SPACE AND CULTURE, INDIA

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Rethinking Development, Welfare and Culture in India

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India is now one of fastest growing economies in the world, with a high rate of development activities. The term 'development' as conceptualised in the Indian economy is problematic; it places more emphasis on the financial rather than the human aspects of development. The globalisation-led development and consequent displacement is creating poverty at a faster rate than it is alleviating it. The problems created by development activities are copious in number and enormous in magnitude. The current policies of development are biased towards infrastructure rather than services, towards big cities rather than small cities and rural settlements, towards already developed areas rather than backward areas, and finally, these policies are privileging richer communities and dispossessing the poor from their rights to land and basic services. Thus, the gap between the haves and have-nots is continuously growing, and an increasing proportion of the population is moving down below the poverty line. The new economic forces are reshaping landscapes throughout the length and breadth of the country.

In these hyper-activities of growth and development, there emerges a crisis of equity and environment. The increasing population is placing greater demands on finite resources of the earth and consequently impacting the environment, making the future of the earth unsustainable. In the process of development, both the physical and cultural landscapes are being re-shaped. The human intervention on rivers, in the name of management for multipurpose development activities, is changing the physical and cultural landscapes in the river basins. The land, water, forest and energy sectors are all facing major resource crises. To cope with the increasing demands of these resources, the environment is deteriorating as it now exceeds the limit of any homeostatic mechanism for efficient recovery. The globalisation-led intervention of multinational companies has changed the nature of resource use and has increased the pre-existing regional inequality and disparity largely. Climate change and natural disasters are occurring at a higher rate, impacting the livelihoods of millions of people, the majority of whom are poor.

In the process of new global order development, the gaps between the rural and urban as well as the rich and poor are increasing. Development programmes are more oriented to the time-bound, specific projects funded by outside agencies like the World Bank and DFID. Continuous development activities are non-existent, thus raising the question of equity. The distribution of resources and services are skewed in nature, pushing marginal communities further towards the periphery of power and development. However, one positive aspect of Indian democracy has emerged in recent years—the protection of rights of the citizens in different spheres of life, starting from the right to information and education, to work and food.

For the second issue of 'Space and Culture, India', we decided to include a variety of articles from various disciplines, thereby developing a common platform for interactions between scholars who are working on diverse questions related to India. This issue looks into matters of development, rights and movements, and equity, besides presenting an ethnographic analysis of the cultural geomorphology of river islands and a comparative analysis of Shakespearean performances in India and East Ger-

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many. Benjamin looks into the uneven urban development under globalised forces, which bypasses the less developed regions and increases the levels of regional inequality between Northeast India and other parts of mainland India. Bezbaruah analyses different aspects of India's National Food Security Act. He suggests that more emphasis should be given to the implementation mechanism and suitable measures be taken to mitigate the apprehended undesirable consequences of the Food Security Bill, to ensure social welfare of the poor.

Economic development and laws are not enough for equity and justice to all sections of society. Borpatragohain explains how, in spite of having efficient laws to protect the rights of women to live with dignity, social factors like male dominance, discrimination, subjugation and exploitation create obstacles and inhibit the law. The social health of the Indian democracy is deteriorating in all aspects, which he has labelled as a *multiple organ failure*. He argues that appropriate implementation of the law can be one of the solutions, but cannot be the sole solution to the problem of the continuous rise of violence against women. This viewpoint also expresses concern and stresses the need for a collective effort to bring about an appropriate attitudinal change for all Indians.

Namami Sharma's article explains the importance of movement to ensure the protection of rule of law, without which Borpatragohain opined that even efficient laws are insufficient. This article traces the story of a social actor who is providing constant support to the Baiga tribes of Madhya Pradesh for the people's struggle for resource rights in the area. This article illustrates how a generous effort can help marginal people to fight with and to win over the powerful state machinery, to protect their own resources and livelihood. Binary divisions and dualism within disciplines often undermine the worth of research and teaching of the subject and put the discipline in a problematic situation. Sahariah et al. explain how natural and cultural phenomena are interlinked in the development of *Satra* (Vaishnavite monasteries) in the Majuli Island, and challenge the binary division of geomorphology and cultural geography as absolutely separate sub-disciplines within the field of Geography. The article explains the cultural geomorphology of the development of *satra* in Majuli Island, where the boundaries between physical and cultural landscapes are getting blurred, and giving rise to the concept of landscapes, which can never be identified as either physical or cultural.

The research article by Dhurjjati Sarma makes a comparative study of the Shakespearean appropriations in late 19th century India under colonial rule on one hand, and in mid-20th century (East) Germany on the other. The article argues that the process of globalisation should be intercultural; that is, the *praxis* or the substance of the plot or action should be assessed on its variable adaptability to new contexts and situations. According to Sarma, the validity of Shakespeare studies in the 21st century lies not merely in the assessment of the extent to which a Shakespearean translation or an adaptation departs from the 'original' text, but also in re-examining the new meanings which are generated in the process. In the publication watch, this issue shares a long list of publications, both from the web and print sources, on different matters related to India.

Food Security: Issues and Policy Options

A Discussion in Light of India's National Food Security Act

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Abstract

From its initial drafting to its eventual passage in the Indian Parliament and beyond, the National Food Security Bill has been extensively debated with a lot of animation by activists, economists, politicians and even corporate leaders. This article presents a brief summary of the debate in the backdrop of a discussion of the general issues related to food security and India's past record of food grain management. Since the Bill has now been turned into an Act, it is suggested that the focus of attention should now shift to its implementation mechanism and suitable measures to mitigate the apprehended undesirable consequences of the proposed nationwide food security programme.

Key words: Food Security, Right to Food, Public Distribution System

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Introduction

Concisely food security may be defined as freedom from hunger and malnutrition. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations describes food security as a state where "all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food they need" (FAO, 1983: 33). Elaborating further the World Bank (1986) states that food security means "access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life; its essential elements are availability of food and the ability to acquire it" (World Bank, 1986: 1). The Bank also draws a distinction between chronic and transitory food insecurity. Chronic food insecurity refers to a state of "continuous inadequate diet caused by the inability to acquire food. It affects households that persistently lack the ability to either buy food or produce their own." Chronic food insecurity is thus akin to abject poverty. Transitory food insecurity is defined as "temporary decline in the household's access to enough food. It results from instability in food price, food production and household income – and in its worst form, it produces famine" (World Bank, 1986: 1). Transitorily food insecure people are therefore not necessarily very poor but vulnerable to market shocks and supply instabilities.

Thanks to the persistent follow-up of the international community, over the years 'right to food has come to be increasingly and extensively accepted as a basic human right. Way back in 1948, it was stated in the article 25(1) of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of himself and his family, including food". Food and nutrition rights were subsequently reaffirmed in the article 11 of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976), "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing . . . ." Further, it was insisted that it is "the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger . . . ." (ICESCR, 1976: 4). FAO has been facilitating implementation of this right at country level. However, instead of enforcing a uniform standard of food security for all countries, the FAO has left interpretation and implementation of the 'right to food' to the countries concerned in their respective economic, social and cultural context. "States, as appropriate and in consultation with relevant stakeholders and pursuant to their national laws, should consider adopting a national human-rights based strategy for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security as part of an overarching national development strategy, including poverty reduction strategies, where they exist" (FAO, 2005: 11). In India, measures such as the Public Distribution System (PDS), the Food for Work Programme, Antyodaya Anna Yojana,[1] Mid-Day Meal scheme for schoolchildren, etc. have been in operation for some time to provide food security to the vulnerable sections of the society. The National Food Security Bill passed by the Indian Parliament in August 2013 now seeks to combine all such measures and expand them to a comprehensive package and to enshrine 'right to food' for all residents of the country as a legal entitlement.

The present paper is an attempt to summarise the various contentious issues that have surfaced in the public space in India in connection with the National Food Security Bill. However to contextualise the summary, some space is first devoted to a discussion of general issues related to food security and India's past experience in dealing with these issues.

The Twofold Task in Ensuring Food Security

Food security is thus concerned with both production and distribution of food. The twofold task therefore consists of (a) securing sufficient production and/or supply and (b) ensuring everyone's adequate access to that supply.

Ensuring Enough Supply

To achieve sustainable global food security, first there must be enough current and future

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[1]A programme for supply of food grains to the very poor households at a nominal price.

food production to meet the world population's need for adequate nutrition. Despite prevalence of widespread hunger in several parts of the world, until recently adequacy of total global food production was not a major concern. Indeed, developed countries are known to pay their farmers to curtail or limit agricultural production to prevent price of markets from crashing. Shortage in the developing countries was thought to be a problem of inadequate capacity to produce locally and/or import from food surplus countries. However, the global food inflation of 2007 and again of 2010 came as wake-up calls and jolted the world community from complacency. Moreover, impending climate change concerns have also brought back some unease about sufficiency and stability of global food production. Apart from raising average global temperature, climate change is likely to manifest in more frequent occurrence of extreme weather-related phenomena. Such possibilities have aroused considerable uncertainty about growth, stability and geographical distribution of world food production in the future.

Renewed concern about sufficiency of global food production has also revived interest in research on technology of food production. The next major technological breakthrough is likely to come in the form of genetically modified food crops. As of now, there is considerable public apprehension on issues related to safety of such crops, the form of business that may control distribution of seed/plants of such crops etc. Hence, even after the breakthrough will arrive, its acceptance, implementation and spread may take some time.

Given that there is adequate global production, it may not be essential for every country to be self-sufficient in food grain production in order to be food-secure. So long as a country has the capacity to import food in a regular and sustained manner, it can be food-secure without being self-sufficient in food production. Indeed many countries of the Middle East perhaps cannot aspire to be self-sufficient in food production. However, because they are rich otherwise, importing enough food in a regular ba-

sis is not a problem for them. However, dependence on other countries for food can be a strategic disadvantage, especially in time of international conflicts. Hence, many rich countries like Japan and South Korea are seen maintaining high cost agricultures so that at least partial self-sufficiency in food production is maintained.

Despite large percentage of population being engaged in agriculture, India used to be chronically deficient in food grain production until the advent of the Green Revolution in the late 1960s. Shortage of hard currency did not allow India to procure food from the international market during that period. The country had to depend on concessional import from USA under P.L. 480,[1] which required to be paid in the importing county's domestic currency, but to which political strings were often attached. During India-Pakistan conflict of 1965, the USA supported Pakistan and P.L. 480 supplies to India were stopped. This was accompanied by two successive years of drought, and independent India experienced its worst food crisis in 1965 and 1966. However, the technological breakthrough that arrived in the following years in the form of High Yielding Variety (HYV) seeds changed the situation dramatically. Adoption of the new technology, facilitated by public policy of input subsidisation, extension service and price support, ushered in the Green Revolution. Thanks to the Green Revolution, India was able to achieve sustained increase in domestic food production over the next two decades or so, thereby securing for itself self-sufficiency in production of cereals ever since, except for a few occasional years of bad monsoon in between.

During the 1990s, a slowdown in India's agricultural growth had set in resulting from factors such as the adverse environmental consequences of the Green Revolution in the Punjab-Haryana-Western UP belt, rise in cost of cultivation, falling rate of returns, deficiency in public investment in agricultural infrastructure etc.

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[1] P.L. 480 (Public Law 480) is a US Food Aid Programme also known as the Food for Peace Program.

The slowdown and stagnancy in agriculture has become a serious concern for the economy in general and food security of the country in particular. In the 10th and the 11th Five Year Plans (2002-2012), there were programmes for reviving public investment in agriculture and rural economy. Moreover, several programmes to extend the Green Revolution to new crops such as pulses and new areas such as the Eastern India have also been pursued.[1] In the short and medium term, these initiatives have the potential of taking the country through some distance. Average yield of important crops like rice in India being only a half of what has been realised in China, there is a scope for stepping up food production by extending further the use of existing technological expertise. However, sustaining growth of food production in particular and that of the agriculture sector in general will ultimately hinge upon yield increasing technological breakthrough, especially as net area available for cultivation is likely to shrink in the future due to growing demand for land for non-agricultural use.

Ensuring Access

In order to ensure that all sections gain access to the national food stock requires that food is made available at affordable prices. Therefore, ensuring enough production requires ensuring remunerative prices for the farmers. To resolve the conflict subsidisation has to be resorted to, that is, food is to be distributed at prices lower than the prices at which grains are procured from producers. However, the size and administration of the food subsidy has been a matter of significant and sensitive public policy debate in India.

In India, Commission of Agricultural Cost and Prices (CACP) set support and procurement prices of grains.[2] The Food Corporation of India

(FCI) procures, stores and distributes food grains through Public Distribution System (PDS), comprised of network of 'fair price shops' and also through sale to the open market. The original idea was to procure in good harvest years so that farmers are protected from a crash of prices following bumper harvests and a buffer stock is raised to see the country through bad agricultural years. The buffer stock is meant for augmenting supplies in the bad harvest years so that the consumers are protected from acute food scarcity and high open market price of food in such years. However, thanks to the post-Green Revolution economic and political influence of the big farmers in Northwestern India, procurement has become regular with routinely hiked procurement prices every year. Therefore, what was originally designed as a sensible public policy for food grain management in the country turned into a handle for extracting benefits for the privileged class of big farmers. As a result, several undesirable trends surfaced in India's food management system.

Regular siphoning off supply from the market through public procurement means that open market prices of food grains remain high, which adversely affect all those who are rightly or wrongly left out from the state run PDS. Besides, the dual price system of food grains induces leakage from the PDS supplies and encourages speculative hoarding of the same to be resold to procurement agencies next year at the upwardly revised procurement prices – a phenomenon described as the 'revolving door effect' by Basu (2011).

From the macroeconomic point of view, the above-described development meant that the size of food subsidy rose steadily through the years. In the aftermath of the balance-of-payment crisis of 1990, which most experts linked to fiscal profligacy of the government in the preceding decade, regaining fiscal stability and curbing of subsidies assumed priority in structural adjustment programme of the Indian economy initiated in 1991. With a view to reign in the food subsidy, issue prices of PDS grains

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[1]Curiously however institutional reform required to ensure more efficient use of agricultural land have not received due attention from the policy makers.
[2]Minimum support price is the minimum price at which the government guarantees to procure produce. It is announced well before the harvest. Procurement price is the price at which the government actually buys food grain for PDS and for maintaining the buffer stock.

Generally minimum support price is less than procurement price.

were gradually raised in the 1990s. However, as the gap between PDS price and the open market price started narrowing, buying food from 'fair price shops', which involves a number of inconveniences, became unattractive even for ration cardholders and PDS off take began to decline. Consequently, food grain stocks piled up in FCI go-downs while a significant section of population remained mal-nourished and hungry.

Policy response to this mismatch was to design the targeted PDS, under which households to be covered under PDS were classified into BPL (below poverty line) and APL (above poverty line) categories. It was decided to supply food grains to BPL ration cardholders at a much lower price than the APL cardholders. This resulted in better off take from fair price shops by BPL families. However, off take of APL households continued to remain low.

Two main shortcomings from which India's PDS has been found to suffer are the large margin of error in selection of target beneficiaries and the substantial extent of leakage of grain from the distribution chain. Estimates based on National Sample Survey 61st Round data found exclusion errors (wrongly leaving out deserving beneficiaries) and inclusion error (erroneously including undeserving households as beneficiaries) to the extent of 50 per cent and 31 per cent respectively among BPL cardholders in 2004-05. Around the same time, one study estimated overall leakage of 44 per cent of food grains meant for distribution at subsidised prices through fair price shops (Khera, 2011a). The rate of leakage however was found to vary across states. In Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh where PDS coverage has been nearly universal, the leakage was also limited to 10 to 20 per cent only. However, in states like Assam, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, the leakages were found to be as high as 80 to 90 per cent. More recent studies have indicated a drop in the overall leakage rate by about 10 percentage points, owing primarily to the improvement in PDS administration in some more states like Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh (Khera, 2011b). Concomitantly there has been a rise in

the rate of accessing of food grains from PDS by households in both rural and urban areas.[1] Nonetheless, PDS inefficiencies and leakages are still beyond acceptable limits.

