistic ones. As one easily witnesses, most of the poets in Hindi literature adopted the emotional or romantic attitude of expression, and that suited to the national consciousness as it was the need of the hour. But in the post-colonial times, circumstances and issues changed. At the time of the Indian independence, poets welcomed the new dawn and gave expression to their various aspirations and even apprehensions. Girija Prasad Mathur, for instance, warned the people of India in these words:

आज जीत की रात
पहरूए!
सावधान रहना
खुले देश के द्वार
अचल दीपक समान रहना

Because:

अभी शेष है पूरी होना
जीवन मुक्ता डोर
क्योंकि नहीं मिट पाई दुख की
विगत साँवली कोर
ले युग की पतवार
बने अम्बुधि समान रहना ।

But soon after the Independence, the people got frustrated and disillusioned. Premchand, in his novel, warned much earlier that only replacing Tom with Govind won't do, and Faiz's perceived: *Ye dag-dag ujala, ye sabguza sa ...* and it came true. Even in the independent nation, the masses continued to be exploited by a legalised native nexus. The changing perception of the nationality can be felt in Dinkar's poetry. Let us compare his two poems for this purpose *Himalaya* and *Samar Sesh Hai*. In the former poem, he asks the Himalaya to come out of his deep meditation as it is the need of the hour:

*Kitni maniyen loot gayin? Mita
Kitna mera vaibhav ashesh!
Tu dhyanjayna hi raha, idhar
Veeran hua pyara swadesh.*

And then:

*Tu maun tyag kar sinhnad
Re tapi aj tap ka na kal
Navyug-shankhdhvani jaga rahi
Tu jag-jag mere vishal.*

This expression shows the emotional outburst of the poet at the time of national crisis that reflects the extraordinary flow and rhythm of his poetry. But in the other poem, he expresses his concern with the sufferings of the people even in the independent nation. He asks the rulers in a changed tone:

*Atka kahan swaraj? Bol dilli. Tu kya kahti hai?
Tu rani ban gayi vednaJanata kyon sahti hai?
And then suggests the people to fight the rest of the battle:
Samar sesh hai, us swaraj ko satya banana hoga,
Jiska hai ye nyas use satvar pahunchana hoga.*

Another important poet, Nagarjun, also visualises the stark realities of the national life in such poems as *Such na Bolna* (Don't speak Truth):

*Matao par bahino par ghore dauraye jate hain,
Bachche, burdhe bap tak na chutte, sataye jate hain.
Mar-pit hai, loot-pat hai, tahas-nahas barbadi hai,
Jor-julum hai, jel-sel hai. Wah kya azadi hai!*

The poet wonders whether it is really independence. Yet another poet, Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena writes: "A country is not a map/ On paper / That even though a part is torn / Can remain intact as usual."

The disillusionment of the people with the system in the independent India is very clearly in the poetry of the nineteen-sixties onwards. The unfulfilled promises of the government, fake execution of development schemes, bribery and other types of corruption, the neglect of the common people and poverty led to an anti-establishment attitude among the people, and it was duly reflected in poetry by such *Akavita* poets as Rajkamal Choudhary and Dhoomil. The Hungryalist movement of Bengali literature and the Beat movement of America literature catalysed the process of the anti-establishment protest. Rajkamal Das' *Kavita* and *Mukti-Prasangare* the testimony to this trend. In his well-known poem, *Das Kavita* (Slave Poem), he comes out with this realisation:

From the guard/to the President/of office-bearing,
Interwoven in the tricolour of selfishness, deception and fear –

The slave of the garland of victory of the system I am, that which is imposed on democracy
Slave I am – slave, revolutionary friends! With you I am a slave -
(*Audit Report, 99*)

It is to be noticed how the poet identifies with his fellow citizens. Here is another extract from *The Last Poem* of August '65 in which he laughs at the people's own tendency of not fighting for the right causes:

Keep silent, the weather
Changes only when you keep silent ...
To make noise is betrayal
Keep silent, O you subjects
Whatever you have to say to your Lord,
Say keeping silent only.

(*Audit Report, 24*)

The poet doesn't spare even the national anthem. He ridicules the ritualistic celebration of patriotism by presenting a semi-lunatic woman as Mother India: "A semi-lunatic woman will become mother – *Jai hey, Jai hey, Jai-Jai-Jai hey Bharat bhagya vidhata.*" Dhoomil also questions:

Is freedom only the name of three tired colours
That is carried by a wheel
Or does it possess some particular meaning?

In another poem, *Patkatha*, he laments the miserable condition of his country in these words:

This is my country
Stretched
from the Himalaya to the Indian ocean
It is a heap of burnt soil
Where every third tongue means
Hate.
Intrigue.
Anarchy.

Thus, we notice how nationalism in Hindi has covered a long way, crossing different phases, modifying and enriching itself and getting mature and mature. The sense of nationality that was dormant in the undivided greater India in ancient time, during the rules of the Mauryas and the Guptas, became manifest for the first time in the twelfth century which was the most crucial – and perhaps the most unfortunate period in the Indian sub-continent as it is during this period that India lost its

age-long glory and freedom and became doomed to be ruled by invading forces. The defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan at the hands of Ghori, signalled the end of the Hindu kingdoms and laid the foundation of the Muslim rule in India, which continued till the end of the Mughal empire, formally to 1858. This paved the way for the Hindu nationalism in India, mainly directed against the invaders.

With the shift of power to the Europeans, the nature of nationalism gradually changed as now both the Hindus and the Muslims became sufferers. The common cause of both the communities helped to fight together against the foreigners, and thus the secular element developed in nationalism, at least in the mainstream. The history of the entire freedom struggle in India is that of nationalism in the modern sense of the word and at duly found reflection in Hindi poetry. Now the interactions with different ideologies like Sufism, Gandhism, Socialism and Humanism, movements like *Pragativad* and reforms like those of the Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society also kept influencing the Indian nationalism from time to time. By now the Indian nationalism has become mature enough to encompass in it all the ethnic, linguistic and religious groups in it, so much so that despite the threat of various breaking forces, the sovereignty of India is intact.

Hindi Sahitya ka Vajjanik Itihas. Ganpati Chandra Gupt, 2002, Lok Bharati, Allahabad.

Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas. Dr Nagendra & Dr Hardayal, National, New Delhi.