The National Food Security Act 2013

The National Food Security Bill, introduced in Indian Parliament in 2011 and finally passed in August 2013 by both houses after prolonged debate within and outside the parliament, has since become an Act in September 2013.

The main plank of the Act is the resolve to cover 75 per cent of rural population and 50 per cent of urban population under a programme of highly subsidised supply of food grains through the PDS. The percentage of population to be covered will actually vary from state to state according to the percentage of BPL population in the states. That is, the population coverage will be higher in states where the percentage of BPL population is higher. Each household in the beneficiary groups will be entitled for 5 kg of food grains per person per month at the nominal price of ₹3/2/1 per kg of rice, wheat and/or coarse cereal respectively (the price is subject to review after three years of operation of the programme). Very poor household entitled for receiving subsidised food grains up to 35 kg per month under the existing Antyodaya Anna Yojana will continue to enjoy the same entitlement, even if their entitlement at the standard rate of 5 kg per capita per month should be less. What is significant is the Act makes these entitlements of subsidised food grain a legal right. Hence, failure to provide the quota of ration will make the government liable for payment of cash compensation called 'food allowance'.

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[1]The contribution of PDS purchases to total consumption in 2009-10 shows a considerable rise compared to 2004-05 for both rice and wheat. The PDS share in rice consumption increased from 13 per cent in rural areas and 11 per cent in urban areas in 2004-5 to 23.5 per cent in the rural sector and about 18 per cent in the urban sector in 2009-10. For wheat, the respective percentages improved from 7 per cent and 3.8 per cent to 14.6 per cent and 9 per cent (Government of India, 2013).

Further, the Act provides for additional nutritional support to vulnerable sections like mothers and children. Pregnant women and lactating mothers will be entitled to a nutritious 'take home ration' yielding 600 calories per day and a maternity benefit of at least ₹6,000 within six months. Children aged 6 months to 14 years of age are to receive free hot meals or 'take home rations' in lieu.

Some other notable features of the Act are the following:

> (a) The eldest woman in the household, 18 years or above is the head of the household for the purpose of issue of the ration card; a measure supposed to ensure greater total availability and more equitable distribution of food within the household.

> (b) There will be state and district level redress mechanisms for non-compliance of the provisions of the Act; and

> (c) State Food Commissions will be formed for implementation and monitoring of the provisions of the Act.

While the central government will make available the food grain stock to be distributed from its procured stock, the state governments will be responsible for implementing the programme at the ground level. In particular, the state government will have to identify the households to be excluded. The Act does not spell out the exclusion criteria. However, the initial idea was that exclusion would be made on the basis of a multiple indicators based score of a household calculated from information gathered from the nationwide socio-economic census of households conducted in 2012.

Debates on the National Food Security Act (NFSA)

The National Food Security Act has been extensively debated — even outside the Parliament — in the media and in the academic platforms.

One group of critics contends that the Act does not go far enough. First, the Act is concerned with only provision of enough calories and does not guarantee fuller nutritional security. The supporters of the Act argues that fuller nutritional security will be indirectly served, as beneficiary households will be able to spend money saved from buying cereals from PDS instead of the open market on procuring other nutritional foodstuffs such as pulses, milk, eggs, etc. A programme for supplying a complete basket of food items through PDS for fuller nutritional security to all Indians perhaps will be too ambitious at the moment for the country even to think about. However, the issue deserves some attention in the light of the recent findings from National Sample Survey that in recent years average calorie consumption across all income categories has declined (Chand and Jumrani, 2013) and the percentage of people declaring themselves to be involuntarily starving has also come down sharply. The findings have been interpreted by some scholars as a reflection of reduced calorie requirement for an average Indian in view of changes in lifestyle, mode of transportation, nature of work and mechanisation of agriculture. To the extent, this interpretation is tenable; the focus of food policy in the country should shift from provision of enough cereals for meeting old estimates of calorie requirements to imparting a better balance in the food basket for promoting overall nutritional security.

The other criticism of this group is that to be truly meaningful the Act should have gone for universal coverage under PDS. There are two strong arguments for universal coverage. First, this will obviate the need to identify beneficiaries, and hence will avoid exclusion and inclusion errors from which India's PDS is widely reported to suffer in the past. Second, it has been found that leakage from PDS is the least in states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh where the coverage has been universal or near universal. The intuitive logic for this is that when a programme is meant not just for the voiceless poor but covers other groups who are empowered enough to voice against non-delivery, the system is under in-built pressure to deliver.

The detractors of the Act have several arguments about its fallouts and implementation.

There is a widespread concern that the enhanced food subsidy will aggravate the already delicate fiscal situation of the country. Though there are contesting calculations of the impact of the Act on fiscal deficit (Bhalla, 2013; Sinha, 2013), there is no denying that there is going to be some adverse impact on the fiscal situation. It is worthwhile to note that a large fiscal deficit[1] can aggravate inflation and current account deficit[2] leading to depreciation of both internal and external value of the Indian rupee. Moreover, high fiscal deficit worsens public debt position, which can prompt international agencies to downgrade India's credit rating, which in turn can affect India's attractiveness as a destination of investment. It is however to be noted that fiscal deficit situation is not dependent on the size of the food subsidy alone but more generally on overall governmental revenue-expenditure process, and managing of the deficit calls for wider subsidy, expenditure and tax reforms.

Another concern with the NFSA is that it might adversely affect food grain production in the country. Some recent studies have shown that in general the rates of returns on food grain production in India in recent years have been extremely low and even negative in many cases (Narayanmoorthy, 2013). Yet a large number of small and marginal farmers continue to cultivate their land to ensure a measure of food security for themselves.[3] With food grains being available virtually free, they may be inclined to discontinue their un-remunerative crop cultivation and deploy their land and labour for alternative, more remunerative activities. While this may seem to bring higher wellbeing for them at the micro level, for the country as a whole this may mean a fall in total production, which in turn may jeopardise implementation of the Act itself.[4]

Nevertheless, the strongest criticism of the Act arises from the lack of faith in the ability of the beleaguered PDS of the country to deliver an expanded nationwide programme of distribution of food grains. Though the Act talks about reforming PDS by involving community-based organisations, NGOs and self-help groups, it is not convincing that such reforms will greatly improve its efficiency of the system. The delivery mechanism of the national food security programme is an area of major concern. It deserves attention of policymakers, administrators, media and academics.

Perhaps the delivery mechanism of the national food security programme can be made more efficient by replacing the monolithic FCI by decentralised and regionalised procurement and distribution systems. Scholars suggest that these systems taken together are expected to be less expensive and more effective (Sinha, 2013).

In another study, Bhagwati and Panaghariya (2013) advocate direct cash transfer of the food subsidy to beneficiary households, leaving the households to buy food by themselves from the open market. Concomitantly they recommend that the FCI, notorious for inefficiency and corruption, be disbanded or at least scaled down substantially, while PDS must be limited to areas not served by markets and procurements be confined to maintaining the buffer stock needed for price and supply stabilisation operations over the cycles of good and bad agricultural years. Critics of cash transfer however argue that the scheme may lead to diversion of the cash received to non-food expenditures, and that the transfer may even be frittered away in drinking and gambling. To this, they point out

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[1]Fiscal deficit is the excess of total government expenditure over its non-debt receipts during a period. Thus, it is the part of government expenditure that is financed by fresh net borrowing.

[2]Current account deficit is the excess of a country's payment for imports of goods and services and remittance of income and transfers outward over its receipts from export of goods and services and income and transfer remittances received from abroad.

[3]About 30.4 per cent of total cereal consumption and 10.6 per cent of total pulse consumption in rural India in 2009-10 came from home-grown stock (Government of India, 2013).

[4]As per National Sample Survey, results the share of home produce in total consumption of households fell from 30 per cent to 25 per cent for rice and from 40 per cent to 37 per cent for wheat between 2004-05 and 2009-10.

that such diversion can take place otherwise too, as subsidised food grains can easily be sold in the open market to pocket the price difference in cash.

While on paper the cash transfer may seem to be efficient and effective, as of now there are some practical problems in its nationwide implementation. To receive cash transfers each household will be required to have a bank account and easy access to banking services. A large number of Indian households yet do not have a bank account.[1] [2] Universal financial inclusion of households and penetration of banking services through expansion of conventional and unconventional modes of reaching out will have to take place before cash transfer of food subsidy and similar other benefits can be seriously brought into practice in a nationwide scale.

In the longer run, moving over to direct transfer of benefits will perhaps be the better option. Meanwhile, as programme cannot be done without the PDS, it will be a good idea to try to reform the delivery mechanism of the PDS system. In doing so, the country can learn from the experience of those states where the system has worked better than in most other states. As Dreze and Sen (2013: 212) summarise the debate, "the really important issue, however, is not 'cash versus kind'— it is to put in place an effective system of income support and economic security, whether it is based on cash transfers or the PDS (or a combination of the two). Leaving poor people to their own devices is neither socially just nor smart public policy."

Conclusion

Now that the National Food Security Bill has been passed by both the houses of the Indian Parliament and the Bill has since become an Act, the focus of the debates should shift from its intents and contents to its implementation mechanism and the measures to mitigate the apprehended undesirable consequences from it. Successful implementation of this ambitious food security program will weave a meaningful safety net for a vast majority of Indians who eke out their living in the unorganised sector [3] virtually devoid of any social security system to fall back upon.

About the Author

Professor Madhurjya Prasad Bezbaruah was born in 1959 in Shillong. He completed his MA in Economics from the Delhi School of Economics in 1980 and Ph.D from Gauhati University in 1990. Currently, he is the Professor of Economics, Gauhati University (former Head of the Department of Economics and Dean, Faculty of Arts, Gauhati University). He teaches mainly Microeconomics and Econometrics. His area of research interests are Agricultural Economics and Regional Developmental Issues.

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[1]As per 2001 Census of India, only 35.5 per cent household in India had any form of bank accounts counting in even the post office saving bank accounts. The percentage was as low as 30 in rural areas. Assam was one of the least financially included states, with only 20 per cent of households having bank accounts – the percentage was as low as 15 in rural areas. (Bhavani and Bhanumurthy, 2012: 79-80).

[2] As per 2011 census, about 58.7 per cent households, comprising of 54.4 per cent rural households and 67.8 per cent urban households, had reported availing banking facilities.

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[3]The unorganised sector, comprised of most of agriculture, the rural non-farm sector and the urban informal sector, is characterised by easy entry, cut throat competition, low wages, low productivity, financial exclusion and virtual absence of social security provisions such as sick leave, provident fund and pensions. It employs about 90 per cent of India's work force but contributes less than 30 per cent of India's GDP.

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Majuli at the Crossroads: A Study of Cultural Geomorphology

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Abstract

Although well established elsewhere, cultural geomorphology has not yet been well-grounded in Northeast India where a perceived dearth of studies in this sub-branch of geography exists. The Brahmaputra valley, which has a long physical and cultural history, is a unique laboratory, which offers opportunities to study anthropo-geomorphologic, achaeo-geomorphologic and cultural landscapes. The Majuli river island, ostensibly the largest island in the world, houses traditional art crafts and dances, despite being continually under the siege of a plethora of physical obstacles such as flooding, bank erosion, etc. The present study aims at studying how the physical processes that constantly reshape the map of the island exert their influence on the socio-economic and cultural milieu of the region. The paper further analyses why despite all odds Majuli thrives and continues to preserve and maintain its rich natural and cultural heritage, in ways that are perhaps unparalleled in the region or even elsewhere in the globe.

Key words: cultural geomorphology, cultural landscapes, *satra*, Majuli river island, Assam, India

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Introduction

River basins offer a unique opportunity for geographers to study both physical processes and human assemblages, and in many studies around the world, geographers have sought to establish the relationship between physical processes and the human attributes (Mcintosh, 1983). Interrelationships between landscape-scale geomorphology and the development of material and nonmaterial expressions of human activity are demonstrated in many areas of the world where different cultural expressions have developed over millennial time scales (Caseldine and Turney, 2010; Fowler, 2004), and where palimpsests of human activity have been preserved differentially in the landscape (Bailey, 2007). These relationships are also well demonstrated in landscapes where there are strong physical properties and processes that have exerted their influence on the physical make-up of the landscape and the provision of its resources. This is because resource provisions, including fresh water, fertile agricultural land and route ways for trade and transport, have strongly influenced subsequent processes and spatial patterns of human development (Knight and Harrison, 2013).

Physical geography and human geography are two very deep-rooted established traditions within geography. However, in the present educational system in India, geographers are divided into two groups where physical geographers become too specialised to ignore the human components and human geographers are trained to ignore physical components or simply not competent enough or sufficiently trained to appreciate the positives that are to be had from physical geography. In the present system, geomorphology and cultural geography are two distant specialisations within geography where people study their subjects in two different dimensions. However, during the last few decades, there has been a conscious effort to undertake research in an interdisciplinary perspective considering both physical and human landscapes. For instance, cultural geomorphology and geo-archaeology share commonalities that explore the scope of understanding the cultural landscape from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Relationships between landscape-scale geomorphology and aspects of the human environment (including heritage and material cultures) are best examined in landscapes with a strong geomorphological imprint of past climatic and environmental changes, and where human activity has been present for a long period of time (Knight and Harrison, 2013).

Cultural geomorphology, on the other hand, is the discipline that studies the geomorphological component of a territory, which embodies both a cultural feature of the landscape and its interactions with cultural heritage (archaeological, historical, architectonic, etc.). The relationships between geomorphology and cultural elements can be considered schematically according to the two reciprocally integrated viewpoints:

1. Geomorphology meant as a component of a territory's cultural heritage (geomorphosistes)

2. The relationships between some cultural components (in the strict sense of the term) of a territory (archaeological, historical, architectonic assets, etc.) and the geomorphological context in which they are inserted (Panizza and Piacente, 2008).

These contributions are most relevant as archaeo-geomorphological investigations through their emphasis on cultural landscapes, encompassing geomorphology and weathering science (heritage conservation science), archaeology as well as landscape change and environmental protection, which is a part of environmental geomorphology. They treat the landscape as not only altered by human activities, which is the realm of 'anthro-geomorphology' of human impacts on the landscape, but as human culture (a cultural geomorphology that comprises more than impacts) within the physical landscape. This approach is far more appropriate for the understanding of human interpretations of landscape and adaptation to it, in addition to human interactions with (and disturbance of) the natural environment (Thornbush, 2013). Considering these perspectives, this study at-

tempts to explore the present status of Majuli, the largest river island of the world, in terms of preservation of its natural and cultural landscape, which evolved through long interactions of river actions and people's adaptations to it.

The paper begins with a description of different physical processes that led to the development of Majuli river island. This has been followed by objective, methodology and database used in the study. After a brief discussion on geology and physical geography of the island and its impact on human activity, the paper goes on to narrate different cultural assets of the island, which has accumulated over time. Following this, it discusses the cultural heritage of Majuli shaped by both physical and human activities over the years. In the conclusion, the paper suggests that extensive conservation measures need to be adopted to save the river island from both natural disasters and cultural decay.

The Study Area

The Majuli island (93° 30' - 94° 35' E and 26°50' - 27° 10' N) is located in the north of Jorhat district of Assam, India (Figure 1). The elevation varies from 60 to 85 m above mean sea level. The island is bounded by three major rivers: Kherkutia Suti, Subansiri and the Brahmaputra (Bhaskar et al., 2010).

Majuli was a cluster of 15 large and numerous small islands in 1792 (Sarma and Phukan, 2004) which have undergone changes in areal extension in different periods of time (Table 1). This largest river island is a home to the pristine cultural heritage of Assam and the *Vaisnavite* shrines, popularly known as *Satras*. As such, the island has been a principal place of pilgrimage for the last 400 years. However, presently it is well known for having suffered from two natural hazards: severe bank erosion and flooding (Sarma and Phukan, 2004).

The Brahmaputra river is characterised by high seasonal variability in flow, sediment transport and channel pattern[1] (Goswami et al., 1999; Coleman, 1969). In the valley of Assam, it flows

in a highly braided channel (Goswami, 1985) with the presence of numerous laterals, mid-channel bars and islands. Most of them are transient in nature, being submerged during high monsoon flows and drastically change their geometry and location. The very existence of Majuli, and a home to 1, 67,245 people, based on 2011 census, is endangered because of the erratic behaviour of the river Brahmaputra.

The severity of the erosion might be understood from the fact that the area of island, including some sand *chars and chaparis* (the latter are local names for the numerous small and relatively recently formed river islands near the main island) has reduced in recent years. The available data indicate an erosion rate of 1.9 sq. km/ yr for the period of 1920–1998 (Kotoky et. al., 2003). The reasons as to why the Brahmaputra river has so intensely savaged the Majuli river island are not far to seek. The Brahmaputra ranks fourth among the largest rivers of the world with regard to mean annual discharge (Mirza, and Dixit, 1997). The estimated annual sediment yield of the Brahmaputra is 1028-ton sq. km, the highest among the world's largest rivers. However, the sediment yield of the river Ganges is only 502-ton sq. km although its basin area is twice as large as the Brahmaputra (Baruah, 1994). The lateral change and meandering of the courses of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers in recent history have significant influence on the morphology of their alluvial floodplains (Brammer, 1996; Mirza et. al, 2001).

Objectives

The main objective of the paper is to observe as to how physical and anthropogenic forces blend together to transform Majuli from a mere river island to one of the major cultural hubs of Assam.

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[1]The channel pattern refers to limited reaches of the river as seen in plain view that can be defined as straight, sinuous, meandering, or braided (Goswami, 1999).
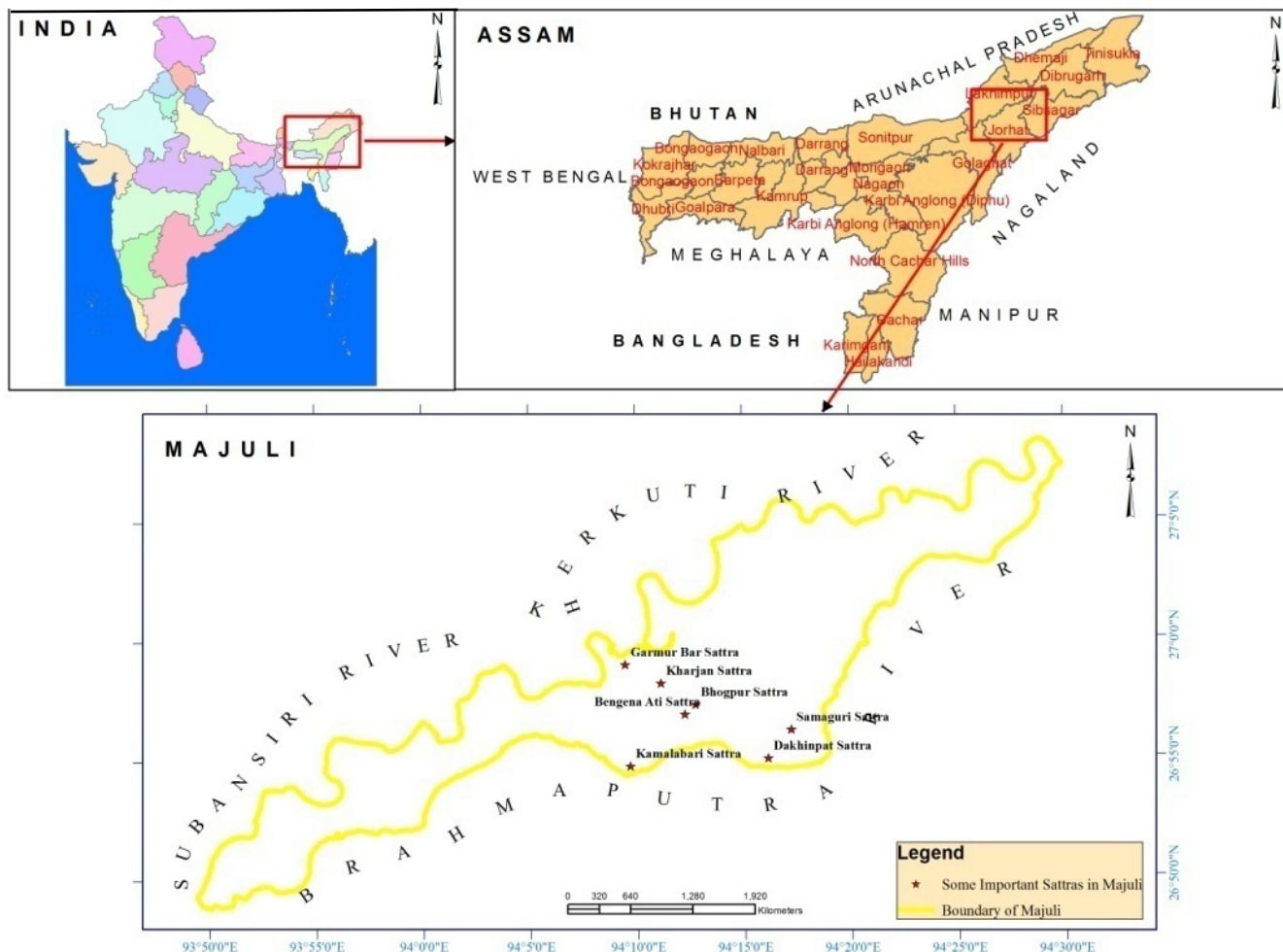
Figure 1: Location Map of Majuli

Table 1: Temporal Variation of Land Area of Majuli River Island	
Year	Area in sq. km
1901	1255
1917	751.31
1966–1972	564.01
1996	453.76
2001	421.65
Sources: Sarma and Phukan, 2004; Allen et al. 1905	

Methodology and Database

A more general research methodology has been adopted for this paper, which has been divided into few stages. In the first phase, a review of the literature on Majuli and the Brahmaputra valley has been done to record the major physical forces, geomorphic history and cultural history of the region. Second, the identification of geomorphological causes, which conditioned the location of a given cultural asset, is considered. Third, how the different socio-economic need of the people such as housing, agriculture, water source, building material, transport, etc. are met from the given environment and how these unique assemblage of socio-economic and physical conditions give rise to a unique cultural milieu of the region are taken up for further analysis. This paper tries to give a comprehensive understanding of physical forces that helped Majuli to gain its cultural assets.

The contributors of this paper made a field trip to Majuli on April 2013 and visited different *Satra* institutions, cultural centres, temporary camps of flood-affected people and areas affected by erosion of the river Brahmaputra. A lot of primary information was collected during that visit and rest of the information is collected by reviewing published materials such as journal articles, census data, books and monographs.

Geology and Physical geography of Majuli and Its Implications for Human Activity

Geologically, the island is a part of the great alluvial tract of the river Brahmaputra, which is by nature a geosynclinal basin[1] formed concomitantly with the elevation of the Himalayas to its north. The island, along with the floodplains of the river Brahmaputra in its adjoining areas, is formed by alluvial deposits in the form of older alluvium, newer alluvium and recent deltaic deposits of the Pleistocene age (Krishnan, 1982). Moreover, a very complex geological setting of very young and un-weathered sedimentary formations covering the entire Brahmaputra basin surrounds the area. On the northern side, the basin is flanked by sub-Himalayan ranges consisting mainly of tertiary sandstone, and is marked by the presence of many raised, relatively young terraces. On the eastern and southern sides, the Brahmaputra valley borders with the Naga-Patkai ranges consisting of tertiary formations riddled with numerous active faults. Being an active floodplain, the island is marked by an array of alluvial features including natural levees, crevasses, splay deposits, point bars and channel bars. The main channel of the river Brahmaputra on the southern side is characterised by rapid aggradation, dramatic channel shifts and excessive bank line recession (Kotoky et al., 2003). The island and the valley as a whole are seismically very active. The seismic activity in the region has a great impact on the fluvio-sedimentary regime of the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries. The climate of the island and the entire Brahmaputra basin lie within monsoon rainfall regime receiving annual rainfall to the tune of 2,153 mm. The temperature varies from 28° to 33°C and relative humidity varies from 54 per cent to 86 per cent. Given these circumstances, the Majuli river island is prone to severe erosion.

The island was a narrow and long piece of land called *Majuli* (land in the middle of two parallel rivers) that had Brahmaputra flowing in the north and the Burhidihing flowing in the south, until they met at Lakhu. Frequent earthquakes in the period 1661–1696 set the stage for a catastrophic flood in 1750 that continued for 15 days and is mentioned in historical texts and reflected in folklore. As a result of this flood, the Brahmaputra split into two anabranches[2]—one flowing along the original channel and the other flowing along the Burhidihing channel and the Majuli island was formed. The Burhidihing's point of confluence moved 190 km east, the southern channel, which was the Burhidihing, became the Burhi Xuti, and the northern channel, which was previously the Brahmaputra, became the Luit Xuti. In due course of time, the flow in the Luit Xuti decreased, and it came to be known as the Kherkutia Xuti; and the Burhi Xuti expanded via erosion to become the main Brahmaputra river (Sarma and Phukan, 2004).

The landscape of Majuli is a combination of agricultural land, grassland, water bodies and sandbars (Table 2). The ecological setting in every part of the world has its own characteristic that moulds the socio-economic and cultural milieu of its inhabitants. In the said context, the socio-cultural environment of the Brahmaputra valley too gave birth to the *Satra* institution. The distribution pattern of the *Satra* institution is interesting. These are located on the bank of the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries. These institutions are situated in the plains area or low-lying areas of the Brahmaputra valley instead of highland. The *Satras* were established by Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva and his

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[1] Broad elongated depression in the earth's crust containing great thicknesses of sediment (please refer to: Knopf, 1948).

[2] An anabranch is a section of a river or stream that diverts from the main channel or stem of the watercourse and re-joins the main stem downstream (North et al., 2007).

disciples like Madhav Deva, Damodar Deva and other preachers during 1500-1600 AD. In those days, the key means of transport and communication was only via water, so within the island, the side of the rivers established these institutions. Added to this, geographical isolation alongside idyllic environment of the island too (with no external disturbance) contributed to the establishment of the *Satras*. Evidently, 65 *Satras* were established at Majuli (Sarma, 2003). It is to be noted here that the germination of ideas and development of *Satra* at Majuli took place at Dhuwahat Belaguri in the year 1522. Its society, culture and even its economy are largely to be viewed in the context of its being a land of the Vaishnavite monasteries or *Satra* (Nath, 2009).

Table 2: Land Use Categories of Majuli island in 2010	
Land Use Categories	Area in Hectares
Woodlands	3575.97
Grasslands	18835.5
Non Forest/Agriculture land	23674.3
Water	3575.97
Sand bar	4922.55
Total	54584.29
Source: Image analysis based on landsat data	

The Culture and Heritage of Majuli

As noted elsewhere, Majuli has been the cultural capital and the cradle of Assamese civilisation for the past 500 years. The *Satra* set-up helped preserve antiques such as weapons, utensils, jewellery and other items of cultural significance. Pottery is made in Majuli, mainly in the Salmora region, from beaten clay and burnt in driftwood-fired kilns in the same mode carried out by the people of the ancient Harappa civilisation and sold through ancient barter system. The handloom works of various indigenous residents of Majuli, such as Missings who weave Jim (ribbed quilts) are known worldwide. Sociologists therefore have stressed and laid emphasis on the preservation of these unique socio-cultural values, whose culture and dance forms are untouched by modernism (Sarma, 2012). It is noteworthy here that in 2004, Government of India nominated Majuli for its inclusion in the 'cultural landscape' category of the UNESCO World Heritage list. Although this appeal has been rejected in 2012 for the third time, yet it bears significance in the preservation of cultural landscape of Majuli. The rejection of Majuli's nomination is a pointer to the laxity on the part of both the central and state governments in presenting a convincing dossier pertaining to its case as a claimant to the status.[1] What is ironical is that the callous culture of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Assam has failed to revise the incomplete dossier for reconsideration of Majuli in the coveted UNESCO World Heritage list of 2014.[2]

Notwithstanding in this cultural repository, where all faiths irrespective of caste and community abides, *Raas*, which depicts the life of Lord Sri Krishna, is the main festival and celebrated every year in autumn. Literally, every individual gets involved to make this three-day celebration a grand success. People from different nooks and corners of the country converge to celebrate this festival, which also includes a number of expatriate members of the community. The *Satras* have also honed certain art and craft traditions, which can now be found only here, and exist nowhere else. In Natun Samuguri *Satra* for example, one can still

[1]Dwaipayan, (2013, September 25). World Heritage Site tag and Majuli, The Assam Tribune, (p. 6).
[2]Revised Majuli dossier not yet ready (2013, November 21).The Assam Tribune, available at: http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=nov2113/at09 (accessed November 21, 2013).

find the craft of mask making (See Fig-2); and in the Kamalabari *Satra,* the finest boats are made.

Figure 2: Masks in Samaguri Satra (Photo: D. Sahariah, 2013)

Neo-Vaishnavite Satras

The colourful hub of Assamese neo-Vaishnavite culture still survives but, as mentioned above, remains highly threatened for having suffered from two natural hazards: severe bank erosion and flooding. Historical records unfold that Mahapurush (Saint) Srimanta Sankardeva himself took refuge in Majuli and spent a couple of months at Belguri in West Majuli, which was a place of grandeur for the historic and auspicious and known for *Manikanchan Sanjog*, the first meeting between Mahapurush Srimanta Shankardeva and Mahapurush Madhavdeva, which was also the first *Satra* in Majuli. After the '*Manikanchan Sanjog*', 65 *Satras* were set up. However, today only 22 of the original 65 still survive. The establishment of 65 *Satras* in Majuli is reflective of the importance of Majuli to the *Satras* of Assam.

The main surviving *Satras* are:

- *Dakhinpat Satra*: Founded by Banamalidev, a supporter of *Raasleela*, this is now observed as one of the festivals of Assam.

- *Garamurh Satra*: This *Satra* was founded by Lakshmikanta Deva. During the end of autumn, the traditional *Raasleela* is enacted with pomp and celebrations. Ancient weapons called '*Bartop'* or cannons are preserved here.

- *Auniati Satra*: Founded by NiranjanPathak Deva, the *satra* is famous for the *Paalnaam*[1]and *Apsara* dances and also its extensive assortment of ancient Assamese artefacts, utensils, jewellery and handicrafts. It also has a hundred and twenty five disciples and over 700,000 followers worldwide.

- *Kamalabari Satra*: The Kamalabari *Satra*, founded by Badulapadma Ata, is a centre of art, cultural, literature and classical studies on the Majuli island. Its branch, the Uttar Kamalabari *Satra* has performed cultural programmes of the *Satria* art in different parts of the country and abroad.

- *Begenaati Satra*: It is a reliquary of antiques of cultural importance and an advance centre of performing art. Muraridev, the grandson of Sankaradeva's stepmother was the founder of the *Satra*. The royal raiment, which belonged to the Ahom king Swargadeo Godadhar Singha, was made of gold. Also preserved is the royal umbrella made of gold.

- *Shamaguri Satra*: This *Satra* is famous for mask making in India.

These *Satras* are also the treasure house of 'Borgeet', Matiakhara, Satriya Nritya (Jumora Nritya, Chali Nritya, Notua Nas, Nande Vringee, Sutradhar, Ozapali, Apsara Nritya, Krishna

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[1]*Paalnaam* is a compound word, pal and nam. Pal means by turn and nam means congregational prayer, chanting the name of God. Therefore, *Paalnaam* means holding of incessant congregational prayer or chanting of the name of God by the inmates of the Satra in-group and in rotation.

Nritya and Dasavater Nritya), all promulgated by the saint Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva.

Discussion

With its unique geographical location, abundant natural resource base and being rooted in cultural traditions and spirituality, the Majuli river island emerged as an unique entity with nature-blessed physical and cultural attributes unmatched elsewhere in Assam. The riverine island, being cut off from elsewhere and ensconced by the river Brahmaputra, afforded a unique setting for the *Satra* institution to take root and develop. However, the changing geo-environmental condition of the region especially the intensity of flooding after the 1950 earthquakes increased manifold (Lahiri and Sinha, 2012). The erosion history of Majuli can be divided into two eras: before and after the 1950 earthquake. Before 1950, erosion was insignificant, but after 1950, especially from 1954 onwards, erosion in Majuli has taken a serious turn (Sankhua et al., 2005). Due to the continued erosion of the river Brahmaputra and other tributaries, many *Satras* have been compelled to shift to other places. Thus, from the initial 65 *Satras* only 22 survives, the remaining 43 have been forced by bank erosion either to move away completely from the island or to relocate elsewhere within the island. For instance, *Satras* like Auniati, Uttar Kamalabari, and Dakhinpat have eroded several times. However, they have resettled within the island

Acknowledgement

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at alternative locations: for example, the *Auniati Satra* changed its location six times due to erosion (Sarma, 2012). It is noteworthy to point out here that the Brahmaputra is one of the most highly flood-causing large rivers of the world, carrying an average annual flood load of 47,608 $m3s-1$ with a recurrence interval of 2.56 years (Bhattacharyya and Bora, 1997). Hence, recurring floods and bank erosion in the region have not only devastated the agro-based economy of the island but also the cultural heritage of the region.

Conclusion

Majuli is the pivotal centre of the *Satra* institution of Assam. Originally, there were more than 65 *Satras* in Majuli. Given its physical isolation, the pure and pristine environment, and limited exposure to outside culture, Sankardeva was prompted to select Majuli as the ideal site for establishment of the first *Satra* in 1522 as the place had all the requisite characteristics for such an establishment. However, over the years, due to flood and erosion hazards, the very existence of the island is at stake. In order to maintain the presence of the age-old cultural tradition of the island, the physical processes operating in the region need to be taken cognizance of and tackled if need be, to protect the island and its heritage. Necessary steps need to be taken in order to secure the future of the land, its people and the golden heritage it bears.

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Globalisation, Urbanisation and Spatial Inequality in India with special reference to North East India

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Abstract

Globalisation, an increasing international interaction in economic, political and cultural aspects, is a highly uneven set of processes whose impact varies over space, through time, and between social groups. On one hand, as globalisation seems to be an inevitable reality, many developing countries are restructuring their economies to receive and reap the benefits of widening and deepening global economic interactions. On the other hand, there are regions, which are increasingly excluded, and 'structurally irrelevant' to the current process of globalisation. Moreover, cities are at the core of development strategy of globalisation. While cities in developed countries are becoming centres of globally integrated organisation of economic activity, cities in developing countries are usually at disadvantage positions due to weak financial bases, low levels of technology as well as lack of infrastructural facilities and institutional factors.

The present paper, in the limelight of these contradictions, analyses the differential impacts of economic globalisation in cities and regions of India in general and Northeast India in particular. It is noted that the ushering of globalisation through structural adjustment of the economy during the 1990s has disparate impacts on various cities and regions of the country. The paper also examines the infrastructural constraints of cities of Northeast India as well as the existing institutional arrangements to 'globalise' the region through neoliberal reforms and investments.

Key words: Globalisation, Northeast India, Cities, Urban renewal, Spatial Inequality, Z-Score method

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Introduction

Cities and urban regions are at the core of development strategy of globalisation and are therefore, increasingly redeveloped, renewed, marketed and promoted to attract potential investors and consumers. It has been argued that the process of globalisation is conditioned by restructuring of spatial organisation of economic activities at both global and city level and these are interrelated (Sassen, 2011). The interdependence between global and local has been heightened that cities are not only a product of local processes but "are shaped by the interplay of local, regional, national and international forces" (Healey & Ilbery 1990).

In general, the term 'globalisation' may refer to an increase in international interaction through more intense "transworld simultaneity" and "transworld instantaneity" (Scholte, 2007, p.13) due to "expansion in the scope, velocity, and impacts of international transactions such as trade, investment, migration, and communications" (Warf, 2006). Thus, in the new economic scenario created by globalisation, "the geography and the composition of the global economy changed so as to produce a complex duality: a spatially dispersed, yet globally integrated organisation of economic activity" (Sassen, 1991, p.3).

From economic perspective, globalisation is deeply associated with neoliberalism. At the global scale, neoliberal policies are pushed by multinational corporations (MNCs), and are strategically supported by state(s) on which national elites and MNCs wield substantial influences (Ellwood, 2001). These policies are further promoted by global governance institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation (Peet & Hartwick, 2009) collectively known as the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs).

Globalisation is criticised for intensifying global inequality. The impact of globalisation is highly uneven and varies over space, through time, and between social groups (Pacione, 2009). It has been noted that certain countries and regions failed to participate in economic globalisation. Friedmann (1995, p. 40) describes the global economy as "a core space articulated by a small number of regional control centers and a fragmented and marginalised periphery". Castells (1993, p.37) even contended that globalisation and consequent restructuring of economy has resulted in the emergence of a 'fourth world' of regions that are increasingly excluded and 'structurally irrelevant' to the current process of global capital accumulation.

This contribution examines the process of globalisation in Indian cities with special emphasis on the Northeast region. It is presupposed that the differential impacts of globalisation is clearly exposed in a highly imbalance country like India and the paper tries to argue the relevance of globalisation in an economically underdeveloped region like Northeast India. The first section introduces the idea of globalisation. The following sections then focus on impacts of globalisation in India and Northeast India followed by critical assessment of urban development projects in India. In short, the present paper is an attempt to analyse the complexities of the process of globalisation in India with special reference to the Northeast region.

Globalisation and Cities-The Indian Scenario

"[G]lobalisation in India, expressed in terms of a freer flow of goods and services, capital, technology, and information, owes itself to a macroeconomic crisis that erupted in 1991" (Mathur, 2005, p. 44). India was facing huge balance of payment crisis during the 1990s mainly due to the Gulf War and turned to the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) for funds. The BWIs, while lending the funds, make provisions to restructure the country's internal economy to be more outward-oriented and aligned with the global economy collectively known as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). The SAPs involved a standard package of measures consisting of devaluation of currency, lowering of wages, removal of subsidies, liberalisation, privatisation, infrastructure development and measures to increase the state's revenue.

With the liberalisation of the Indian economy, the stock of foreign direct investment soared from under $2 billion in 1991 to almost $45 billion in 2005. Accordingly, the growth rate of the national economy has increased considerably at least during the early period of neoliberal reforms. While the mean annual growth rate of real Gross National Product (GNP) could not climb above four until the 1980s, the figure grew at more than six after the 1990s consistently. However, it may be pointed out that the inflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is highly unequal at the state level. Among the twenty-eight states of India, only six states viz. Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh together accounted for over 70 per cent of FDI equity inflow to India during 2000-2012 (Mukherjee, 2011). The inter-state difference in FDI inflow has been attributed to differences in macroeconomic policies, geography, political institutions as well as social norms, cultures and beliefs (Basu, 2001; Chakravorty, 2003a).

The structural reform and the associated development strategy are expected to not only generate higher economic growth but also accelerate the pace of urbanisation (Bhagat, 2004; Kundu, 2003). However, it may be seen from Table 1 that during 1991-2001, India's urban population growth rate declined to 31.30 per cent from 36.10 per cent registered in 1981-1991. The growth rate of urban areas has increased again to 32.15 per cent during 2001-2011, which is viewed sceptically by some scholars that the Census of 2011 would have identified new urban centres that are of much smaller denomination than in the earlier censuses (Kundu, 2011b).

Moreover, the population growth rates in the 3-mega cities with more than 10 million populations have slowed down considerably during the last decade. As shown in Table 2, Greater Mumbai urban agglomeration (UA), which had witnessed 30.5 per cent growth in population during 1991-2001, has recorded 12.1 per cent during 2001-2011. Similarly, Delhi UA (from 53.0 per cent to 26.7 per cent in 2001-2011) and Kolkata UA (from 19.9 per cent to 6.9 per cent in 2001-2011) have also slowed down considerably. In fact, predominantly urbanised regions like national capital territory of Delhi and the union territory of Chandigarh has grown during 2001-2011 at rates less than half of that in the preceding decade (Kundu, 2011a) even after inclusion of large number of new census towns which are without recognised urban local bodies. In fact, it has been pointed out that only 26 to 29.5 per cent of the urban growth from 2001-2011 can be attributed to the recognition of new census towns (Pradhan, 2012).

Therefore, it has been asked that why did the rate of urban population in India decline during a period of relatively high economic growth, outward looking economic policies, and greater reliance on market forces for development (Mathur, 2005). Various opinions have been given on the causes of deceleration in urban growth. Some scholars attributed to the success of various rural development programmes (Mohan, 2006) as well as stagnation in traditional organised sector in old metropolises like Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai (Kundu, 2003). It has also been argued that a lot of pressure has been put on the absorptive capacities of urban areas due to infrastructural constraints. However, others maintain that the growth of cities in India is more determined by poor performance of the agricultural sector in the surrounding countryside rather than by a pull from increased industrialisation in cities (Nijman, 2012). In the post-reform period, the rural areas seem to have been forgotten and rural non-development has fuelled a rural refuge migration into the cities. Regardless of these contradictory views, it is certain that the absorptive capacity of Indian cities has not increased in the post-reform period as indicated by decreasing rate of population growth.

Table 1: Pattern of Urban Growth in India, 1981-2011						
Census Year	Urban Population (in Million)	% Urban Population	Decennial growth rate of urban population	Population of million plus cities (in Million)	% of million plus cities to urban population	Decennial growth rate of million plus cities
1981	159.46	23.34	46.14	42.12	26.41	51.34
1991	217.17	25.72	36.10	70.66	32.54	67.75
2001	285.35	27.78	31.30	107.88	38.60	52.67
2011	377.10	31.16	32.15	160.70	42.60	48.96
Source: Census of India, various years						

Table 2: Growth Rates of Top-ten Urban Agglomerations in India, 1981-2011				
Sl. No.	Urban Agglomeration	Growth Rate of Urban Agglomerations		
		1981-1991	1991-2001	2001-2011
1	Greater Mumbai	33.7	30.5	12.1
2	Kolkata	19.9	19.9	6.9
3	Delhi	46.9	53.0	26.7
4	Chennai	26.4	21.0	32.6
5	Bangalore	41.3	37.8	49.1
6	Hyderabad	66.5	27.4	35.0
7	Ahmadabad	29.5	36.4	40.4
8	Pune	44.8	50.6	34.3
9	Surat	64.4	85.1	63.1
10	Kanpur	23.8	32.5	7.5
Source: Census of India, 1981, 1991, 2001 & 2011 (provisional)				

It may, however, be noted that the urban population in India is already skewed towards large and metropolitan cities. According to 2001 Census, 65 per cent of the total urban population in the country settled in Class I cities and above. Increasing urbanisation and continued concentration of the urban population in large cities has led to tremendous pressure on urban basic infrastructures. To overcome the infrastructural constraints and scarcity of land in prime locations of inner city coupled by increasing concern of environmental deterioration in city proper or "bourgeois environmentalism" (Butola, 2000), industrial districts have either shifted or emerged along the metropolitan corridors and coastal areas (Kundu, 2003; Kidwai, 2006) outside the city limits. This is facilitated by increasing mobilities and technological advances in communications and information exchanges that enable domestic and multinational companies to locate anywhere (Mathur, 2005).

Thus, an important impact of globalisation in Indian cities is reorganisation of urban space in the form of deindustrialisation and gentrification. Deindustrialisation or shift in geographical location of industries from inner city to peripheral areas has resulted into redistribution of urban population. To solve the increasing pressure on land, municipalities have either increased the permissible level of floor space index (FSI) and vertical limits of buildings thereby providing space for business houses, commercial activities and high-income residential units. This resulted in gentrification or creation of a few high-density business and high-income residential districts while pushing out households that could not afford the costs. The relatively poorer population has to settle in "degenerated periphery", get jobs in the industries located therein or commute to the

central city for work (Kundu, 2003). As a result, peripheral areas of metropolises have shown relatively higher growth rates in comparison to the growth rates of main cities. For instance, while the Delhi Municipal Corporation (DMC) has shown a decrease in growth rate and the New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC)-a negative growth rate during 2001-2011, Gurgaon at the periphery of Delhi, has grown by a relatively high 5.7 per cent annually over 2001-11(Denis et al., 2012).

The post-reform period is thus, marked by a visible slower growth of formal sector employment in the inner city areas (Mathur & Raikhy, 2002) mainly due to relocation of industries. At the same time, it is maintained that the capacity of unorganised or informal sector to absorb migrants as casual or self-employed workers also seems to be drying up over the years (Kundu & Basu, 1998) that may be due to combined effects of inadequate infrastructures, excessive size of cities and neoliberal policies. Therefore, a big question mark may be put on the beneficial impacts of neoliberal policies on cities that failed to provide employment opportunities to both formal and informal workers.

Another important implication of globalisation in Indian cities is increasing inequality. Using the NSS All-India Debt and Investment Survey, Jayadev et al. (2011) found out that during 1991 and 2002, the median wealth of the urban elite was much higher and grew faster to that of middle classes and manual workers. The wariness of some scholars that the post-reform period may witness an "increase in intra-urban disparity and lead to segmentation, particularly in India's metropolis and other large cities" (Kundu, 2001, p.187) may have been confirmed. Besides, not only intra-urban inequality but also inter-urban inequality increases during the post-reform period. A number of studies have found significant evidences of continuing disparities in India's urban regional system (Chapman et al., 1999; Sivaramakrishnan et. al., 2005; Shaw, 2007; Chakravorty, 2003a). It seems that with the changes brought forth in the post-reform era,

inequalities across regions and between different sizes or class of urban settlements have been accentuated (Kundu, 2003).

The above discussion provides us a point to ponder on the significance of neoliberal policy from the perspective of balance regional development. Inter-state inequality has been rising and regional disparities have been growing in the post-reform period (Ahluwalia, 2000; Bhattacharya & Sakthivel, 2004; Kant et. al, 2004). At district level, Chakravorty (2003a, p.135) has shown that the share of investment in industries continues to concentrate highly in the post-reform period and contended, "the top ten districts attract about one-third and the top 25 districts attract about one-half of total investment in the country in both pre-reform and post-reform periods". Therefore, it may be argued that the outlook that ushered in the reforms of the 1990s has made the inherent assumption of policy continuity invalid and as a result, "it is now necessary to formulate a new theoretical framework for the analysis of regional development" (Chakravorty, 2000, p.368). In the post-liberalisation period, the role of long-term national planning has been questioned (Harris, 2003) and a strong lobby is emerging in large Indian cities for making the cities relatively independent of state and central-level control (Sivaramakrishnan et.al, 2005).

For growth and development of major cities and city-regions, it may be suggested that major cities should be liberated from the stringent control of the national planning process in order to reinvent and transform themselves to become more productive and competitive. The reality is that long term planning like master plans and regional plans have contradicted the dynamics of market capitalism, which is holding the upper hand in the current process of urban and regional development. The 'new' neoliberal state is expected to follow the directions of the market in the long run. Thus, the role of the state has to be redefined and limited to more intensive intervention at the micro-level in the form of

flexible, short-term, local level spatial planning (Harris, 2003).

The Northeast Scenario

Northeast India consisting of the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura is a peripheral and distant territory from the mainland India and is considered as a "space that is territorially organised, patrolled, enforced and enclosed" (Kurien, 2009, p.1). The region accounts for 7.9 per cent of the total geographical area of the country out of which about 70 per cent are hilly areas. It is connected with the rest of India through a narrow corridor, the 'chicken neck' or 'Siliguri Corridor' in North Bengal. There are more than 475 ethnic groups and sub-groups and many of these ethnic communities try to carve out their own ethnic states after the independence of India until today. The region's path to development has been severely constrained by an intricate web of geographical, political, social and economic problems.

It seems that changes due to economic globalisation have been modest, if not bypassed, in the Northeast region. The structural adjustment and consequent liberalisation of the national economy has not yet benefited the region's economy and is "one of the pockets that do not seem to have profited in the changed economic environment" (Bezbaruah, 2007, p. 83). It may be noted that during 2008-2009, the region received US $ 42 million, which was only 0.2 per cent of the total FDI inflow in the country. The figure was even reduced in 2010-2011 to 8 million, which constituted only 0.04 per cent of the entire FDI inflow in the country (Mukherjee, 2011). Thus, it has been argued that the prospect of globalisation is not promising as the region is unable to attract global players (Roy & Adhikari, 2008).

As the Northeast failed to participate in the globalisation process, no significant change has been identified in urban areas of the region. Instead, urban growth rates in bigger Northeast states have declined considerably in the post-reform period in comparison to the preceding decade as shown in Table 3. However, it may also be noted that urban areas in Northeast India have been frequently reorganised through inclusion and denotification of whole towns or part(s) of towns due to administrative reasons. Large part of the urban growth process is due to notification of smaller villages as towns and expansion of bigger towns through incorporation of outlying villages.

At city level, the situation is more vivid. In 2011 census, there were twelve Class I cities in the region. Interestingly, the growth rates of all cities except Imphal, Agartala and Shillong have declined considerably during 2001-2011 in comparison to the preceding decades. It may be argued that cities in the region have lost their capacity to absorb migration, which may be due to declining employment opportunities and increasing diseconomies of scale without any significant investment in the post-reform period. The abnormal growth rate of Agartala city during 2001-2011 may be explained because of increase in the area of the city. In 2001, Agartala was under municipal council and its area was 15.81 km^2 but by 2011, it became an urban agglomeration and the area of the city has increased to 58.84 km.^{2} Similarly, the high growth rates of Imphal UA and Shillong UA during 2001-2011 were due to inclusion of a number of census towns. For instance, Shillong UA comprised only five census towns in 2001 but another five census towns were added in 2011 apart from Shillong Municipality and Shillong Cantonment.

Why do cities in Northeast India failed to attract significant capital investment from private and global players? Till today, the region's economic backwardness due to geographical, political and socio-economic factors resulted into physical and economic isolation of the region. The failure to integrate with the outside world positioned the region into a mere consuming space.

It may be argued that the region has all the necessary characteristics of places that are likely to be bypassed by globalisation. The region's inland location or landlockedness, small market and weak economic base, as well

Table 3: Growth of Urban Population, Northeast India, 1971-2011							
Sl. No.	States	Percentage of Urban Population				Annual Exponential Growth Rate		
		1981	1991	2001	2011	1981-91	1991- 01	2001-11
1.	Arunachal Pradesh	6.32	12.21	20.41	22.67	9.28	7.00	3.18
2.	Assam	9.88	11.09	12.72	14.08	3.29	3.09	2.43
3.	Manipur	26.44	27.69	23.88	30.20	2.98	1.21	3.55
4.	Meghalaya	18.03	18.69	19.63	20.07	3.10	3.16	2.70
5.	Mizoram	25.17	46.2	49.50	51.58	9.57	3.27	2.42
6.	Nagaland	15.54	17.28	17.74	28.96	5.58	5.27	5.15
7.	Sikkim	16.23	9.12	11.10	24.96	-3.23	4.83	9.29
8.	Tripura	10.98	15.26	17.02	26.17	6.19	2.53	5.65
	All India	23.73	25.72	27.78	31.16	3.09	2.73	2.76
Source: Census of India-1981, 1991, and 2001								

Table 4: Growth Rates of Class I Cities in Northeast India, 1981-2011								
Sl. No.	City	State	Population			Decadal Growth Rate		
			1991	2001	2011	81-91*	91-01	01-11
1	Guwahati UA	Assam	5,77,591	8,18,809	9,68,549	131.60	41.76	18.28
2	Imphal UA	Manipur	2,02,839	2,50,234	4,14,288	26.76	23.36	65.56
3	Agartala UA	Tripura	1,57,358	1,89,998	3,99,688	19.04	20.74	110.36
4	Shillong UA	Meghalaya	2,23,366	2,67,662	3,54,325	27.93	19.83	32.37
5	Aizawl NT	Mizoram	1,55,240	2,28,280	2,91,822	108.40	47.05	27.83
6	Silchar UA	Assam	1,15,483	1,84,105	2,28,985	119.57	59.42	24.37
7	Dibrugarh UA	Assam	1,23,885	1,37,661	1,54,019	49.51	11.11	11.88
8	Jorhat UA	Assam	1,11,584	1,37,814	1,53,249	58.52	23.50	11.19
9	Nagaon UA	Assam	93,350	1,23,265	1,47,137	68.09	32.04	19.36
10	Tinsukia UA	Assam	73,918	1,08,123	1,25,637	34.61	46.27	16.19
11	Dimapur MCl	Nagaland	57,182	98,096	1,23,777	73.92	71.55	26.17
12	Tezpur UA	Assam	54,999	1,05,377	1,00,477	38.16	91.59	-4.64
Source: Census of India, 2001& 2011(provisional)								
* The decadal growth rates for Assam towns should be read as 1971-1991 because census was not held in Assam in 1981.								

as insurgency and bad governance are likely to inhibit the growth process of the region.

Adding to this, it has also been argued that in the post-reform period while the core cities continue to strengthen their global trading links, "the small and medium towns, located away from the emerging global centres of growth, particularly those in backward regions, have failed to attract much private investment"(Kundu, 2003, p. 3087). Cities in Northeast India are relatively smaller in size in comparison to other cities in the country. Large cities are bound to be more productive as they attract skilled and creative individuals, which, in turn, are responsible for the generation of new ideas and the application of existing ideas in novel ways (Jacobs, 1969; Florida, 2005; Glaeser, 2011). Moreover, there has been acute deficiency of infrastructures and basic amenities across the region's states and cities. All states of Northeast India were classified under the 'low category states' in infrastructural development Index (TFC, 2004).

An attempt has been made to find out urban infrastructural index for Northeastern cities with the help of Z-Score method.[1] The

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[1] A Z-Score or standard score method is a simple, but popular method of rescaling and 'standardisation' of data. Z-score measures the number of standard

composite index in Table 5 has shown that Imphal in Manipur is the most developed city in terms of urban basic amenities followed by Agartala and Shillong. It may be observed that certain cities in the region have low percentage of permanent house, drinking water facilities as well as drainage facilities. Generally, Northeastern cities are characterised by bad and congested roads, poor housing, and inadequate space for leisure and recreational facilities, inadequate and irregular power supply and communication facilities.

Besides, it is believed that the underdevelopment of industrial sector is one of the main reasons behind the exclusionary status of the region. It has been maintained that the northeastern region is in a disadvantageous position for industrial development due to inadequate infrastructure, small and fragmented markets, and social unrest and terrorist activities (Giri, 2008). Due to near absence of large-scale industries, the urban economy in northeast India is flooded with informal sector. It has been estimated that the share of informal workers to total workers in 2004-05 was 84.41 per cent and 83.72 per cent for Assam and other Northeastern states respectively as against the all India average of 86.32. More interestingly, the growth rate of informal sector during 1999-2000 and 2004-2005 was 7.17 per cent and 5.83 per cent for Assam and other Northeastern states respectively as against the all India average of 2.88 per cent.

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deviations an observation is away from the mean of all observations. The method converts all indicators to a common scale with an average of 0 and standard deviation of 1 that enable comparison of observed data. The method is defined as $Z = (X_{ij}-X_j)/ σ_j$, Where Z_i = Z-score for the ith district, X_{ij} = X variable in the ith district and jth variable, X_j = mean of the jth variable and $σ_j$ = standard deviation of the jth variable. After calculating Z-score for all the variables, composite score for each district is found out by adding all the Z-score values of each variable as $C_i=\sum Z_i$, where, C_i = composite score for the ith district, $\sum Z_i$ = summation of Z-score for the ith district.

Therefore, low intense globalisation in the Northeast does not appear to produce any significant impact on the urban forms or urban spatial structure. In most cities, the only visible changes include the changing sky-line of cities due to erection of mobile transmission towers and renovations of buildings for multinational company's outlets. Only Guwahati has witnessed modest changes in its form with the rise of flyovers, shopping malls and high standard hotels and restaurants. From a regional development perspective, it may be argued that the northeast does not have any central core or city, which is capable to integrate the economy and culture of the variegated ethnic tribes of the region. The northeast has failed to identify itself as a 'region' in terms of nodes and inter-linkages, cultural cohesion and economic integration in spite of nearness and similarities. In the era of increasing importance of interconnectedness, development is related to proximity, concentrations and agglomerations and integrations of firms and markets more than before, and the term 'region' has evolved to mean "any area of sub-national extent that is functionally organised around some internal central pole" (Scott & Storper, 2003, p.580).

Although the future of globalisation in Northeast India is uncertain, the region has witnessed percolation of ideologies that drive economic globalisation. These ideological elements of globalisation or "ideological globalisation" include support for markets and trade, democracy and decentralisation, good governance and ideology of identity and identity politics, and are far more pervasive than economic globalisation (Chakravorty, 2003b). Moreover, in the absence of economic impact, cultural globalisation seems more influencing (Nayak, 2011). An endemic aspect of globalisation is that people and cultures are on the move. The region has become a supplier of cheap labour as lots of trained nurses, domestic helpers and workers in hospitality sectors are getting employment in other cities of India and abroad.

Table 5: Urban Infrastructures and Composite Index, Selected Cities, NE India, 2001

Class I cities	Percentage of Urban Households having									Composite index
	Drinking water	Electricity	Toilet	Bathroom	Permanent House	LPG	Separate kitchen	Latrine	Drainage	
Imphal	89.40	97.55	96.73	30.21	33.91	68.32	93.00	96.73	72.59	4.35
Agartala	95.75	97.08	97.39	70.52	11.45	73.32	93.28	97.39	77.86	4.17
Shillong	92.92	97.45	95.48	83.31	54.30	46.75	95.98	95.48	95.50	2.44
Aizawl	57.95	97.38	98.77	69.28	81.70	84.58	92.98	99.14	78.80	2.15
Dibrugarh	98.73	76.39	97.69	62.40	45.78	61.31	95.47	97.69	74.33	2.01
Silchar	83.86	78.42	98.29	69.67	48.18	54.59	92.02	98.29	68.95	1.87
Guwahati	54.76	80.14	97.11	55.72	43.52	69.58	94.66	97.11	62.68	1.62
Dimapur	38.19	88.63	98.16	57.29	47.83	49.22	87.97	98.16	66.28	1.56
Nagaon	99.69	78.46	99.38	47.86	34.29	52.41	93.64	99.38	44.04	1.13
Source: Census of India-2001										

Lastly, globalisation is often equated with the much-hyped Look east Policy (LEP) in this part of the country. Implemented by the Indian government at the time of neoliberal shift in Indian economy, the LEP has been conceived as a policy to economically integrate the northeast with the South-East Asian nations. Major initiatives like opening of border trade and major infrastructure projects like Kaladan Multi-modal Transit and Transport project (KMMTP) that links Myanmar and mainland India through Mizoram are expected to provide opportunities to revive the local economies as well as situating the region as a transit corridor. At the same time, it has been argued that as the region is suffering from endogenous infrastructural constraints, the inflow of cheap products from other states and South-East Asia through opening of Indo-Myanmar border trade in the post-liberalisation period has led to the closure of many manufacturing units, ranging from the large to the small (Sharma, 2012). Therefore, it may be suggested that the opening of the region has to be preceded by internal transformation.

Urban Renewal: Towards Globalising the Indian Cities

In the era of globalisation, cities have to position themselves within the global system to facilitate flows of capital, goods and people to receive growth and development. They have to be included in the "space of flows", where they constitute crucial nodes in a world-wide network and act as points of transmission that

incentivised strengthening of local governance through implementation of 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, legislations have been enacted in the states of Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram for the establishment of urban local bodies. Moreover, it has been conceived that the mission should take into account small and medium size cities to strengthen a regional urban system. Thus, Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small & Medium Towns (UIDSSMT) and Integrated Housing & Slum Development

link the global with the local and regional (Von Kempen & Naerssen, 2008).

In India, it was maintained that the rate of urban infrastructure investment was inadequate to sustain the demand of modernising, industrialising, and increasingly urban economy (Mohan, 2006). Therefore, the central government launched Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) in 2005 to put the Indian cities on a fast track of development by focusing on improvement of economic and social infrastructure of cities, ensuring basic services to the urban poor as well as strengthening of municipal governments. JNNURM covered 63 cities throughout the country including seven mega cities, 28 million plus cities and 28 other sub-million cities, which are either state capitals or cities of particular cultural, historical or tourist significance. Thus, all capital cities of the northeastern states are also covered by the two components of the mission viz. Urban Infrastructure and Governance (UIG) and Basic Services to the Urban Poor (BSUP). City Development Plan (CDP) has been prepared for each city and funds have been allocated as per acceptance of requirements. Infrastructural development program is given the main priority under which projects for constructions of roads and flyovers, drainage, large market complex and water supply, urban transport, etc have been rolled out.

An important implication of JNNURM is the renewed importance of urban local governments. Since the JNNURM has

Programme (IHSDP) to cover towns and cities other than the mission cities.

Implemented at the time of the introduction of New Economic Policy (NEP) in India, it was argued that the *raison d'etre* for the urban renewal mission echoed the neoliberal policies that the reform would lead to economic growth assisted with higher rate of urbanisation. It was expected that cities covered by the mission would emerge as "engines of growth" for the respective urban system (Banerjee-Guha, 2009).

However, urban renewal or inner city development is often criticised as anti-poor due to its association with slum-clearance or relocation. In India and Northeast India as well, most of the JNNURM housing projects for the poor under Basic Services to the Urban Poor BSUP program are systematically located in the outskirts of the cities in order to make slum-free cities. Thus, Mahadevia (2011) has pointed out that the metropolitan story in the reform era has been one of parallel and conflicting policies, with one set of policies focused on large-scale urban infrastructure projects to make cities into engines of economic growth and the other focused on poverty alleviation. While the former excludes the urban poor, the latter includes them.

Although the mission has been criticised for its systematic tendency towards increasing social inequality in large cities, making the disadvantaged sections of the society more vulnerable (Banerjee-Guha, 2009), it is expected that the mission will tackle infrastructural constraints in Northeast cities. Due to underdeveloped economy, states and municipalities in Northeast India are not able to mobilise resources and are in need to develop physical infrastructures and basic amenities for the welfare of the residents. In the relative absence of private investment, the Northeastern states are compelled to embrace the state-controlled urban renewal project in order to develop the economic condition of the region and its cities even if it is intended to "facilitate neoliberal capitalist accumulation" (Banerjee-Guha, 2011, p.83).

Conclusion

Globalisation seems to be an inevitable reality and has been penetrating various countries with different intensities. Cities are at the centre-stage of the process of globalisation and the process is expected to increase urban growth and productivity. On the contrary, the growth rate of Indian cities has declined considerably after the 1990s indicating the minimal impact of neoliberal reforms. In the meantime, deindustrialisation or relocation of industries has taken place from inner cities.

Therefore, the neoliberal reforms not only failed to induce growth and development but also witnessed relocation of poorer population from central city areas to the peripheries.

Another important implication of globalisation in Indian cities is increase in inequality. The poorer people are getting poorer due to greater reliance on market rather than the public. At the same time, slower growth rate of traditional mega cities and increasing inter-city inequality has cascading effects on regional inequality as cities are at the core of regional development process. As a result, renewed emphasis to frame flexible and short-term regional development policy and planning based on large cities has been suggested.

Without having a core city, Northeast India has been conceptualised as a regional planning unit. The region fails to integrate internally and with outside. It could not translate its available resources and small size to achieve considerable development. Rather, the geographical disadvantages, the small sizes of market, weak economic and infrastructural bases inhibit full penetration of globalisation as indicated by negligible percentage composition of FDI. Cities in the region failed to expand its population base in the post-reform period due to employment and infrastructural constraints. The declining absorptive capacities of the region's cities reflect the unconvincing situation of the region to receive globalisation. In the meantime, ideological and cultural globalisations have been experienced thereby positioning the region into a mere consuming space.

To globalise cities in India, major projects like urban renewal projects have been formulated along neoliberal path to development. Urban renewal might have repercussions in the existing socio-spatial structure towards social segregation, marginalisation and spatial differentiation. However, states and cities in Northeast India are financially poor and wholly dependent upon the federal government. Therefore, contradiction appears when we talk of liberation of large cities in India from state and federal controls, and favouritism towards

strengthening of government controlled schemes like JNNURM in Northeast India. It is also methodologically inappropriate to compare large cities in India where neoliberalism is encroaching upon poorer spaces with cities in Northeast India where traces of liberalisation are yet to be found.

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Reinterpreting the 'Bard': Shakespearean Performances in India and (East) Germany

Mr. Dhurjjati Sarma[†]

Abstract

This essay attempts to undertake a comparative study of the Shakespearean appropriations in late 19th century India under colonial rule on one hand, and in mid-20th century (East) Germany on the other. While 19th century Indian responses to Shakespeare carried a covert nationalist agenda against the British rulers who had made him complicit in the colonial project, the mid-20th century German adaptations found in him, a potent site for voicing their opposition against the governments, which had imposed censorship regulations upon newspapers, books and television. Within this framework and making use of the textual, performative and audience sensibility components, the paper would endeavor to: a) explore the nuances in the performance strategies of selected playwrights from both the countries, and understand the extent of divergences and departures from the English text; and b) scrutinise the location of these performances respectively within the overlapping currents of colonial modernity, nationality and regional identity in the 19th and 20th century India, and the post-war communist regimes operating in (East) Germany.

Key words: Theatre in India and Germany, Shakespearean adaptations, Comparative Analysis, Indian Response to Shakespeare

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Introduction

I begin this essay with a question. What has 'Shakespeare' got to do with something which is not English? Rather, how should one negotiate with the supposed 'Englishness' of his plays when they are performed before an audience whose native tongue is not English? From the 18th century onwards, Shakespeare has been increasingly identified within the national culture of England as the 'poet of the nation' (Joughin, 1997), and that somewhat explains his posthumous role in the proliferation of 'English studies' as part of the subsequent colonial mission in Asia and elsewhere. This essay deals primarily with the two counter-structures erected against the 'Englishness' and the 'nationalisation' of the Bard within the Anglophone academia.

The first counter-structure against the 'Englishness' of Shakespeare was posited in Germany in the 18th century. It was in Germany where the first concerted efforts towards producing approximate translations of Shakespearean plays were carried out. It was as early as 1775 that one of the first translators of Shakespeare in German, Eschenburg coined the expression '*der deutsche Shakespeare*' [the German Shakespeare], which testifies to the enthusiasm with which the insulated chamber of 'Englishness' within which the playwright had so far been housed, was dismantled (Rendtorff, 1916, quoted in Kennedy, 1993). It is worth noting that the German love for Shakespeare was not dictated by any feeling of animosity or rivalry against the English. The counter-structure was mainly oriented towards utilising his foreignness as a model for a future Germany, as another coinage namely, *"unser Shakespeare"* [our Shakespeare] would suggest (Kennedy, 1993). This 'innocent' counter-structure served as a foil to the second counter-structure which was erected as and when Shakespeare was taken outside the European and American world and subsequently got enmeshed within the 'civilising mission' which became the euphemism for the colonial project of imperialism and domination (Singh, 1996).

'Shakespeare' had first travelled to India years before the British established their colonial empire in the subcontinent. The East India Company, in its third sponsored voyage in 1607 sent three ships, the *Dragon*, the *Hector* and the *Consent* to the East Indies, under the command of William Keeling. Of these three, the *Hector*, commanded by William Hawkins was embarking on a visit to the court of the then Mughal emperor, but owing to stormy weather in the sea, had to be anchored at Sierra Leone (a country in West Africa) for almost six weeks. While the ship was stranded on the shore, two performances of Shakespeare were enacted by the sailors aboard the ship (Loomba, 1997). This crisp information leads one to ponder upon the complicity between Shakespeare and the expansionist enterprise. If on one hand, the continued presence of 'Shakespeare' aboard a ship which was on its way for 'profit and empire' anticipated the eventual construction of Shakespeare as a 'key signifier within the colonial discourse' (Singh, 1996), then on the other hand, the encouragement of Shakespearean performances among rude sailors as a veritable means to keep the crew away from 'quarrels, mutinies and seditions' was a stratagem which later formed the base of the institutionalisation of English education in India (Loomba, 1997).

Based on these two historical backgrounds pertaining respectively to the two 'counter-structures', I would attempt to document the 19th and 20th century adaptations of Shakespearean plays in India and East Germany respectively, within the contemporary socio-political events, thereby defining the reconstructions and redefinitions to which the 'original' plays were subjected.

Shakespeare in (East) Germany: From a play-wright to a social historian

After the initial spurt of Shakespearean translations and adaptations at the hands of Schiller and co. in the 18th and 19th century, the tradition of appropriation was re-invigorated after the Second World War in East Germany, with Gustav von Wangenheim's

production of *Hamlet* at the Deutsches Theater in December 1945. In this period, a decisive attempt was made to redefine the German Shakespeare from a socialist perspective through Bertolt Brecht's ideas about an epic theatre[1] and the alienation effect.[2] Brecht's attempt at the production of *Coriolanus* was based more on fable and theme rather than character, on social issues rather than individual anguish. He found striking coincidences between the political situation in Rome during the formative years of the Roman Republic and the contemporary situation in post-war East Germany (Ewbank, 1996).

Under the Nazis, *Coriolanus* had been a popular play, the performances of which depicted the masses as confused, timid, fickle, and in need of a strong leader. Brecht's adaptation of

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[1] A form of drama and a method of presentation developed in Germany in the 1920s. The term was first used in the early plays of Arnolt Bronnen and Alfons Paquet. Piscator was the founder and director of this influential movement. Since then the term 'epic theatre' has been most closely associated with Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956). Epic theatre was a break with established dramatic styles. In Brecht's words, the 'essential point of epic theatre is that it appeals less to the spectator's feelings than to his reason'. It denotes a form of narrative/chronicle play which is didactic, which is not restricted by the unity of time and which presents a series of episodes in a simple and direct way: a kind of linear narration ('each scene for itself'). Notable features are the use of a chorus, a narrator, slide projection, film, placards and music (Cuddon, 2013). Epic drama was devoted to the expression of political ideas and ideals, though not overtly propagandist (Bertolt Brecht: An Overview, available at: http://academic.evergreen.edu/curricular/ppandp/PDFs/Brecht-a%20brief%20overview.pdf, accessed November 12, 2013).

[2] It is an idea central to the dramatic theory of the German dramatist-director Bertolt Brecht. It involves the use of techniques designed to distance the audience from emotional involvement in the play through jolting reminders of the artificiality of the theatrical performance. Examples of such techniques include explanatory captions or illustrations projected on a screen; actors stepping out of character to lecture, summarise, or sing songs; and stage designs that do not represent any locality but that, by exposing the lights and ropes, keep the spectators aware of being in a theatre (Encyclopedia Britannica, available at: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15423/alienation-effect, accessed November 11, 2013).

Coriolanus however, was centred more on the role of the masses in defending the Roman Republic rather than on the protagonist himself. His idea was to reconstruct the play not as the tragedy of a *unersatzlich* – 'indispensable' or 'irreplaceable' – individual, but as a play, which espouses the centrality of the masses. Playing against the Shakespearean formula of ending a tragedy with the death of the protagonist, Brecht adds a final scene to the play, in which the Roman Senate learns of Coriolanus' death but after a brief silence, carries on with its normal work. The play ends on the one ruthless word, 'Abgeschlagen' ('Rejected') and the stage direction 'The Senate continues its normal business' (Ewbank 1996, p. 8).

For Brecht, the masses become the idealised instrument for social development. The Roman society reaches a state of development where it no longer requires the service of a military hero who cannot bend in order to adjust himself to a new social situation. In Brecht, the tragedy of Coriolanus is concomitant with the inevitable historical development from the Renaissance to the culture of Socialism, and therefore the protagonist has had to submit his will to that of the masses, failing which he becomes redundant and dispensable. Shakespeare in this context could be seen not merely as a playwright, but increasingly as a social historian.

> "Shakespeare in performance as a representation of past history was often understood by the spectators to be a critical commentary on their own present, and Shakespeare came to enjoy a political relevance that he may not have had since the days of Elizabethan England." (Guntner 1993, pp. 109-110)

Post Brecht, dramatists and theatre directors like Muller, B.K. Tragelehn, Adolf Dresen, Christoph Schroth and Alexander Lang utilised the Shakespearean plays as the platform to criticise and question the official versions of history, which ignored the obvious conflicts in the contemporary East German society.

The history of German Shakespeare, therefore, delineates the changing responses towards the playwright across a period of 200-250 years. If the initial response in the 18th century was propelled by a more romanticised notion of awe and admiration, the 20th century and the ravages of two World Wars changed this perception altogether. Even in the face of increasing animosity between Great Britain and Germany in the intervening years between the wars, the German love for Shakespeare stood the test of time. After Schiller in the 18th century, Brecht and his epic theatre rejuvenated the German Shakespeare in the 20th century. In the hands of Brecht and his associates, chosen Shakespearean plays were reinterpreted in conformity with the contemporary political atmosphere in East Germany. In a somewhat similar manner, the narrative of Shakespearean transformation in India was also crafted in sync with the ongoing political developments in India in the 19th century. In this context, the regional appropriation of Shakespeare in India or elsewhere was significant not only from the literary point of view, but also more importantly, from the fact that the (re)enactment of Shakespeare at the hands of the colonised natives was a gesture at demystifying the supposed 'Englishness' of the Bard. It was also an attempt towards the subversion of the authenticity upon which the juxtaposition of 'Shakespeare' and 'Englishness' was effected.

Shakespeare in India: Politics of Ambivalence

Sukanta Chaudhuri, in his essay titled 'Shakespeare in India', attempts to understand the process of Indian response to Shakespeare on two concurrent levels: one is called the 'reader's translation' which would mean sort of a literal transposition of the text into the format of classical Sanskrit dramatic composition, and the other, the performance-oriented versions, interspersed with tools of popular entertainment like songs, colloquial dialogues etc. entirely catering to the sensibilities of the audience. He considers them as twin nodes between whom, is an interface

zone wherein he locates much of what happens to Shakespeare in India. He further identifies three 'paths' upon which the Indian response to Shakespeare was based. They are namely, academic study, translation/adaptation and performance. He rightly points out that these three were overlapping paths, with one converging with the other thereby hinting at their mutual inter-dependence upon one another.

Jyotsna Singh (1996) has rightly remarked that Shakespeare became a key signifier within the colonial discourse. This statement is aptly illustrated in the fact that Shakespeare was made complicit in the colonial agenda of disseminating English education to mould the native masses in order to serve the interests of the British Empire. Following the Battle of Plassey[1] in 1757 and possibly earlier, a number of playhouses were built in and around Calcutta where the British officials stationed in India entertained themselves through plays performed by traveling companies from abroad. Among the plays performed, the ones by Shakespeare were the most prominent. After the establishment of the Hindu College in Calcutta in 1817 and the subsequent imposition of Macaulay's Minute on Education[2] in 1835,

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[1] The Battle of Plassey was an important landmark in the establishment of British rule in India. It took place in 1757 between the armies of East India Company, under the command of Robert Clive and Siraj-ud-Daula, the *Nawab* of Bengal. For more information on this battle, readers may refer to Cavendish Richard (2007). The Battle of Plassey, *History Today*, 57 (6), available at http://www.historytoday.com/richard-cavendish/battle-plassey (accessed November 02, 2013).

[2] Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) was a British historian, essayist and parliamentarian. His 'Minute on Indian Education, dated the 2nd February 1835' laid the foundation of English education in India. His 'Minute' contained certain debatable statement like: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" and "…a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia". For accessing the text of 'Minute on Indian Education', please refer to Minute by the Hon'ble T. B. Macaulay, dated the 2nd February 1835, available at: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00gener

the involvement of the natives with the Shakespearean texts and performances began with the right earnest. Simultaneous with these academic involvements were popular renderings of Shakespearean plays by the Parsi theatre companies beginning in the 1850s, which adapted the plots and characters to suit the taste of the contemporary audiences.

Thus, Shakespeare did not remain confined to European playhouses after being introduced in India. Translated into several Indian languages, including Hindi, Sanskrit, Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati, Kannada, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Oriya, Malayalam, Sindhi and Assamese, the last century and half has seen at least two hundred translated and adapted versions of the plays of Shakespeare in vernacular languages. It is a fact worth mentioning that there had appeared at least one translation of Shakespeare even before the Hindu College was established. In fact, an Englishman named Monkton did the first translation of a Shakespearean play into an Indian language. He had carried out a translation of The Tempest into Bengali. He was educated in Fort William College of Calcutta, and later on gained employment in the East India Company.[1] His translation was published in 1809 but no remnants of his text can be found at this date (Das, 2005). The first Shakespearean play adapted in an Indian language was *The Taming of the Shrew* adapted in Gujarati as *Nathari Firangiz Thekani Avi* [A Bad Firangi (European) Woman Brought to Sense] and staged in Surat in November 1852. One of the early translations of Shakespeare into an Indian language was done in Bengali in 1853 by

Harachandra Ghosh, who translated *The Merchant of Venice* as *Bhanumati Chittabilas*.

Ania Loomba (1998) has listed the variety of ways, in which the intellectuals and artists from the colonised world responded to such a Shakespeare: sometimes they mimicked their colonial masters and echoed their praise of Shakespeare; at other times they challenged the cultural authority of both Shakespeare and colonial regimes by turning to their own bards as sources of alternative wisdom and beauty. In yet other instances, they appropriated Shakespeare as their comrade in anti-colonial arms by offering new interpretations and adaptations of his work. Thus, Shakespeare entered into a complex relationship with the native intelligentsia that was shaped by colonial politics and served as an icon of British cultural superiority.

The first generation of English educated natives, particularly those from Hindu College expressed its overt reverence to Shakespeare through faithful renderings of his plays by elocution as well as enactments. This reverence towards Shakespeare was mitigated in the following generations when he was taken out of the hallowed space of the academia into the popular stage. Moreover, it was here that the process of vernacular transformation of Shakespeare began. This process coincided somewhat with the growth of anti-colonial feelings, which led to the Sepoy Mutiny[2] in

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allinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html (accessed November 05, 2013).

[1] The English East India Company was founded in 1600, as *The Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies*. It gained a foothold in India in 1612 after the Mughal emperor Jahangir granted it the rights to establish a trading post, in the port of Surat on the western coast of India. Interested readers may refer to 'East India Company', Encyclopædia Britannica, available at: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/176643/East-India-Company (accessed November 13, 2013).

[2] The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 (also known as the First War of Indian Independence) was a rebellion of soldiers or Sepoys of British East India Company. It started on the 10th of May 1857, in the town of Meerut, and soon ignited into other mutinies and civilian uprisings, mostly in the upper Gangetic Plain and central India, with the major aggressions restrained to present-day Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, northern Madhya Pradesh, and the Delhi region. The insurgents of Sepoy Mutiny speedily captured large portions of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, including Delhi, where they set up the Mughal ruler, Bahadur Shah Zafar, as Emperor of Hindustan. The mutiny, though, was a widespread movement, but was ultimately unsuccessful and ended its course in 1858. Readers may be redirected to Encyclopædia Britannica, available at: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/285821/Indian-Mutiny (accessed November 10, 2013) for further reading on this monumental event in Indian history.

1857. Therefore, it can be speculated that a subtle process of vernacularisation was in its nascent stage whereby the colonial construction of Shakespeare was to be supplanted by an alternative counter-construction. By such a speculation, it is by no means suggested that Shakespeare became overtly anti-colonial. In fact, Shakespeare was, and he is still, in the postcolonial context, a covert mouthpiece for the colonial (or neo-colonial) agenda. However, what is important is to understand the hermeneutics of the process whereby Shakespeare was indigenised not merely as a literary metaphor but also somewhat ambivalently, as a political subterfuge.

The Indian response to Shakespeare is tinged with attitudes of both reverence and resistance towards the 'universalising' tendencies of his plays. At the root of such ambivalence lies the ethos of modernism. Modernism in Indian literature in the 19th century produced a hybrid class of new writers who by dint of their English education, adhered to the value system perpetuated by the colonial establishment. Coupled with this adherence was a growing sense of belongingness to a nation, and by extension, the consciousness of being under the rule of a foreign power. In this way, the theater itself became a site of staging the nation (Chatterjee, 2007). Shakespeare became the most potent ingredient of such 'stagings'.

The second half of the 19th century also witnessed the movement of Indian Theatre (especially, in Bengal) out of the 'exclusive' patronage of the 'babus' and into the public sphere, where it gained a professional touch at the hands of theatre stalwarts like Girish Chandra Ghosh and Amrit Lal Basu. For Girish Chandra, it was a courageous attempt to have created a new Bengali dramatic idiom whereby he tried to fuse the local folk traditions of musical performances like the *jatra* with the Western dramatic styles popularised by Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Dinabandhu Mitra. This caused him to renounce literally the classical Sanskrit methodology of dramaturgy, and instead he chose to delve deep into the

recesses of Bengali folk-culture for his dramatic materials on one hand and simultaneously remaining receptive to the Western modes of dramatic practices on the other (Chatterjee, 2007). Even though his repertoire of plays include only one Shakespearean adaptation, that one being *Macbeth*, yet like his Assamese contemporary Lakshminath Bezbarua (who in fact, had twice attempted to translate Shakespeare, but his efforts remained incomplete in both), Girish Chandra decided finally to emulate Shakespeare in terms of characterisation and certain other aspects, rather than attempting to do any further adaptations. One reason for this was the box-office failure of his *Macbeth,* which might have discouraged him from making a second attempt to translate Shakespeare. However still, his translation is considered the best attempt made by any Bengali at 'indigenising' Shakespeare. One important aspect of Girish's translation is its emphasis on the performance of the play, literally 'custom-made' for the Bengali commercial stage. The fact that the production failed in the box-office however, would not mean that it could be dismissed as a poor and ineffective attempt. Secondly, Girish's decision not to stage Shakespeare again was not a momentary one born out of experiencing mental pain or incurring financial loss. For Ghosh, his *Macbeth* failed because the audience was not trained enough to appreciate Shakespeare. He felt that the contemporary audience sensibility was yet to understand the kind of dramatic presentation which contained no song and dance (Chatterjee, 2007).

The play however, did contain five songs, four assigned to the witches and one to Malcolm's army. Sudipto Chatterjee, speaking about contemporary audience sensibilities, observed that "Shakespeare was too 'foreign' for the Bengali audience and, as a result, failed to touch them. However, when the principles of Shakespearean drama were applied unannounced to indigenous dramas, the plays were well received" (159). While I would choose to differ with Chatterjee as far as his remark on the foreignness of Shakespeare is concerned, yet I would certainly agree with the

observation regarding the audience sensibility. Girish Chandra's *Macbeth* was performed in the last decade of the 19th century, and by that time, Shakespeare had been sufficiently 'indianised' upon the Bengali stage and he was not anymore 'foreign'. What possibly was the reason for audience disapproval was a sense of 'incongruity' that had crept into the translation of the play. The audience component of the late 19th century Bengal was adept enough to be aware of the nuances implicated within a dramatic production, Shakespearean or otherwise. A contemporary English newspaper *The Englishman* in a review of the play, expressed that:

> "A Bengali Thane of Cawdor is a lively suggestion of incongruity, but the reality is an admirable reproduction of all conventions of the English stage." (Chatterjee, 2007: p.159)

From the perspective of the British, in spite of the 'incongruity', the play is successful in terms of its stagecraft. However, for an Indian audience, this ingenuity in managing the stage-space is not enough. They required something more which Girish Chandra apparently could not deliver, not because of his lack of expertise but more due to his own standpoint on the matter of translation. Ghosh was certainly aware of the contemporary audience mindset and he wrote the play by keeping in mind, its stageability. His translation of *Macbeth* was also dictated by his desire to create a Bengali counterpart to Shakespeare's original. This brought in a certain degree of ambiguity as Girish Chandra was somehow not at ease with maintaining a balance between what to retain and what to indigenise. In an in-depth textual analysis of the play, Abhishek Sarkar (2010) deftly delineates how Girish Chandra variously attempts to retain some allusions at some places while supplying corresponding cultural references at other places, towards even finding a middle ground where the associative horizons of both the cultures may successfully converge. His overall attempt at the composition of the play stands forth as a practical example of a 19th century intellectual

who tried to rise above the 'pedagogic' processes of 'acclimatising' Shakespeare in order to strengthen the new modernist ethic of one's regional language-literature. But then, he was equally aware of maintaining the 'sanctity' of the original text in translation. Possibly that is why, he did not indigenise the title of the play and its characters but chose to retain them as they were in the original. Therefore, the play might have been unsuccessful as a commercial enterprise, but as a literary-cultural artifact, the play would remain as the most appropriate representative of the predicament confronted by the late 19th century Indian playwrights at translating/adapting the Shakespearean plays for the Indian readership/audience, and finding themselves caught at the juncture of colonial modernity and nationalist identity to be further problematised by their respective regional identities.

If the period preceding the India's independence in 1947 was marked by a growing consciousness of nationhood, the following period revealed the shortcomings of such a utopian imagination, which attempted to construct a unified vision of 'India' thereby, bypassing the then emergent voices of sub-nationalistic dissidence. It was in this period that Utpal Dutt emerged as a phenomenon in the contemporary Bengali theatre. During the 1940s, he was particularly disturbed by the political turbulence of post-independence India. He and his Little Theatre group had realised the futility of performing exclusively for the elite audiences in Calcutta. One notable production of the Little Theatre group towards dismantling this barrier was that of Jyotindranath Sengupta's translation of *Macbeth.* Dutt took this production on tours of several villages in the remote countryside of Bengal. These productions in the outskirts of Bengal were revelatory for Dutt. As an actor performing Macbeth for rural audiences in Bengal, he was stuck by their immediate and instinctive understanding of the 'original' play performed for the first time way back in early 17th century England. The prime cause of its success was Dutt's transformation of the play in

the ritual world of *jatra*[1] and the rendition of dialogues through a bold and declamatory form of incantation. Dutt attributed the success of the play to the fact that the rural audiences responded to the play on the level of myth (Singh, 2009). In other words, the play had done away with all that was 'Shakespearean' except retaining the underlying fable.

Implications

Therefore, whether in Brecht, in Ghosh or in Dutt, what remains essentially 'Shakespearean' is the *mythos,* which forms the basis of all the reconstitutions of Shakespeare. In this way, Shakespeare becomes much more than the written word. His text should be seen as an 'open-ended intertextual discourse' (Chaudhuri and Lim, 2006). It is in this context that the question posited at the start of my article should be answered. It is time that the Shakespeare should be relieved of the imposed baggage of 'Englishness' which he has been carrying on for the last 200-250 years. An analysis of his place in world literature and culture would be the starting point of research into the 'global reinvention' of Shakespeare. This is not to reiterate the orthodox notion of Shakespeare epitomising universal values. Instead, the process of globalisation should be intercultural, i.e. the *praxis* or the substance of the plot or action should be assessed on its variable adaptability to new contexts and situations. The validity of Shakespeare studies in the 21st century lies not merely in the assessment of the extent to which a Shakespearean translation or an adaptation departs from the 'original' text, but also to re-examine the new meanings which are generated in the process and which go on continuously to enrich and diversify the *mythos* or the fable underlying what remains

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[1] *Jatra* is a popular folk-theatre form of Bengali theatre, spread throughout most of Bengali-speaking areas of the Indian subcontinent, including Bangladesh and Indian states of West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Orissa and Tripura. References to *jatra* theatre can be located in Varadpande, Manohar Laxman (1992). *History of Indian Theatre*, 2, 193-199 and Richmond, Farley, P., Darius L. Swann and Phillip B. Zarrilli (1993, ed.) *Indian Theatre: Traditions of Performance*, 242-243.

'Shakespearean' even after the texts and the contexts are removed.

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Acknowledgements

Safeguarding the Dignity of Women under the Criminal Law Amendment Act 2013- A Critical Analysis

Professor R.C. Borpatragohain[†]

Abstract

This viewpoint aims to analyse the Criminal Law Amendment Act 2013 from a legal perspective. In doing so, it discusses the statutory safeguards of rights to a dignified life of a woman by analysing the various existing laws, which have been significantly amended to build the Criminal Act, 2013. These laws are: Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860; Indian Evidence Act 1872, Code of Criminal Procedure as amended in 1973, Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act 1956, Information Technology Act 2000, The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000, The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013. In the conclusion, I urge that although efficient laws are in operation in India towards protecting the right to live with dignity of women, however, incidents of violence against women are on the rise. Hence, a concerted effort in bringing appropriate attitudinal change is the task ahead for all Indians.

Key words: Criminal Law Amendment Act 2013, Safeguarding the Dignity of Women, India

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Evolution of global Human Rights

The Charter of the United Nations (UN) declares in its Preamble that: '[w]e the people of the United Nations [are] determined to save succeeding generation from scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind [and] reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women'.[1] This Charter has become a practical document. The UN has brought to international attention a few of the issues such as de-colonisation, human rights, women's rights, economic development, protection of environment and the problem of population explosion.[2] The purposes of the UN, inter-alia, are to develop friendly relation among nations, based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of people and to achieve international cooperation in solving international problem of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all irrespective of race, sex, language or religion.[3]

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights[4] proclaims that that the people of the UN have reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of human person and in the equal rights of men and women, determined through its Charter to promote social progress and better standard and freedom of life.

It provides[5] that all human being be born free and equal in dignity and rights, being endowed with reasons and conscience with the obligation to act towards one another in a spirit of unity. It also provides[6] that everyone is entitled to all rights and freedom set forth in this declaration, without any kind of distinction, such as race, colour, sex and language, religion,

political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it is dependent, trust, non-self-government or any other limitation of sovereignty. It further provides[7] that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

On 14 December 1974 the UN General Assembly vide resolution 3318(xxix) adopted a Declaration,[8] which provided inter-alia for the protection of women and children in time of peace and war. It calls for the strict observation of the declaration by all Member States prohibiting all forms of repression, cruel and inhuman treatment of women and children.

The UN General Assembly adopted another Declaration[9] through its resolution 48/104, on 20 December 1998 recognising that violence against woman (VAW) is a manifestation of historically unequal power relation between men and women leading to domination over and discrimination against women. It categorically defines different kinds of VAW whether occurring in public or in private life.

In Beijing, from 4-15 September 1995, at the fourth world conference on women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action were adopted. It clearly recognises that women face barriers to full equality and advancement due to factors such as race, age, language, ethnicity, culture and religion, and the conference reaffirmed the commitment towards ensuring the full implementation of the human rights of women and girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The governments, who

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[1] Ensemble on United Nations, published by Institution of UN Studies New Delhi (ed). p 28
[2] ibid p 21
[3] ibid p 29
[4] adopted on 10th December 1948
[5] Through Article 1
[6] Through Article 2

[7] Through Article 5
[8] Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, 1974. Justice Verma Committee also made suggestion on Armed Forces in the context of VAW and safeguarding of women by Armed Forces Power Act, 1958.
[9] Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993, Articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Declaration.

participated at this conference are determined, inter-alia, to take all necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and the girl child and to remove all obstacles to promote gender equality through advancement and empowerment of women.

Earlier on 18 December 1979, by Resolution 34/180, the General Assembly adopted the Convention[1] recalling inter-alia, that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity. While condemning discrimination against women in all its forms, the participant states agreed to pursue a policy of eliminating discrimination against women with the commitment to adopt appropriate legislative and other measures including sanction, prohibiting all discrimination against women. It has gone further to repeal all national penal provisions, which constitute discrimination against women.[2] The state participants [3] undertook to submit a report on the legislative, judicial, and administrative and other measures to give effect to the provisions of the Convention.

Constitutional perspective in India

The Preamble of the Constitution of India, which was adopted in the name of and on behalf of '[w]e, the people' comprises integral and reciprocal components. They are the 'will' in choosing the structure and pattern of the state and the 'commitments' made by each and every citizen of the country. The commitments include justice, liberty, equality and fraternity ensuring the dignity of every individual. Every citizen, as such, is under a duty to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions.[4]

The mandate of the Preamble should be strictly adhered to in determining the ambit of — (a) Fundamental Rights (b) Directive Principle of state policy, as the Preamble is the part of the Constitution.[5] In order to keep the constitutional provisions flexible enough to meet newly emerging problems and challenge; the Constitution must be construed in wide and liberal manner.[6]

As in India, not all the citizens are on the equal plane, the Constitution of India expressly enshrined equality as a goal and not as means. To arrive at the goal of equality, the Constitution has provided for protective discrimination.[7]

The fundamental freedoms, as provided in the Constitution, which are meant for all the citizens are to be well safeguarded by the state. However, in the interest of the security of the state, public order, decency or morality or incitement to an offence, these freedoms must be reasonably restricted.

In the domain of right to life and personal liberty, with reference to women, the right includes the right of women to refuse to participate in sexual act.[8] The valuable asset of any person, in context to right to life and personnel liberty, is the reputation and is a fact of his/her constitutionally conferred right.[9] Right to life is a repository of various human rights, which include inter-alia, the right to live with human dignity.[10]

Another important integral component of right to life is the right to privacy.[11] The right to privacy of women is so well safeguarded by the judiciary through constructive interpretation that even the act of recording conversation

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[1]Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979.

[2] Article 2

[3] Through Article 18

[4] In Official liquidator vs. Dayanand [(2008) 10 SCC1]

[5] As decided in Keshavananda Bharati Sripadgalvar v.State of Kerala, AIR 1973 SC 1461

[6] In M. Nagaraj V.Union of India, AIR 2007 SC71.

[7] Article 14 of the constitution provide for equality before law and equal protection of laws. As it is evident that there are different inequalities that prevail in India with a view to wiping out the inequalities within a specific period, the Constitution envisaged protective discrimination under Article 15 and 16.

[8] In Suchitra Srivastava V.Chandigrah Administration, AIR210 SC 235

[9] Article 21 of the Constitution.

[10]In Trancis Corlic Mullin V. Administrator, Union Territory of Delhi, AIR 1981 SC 746

[11] In Govind V. State of Madhay Pradesh, AIR 1975 SC 1378

between husband and wife without the wife's knowledge tantamount to infringement of her right to privacy by husband.[1] Where freedom of press is available, it must not infringe the right to privacy.[2]

There is a constitutional prohibition[3] of traffic in human beings and the contravention thereof shall be considered as an offence punishable in accordance with law. The practice of Devadasi is judicially considered traffic in human beings.[4]

Statutory safeguards of rights to a dignified life

In terms of the Constitutional mandate and in conformity to international legal order, with a view to safeguarding inter-alia, dignity of women, the Parliament of India, responding to the need of time and to the aspirations of the people, enacted suitable laws besides adopting laws of foreign origin.[5] These are divided into two categories:-

- Ex-post facto laws-Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860; Indian Evidence Act 1872, Code of Criminal Procedure as amended in 1973.

- Laws enacted by the legislative-[6] These laws are Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act 1956, Information Technology Act 2000, The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000, The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013.

After the gruesome gang rape incident committed in Delhi on 16 December 2012, the Government of India set up a committee under the chairmanship of Justice Verma to review existing laws both 'adopted and enacted' and the committee suggests amendments to criminal law to effectively deal with incidents of sexual violence. The committee while placing its mandate within the framework of the constitution grounded its report primarily on the states obligation to secure fundamental rights of the citizens including the right of every person to assert one's individual autonomy. The committee also observed that the failure on the part of the state to secure rights of women amounts to denying the right to equality and dignity and incorporated it in the report that the alterations, modification of the already existing offences as suggested therein, must adhere to the Constitutional framework.[7]

Significant amendment to the IPC

In terms of the highlights made by Justice Verma Committee an act including an act of throwing or administering acid including an attempt thereto which may reasonably cause the apprehension that grievous hurt will otherwise be the consequence of such act has been added as an offence.[8]

- Public servant disobeying direction under law and punishment for non-treatment of victims by any person being in charge of the hospital, public or private, whether run by the central government, the state government, local bodies or any other person are newly added provisions.[9]

- In relation to the offence of assault or criminal force to women with intent to outrage her modesty[10] the new offence incorporated are-sexual harassment and punishment thereof,[11] assault or use of

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[1] In Rayala M.Bhuvaneswar.v Nagaphanender Rayala, AIR 2008 AP 98

[2] Managing Director V Muthulakshmi, AIR 2008 (NOC) 381

[3] Article 23 of the Constitution

[4] In Vishal Jeet v. Union of India, AIR 1990 SC 1412

[5] Article 13 clause 1 provides for the validity of certain laws, which came into being in India before the constitution of India was adopted. Article 372 also provides for adoption of foreign laws

[6] As provides in Article 13(2)

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[7] Justice Verma Committee Report, which recommended amendment to Criminal Law to provide faster trial and enhance punishment to the criminals committing sexual assault against women, was submitted on January 23, 2013.

[8] Clause 7 added to section 100, insertion of new sections 326A and 326B

[9] Addition of sections 166A and 166B after section 166

[10] Section 354 of the IPC, presently increasing the penalty of imprisonment of either description from 1 year extendable to 5 years or also the liability to fine.

[11] Section 354A of IPC

criminal force to women with intent to disrobe,[1] voyeurism,[2] and staking,[3]

- The offence of trafficking[4] and exploitation of a trafficked person[5]

- The newly substituted offences of rape,[6] and punishment for committing rape,[7] punishment for causing death or resulting in persistent vegetative state of victim,[8] sexual intercourse by husband upon his wife during separation,[9] sexual intercourse by a person in authority,[10] offence of gang rape,[11] and punishment for repeat offenders[12]

- Increasing the punishment for any word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of women from simple imprisonment of 1 year to 3 years and with fine.[13]

Significant amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure

1. In context of offences trialable by the Courts,[14] the newly substituted offences are incorporated.[15] The addition of two new proviso to the provision,[16] dealing with

examination of arrested persons by medical officer, envisage inter alia, that where the person, identifying the person arrested is mentally or physically disabled, the identification process may be videographed. The process shall take place under the supervision of a Judicial Magistrate.

2. In relation to provision,[17] dealing with information in cognizable offence, the newly inserted proviso reads:

   o Where the information is given by a woman against whom any of the offences,[18] is alleged to have been committed or attempted it shall be recorded by a woman police officer or any woman officer.

   o Where the woman against whom any of the offences mentioned above is alleged to have been committed or attempted, is temporarily or permanently mentally or physically disabled, such information shall be recorded by a police officer, at the residence of a person or at a convenient place of such persons choice in the presence of any interpreter or a special educator. The recording of

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[1] Section 354 B of IPC
[2] Section 354 C of IPC
[3] Section 354D IPC
[4] Substituted section 370 IPC
[5] Section 370 A IPC
[6] Substituted Section 375 IPC
[7] Section 376 IPC
[8] Section 376 A IPC
[9] Section 376B IPC
[10] Section 376C IPC
[11] Section 376D IPC
[12] Section 376E IPC
[13] Newly substituted Section 509 IPC
[14] Newly substituted Section 509 IPC
[15] Section 376,376A, 376B, 376C, 376D or 376E IPC
[16] Amendment of section 54 with the addition of two new proviso (1) "provided that, if the person identifying the person arrested is mentally or physically disabled, such process of identification shall take place under the supervision of a Judicial Magistrate who shall take appropriate steps to ensure that such person identifies the person arrested using methods that the person is comfortable with. (2) provided further, that if the person identifying the person arrested is mentally or physically disabled, the identification process may be video graphed."

[17] Section 154 "provided that if the information is given by the woman against whom an offence under sections 326A, 326B, 354A, 354B, 354C, 354D, 376, 376A, 376B, 376C, 376D, 376E or section 509 of the IPC (45 of 1860) is alleged to have been committed or attempted, than such information shall be recorded by woman Police Officer or any woman officer".
[18] "Provided further that-(a) in the event that the person against whom an offence under sections 354 A , 354B, 354C, 354D, 376, 376B, 376C, 376D, 376E or section 509 of the IPC (45 of 1860) is alleged to have been committed or attempted, is temporarily or permanently mentally or physically disabled than such information is recorded by a police officer, at the residence of the person seeking to report such offence or at a convenient place of such person's choice, in the presence of an interpreter or special educator, as the case may be;
(b)the recording of such information shall be video graphed;
(c)the police officer shall get the statement of the person recorded by a Judicial Magistrate under clause (a) of sub- section (5A) of section 164 as soon as possible."

information shall be videographed and the police officer shall get the statement of the person recorded by a Judicial Magistrate.[1]

o The newly substituted wordings of the proviso to the provision[2] providing for police officers power to require attendance of witnesses excluded any person under the age of fifteen years or above the age of sixty-five years or a woman or mentally or physically disabled persons.

o The newly inserted proviso to the provisions[3] envisages that the statement of woman against whom any of the offences incorporated therein is alleged to have been committed on attempted, shall be recorded by a woman police officer or any women officer.

o In context to the provisions,[4] for recording of confessions and statements by any Metropolitan or Judicial Magistrate, new sub section,[5] providing for the new offences mentioned therein for recording of confessions and capabilities are to be treated separately.

3. (i) With regard to the provision,[6] providing for report of police officer on completion of investigation, the newly substituted words, figures and letters,[7] define the offences of gang rape or punishment for repeated offences, as discussed above, under IPC.

(ii) In the provision,[8] dealing with prosecution of judges and public servants who is accused of any of the offences as provided in the newly inserted explanation,[9] no sanction shall be required in case of a police servant accused of any of such offences.

It is pertinent to mention here that Justice Verma Committee has recommended that the requirement of sanction for prosecution of Armed Forces Personnel should be specially excluded when a sexual offences is alleged against. At present as the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 is in operation in the North Eastern states and in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, there is requirement of sanction by the Central Government for initiating prosecution against Armed Forces Personnel.[10] Unfortunately, this judicious recommendation, forwarded in the interest of human dignity especially of the victims of sexual offences, has not been reflected in the present Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013.

(iii) The newly inserted section,[11] for cognizance of offence, debarred any court from taking cognizance of offences punishable under the IPC,[12] where the persons are in a marital relationship unless the court is satisfied prima-facie of the facts upon a complaint by the wife against the husband.

(iv) As regards the evidence to be taken in presence of the accused,[13] the newly inserted proviso,[14] mandates that where a

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[1] The Judicial Magistrate will record the statement of the person under section 164(5A) (a), as soon as possible.
[2] Section 160
[3] Section 161 "Provided further that the statement of a woman against whom an offence under Section 354, Section 354A, Section 354B, Section 354C, Section 354D, Section 376, Section 376A, 376B, 376C, 376D, 376E or section 509 of the IPC (45 of 1860) is alleged to have been committed or attempted shall be recorded, by a woman police officer or any woman officer."
[4] Section 164
[5] Subsection (5A) (a)
[6] Section 173
[7] Section 376 D or Section 376E of IPC

[8] Section 197 Croc
[9] Explanation added to Section 197(1) for the removal of doubts it is hereby declared that no sanction shall be required in case of a police servant accused of any offence alleged to have been committed under sections 166A, 166B, 354, 354A, 354B, 354C, 354D, 370, 375, 376, 376A, 376C, 376D or Section 509 of IPC (45 of 1860)
[10] Section 6 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act,1958
[11] Section 198 B of Cr.P.C
[12] Section 376 B of IPC
[13] Section 273 CrPC
[14] Proviso before the explanation to Section 273 CrPC

woman is below the age of 18 years is alleged to have been subjected to rape or any other sexual offence, and where her evidence is to be recorded, the court will take appropriate measures ensuring that such woman is not confronted by the accused and at the same time ensuring the rights of cross examination of the accused. As regard the power to postpone or adjourn proceeding,[1] the newly added and substituted sub-section,[2] mandates that in every enquiry or trial, the proceedings shall be continued from day to day until all the witnesses in attendance have been examined. The proviso provided that as far as possible, the inquiry or trial shall be completed within a period of two months from the date of filing of charge sheet.[3]

(v) The provision declaring any Criminal Court to be an open court,[4] the substituted words, figures and letters,[5] conferred jurisdiction to take cognizance of offences of gang rape or punishment for repeated offenders.

(vi) In context to the order to pay compensation[6] there is addition of two new sub-sections[7] that deal with compensation to be paid in addition to fine[8], as well as the mandate for the first aid or medical treatment, free of cost to the victims of the offences[9] included therein[10] shall be provided by all hospitals, public or private whether run by the central government, state government, local bodies or any other person and shall also immediately inform the police of such incident.

Significant Amendment to the Indian Evidence Act 1872

1. The new amendment incorporated a provision,[11] which provides that evidence of the character of the victim or of such person's previous sexual experience with any person shall not be relevant as to the issue of consent or the quality of consent when there is a prosecution for any of the offences mentioned therein[12] or even for attempt to commit any such offence.

2. With regard to presumption as to absence of consent in certain prosecution for rape, the newly substituted provision[13] includes different offences mentioned therein[14] and where sexual intercourse by the accused is proved, the court shall presume inter-alia that the women (victim) did not consent. What amounts to "sexual intercourse'' is specially mentioned in the explanation to the provision.[15]

3. The provision relating to witnesses who are unable to communicate verbally has been substituted by new section,[16] which provides that under such a situation, the witness may adduce his evidence in any other manner as by writing or by signs, making it intelligible in open court and shall be deemed to be oral evidence, if need be taking an assistance or an interpreter or special educator as the case may be and such statement shall be videographed.

4. In dealing with questions that are lawful in cross-examination,[17] the newly substituted proviso provides that in a prosecution for any of the offences included therein[18] or for any attempt to commit any such offence

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[1] Section 309 CrPC
[2] Newly substituted Sub Section (1) of 309
[3] Where the inquiry or trial relates to sections 376,376A, 376B, 376C or 376D of the IPC
[4] Section 327 CrPC
[5] Subsection (2) of section 327- incorporation of "376D or 376E" in place of "section 376D" of IPC
[6] Section 357 CrPC
[7] Sections 357 B and 357C
[8] Fine under Sections 326 A or 376 D of IPC
[9] Covered under sections 326A, 376A, 326B, 326C, 326D OR 376E of the IPC
[10] Section 357C Cr.P.C.

[11] Sec 53(A) of the Indian Evidence Act 1872.
[12] Section 354,354(A), 354(B), 354(C), 354(D), 376,376(A), 376(B), 376(C), 376(D),or 376(E) of the IPC
[13] Section 114(A) of the Indian Evidence Act.
[14] Section 376(2) clauses (a) to (n)
[15] It shall mean any of the acts mentioned in clauses (a) to (d) of section 375 of the IPC
[16] Section 119 of Indian Evidence Act, 1872.
[17] Section 146 of the Indian Evidence Act.
[18] The offences under Section 376,376(A), 376(B), 376(C), 376(D) or 376(E) of the IPC.

and the question of consent is an issue therein, it shall not be permissible to adduce evidence and to put question to the victim in the cross-examination, as to the general immoral character or previous sexual experience with any person, attempting to prove such consent or the quality of the consent.

Amendment to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012

While addressing the issue of sexual offences against children which are not adequately addressed as yet, there is an impression that while framing the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 that there has been an urgent need to make substitution of certain provisions[1] of the Act. The newly substituted provisions envisage:

1. For alternate punishment providing therein that where an act constitutes any of the offences punishable under this Act and also under various provisions[2] of the IPC, once the offender is found guilty of such offence, he shall be liable to punishment under any of the above laws and the punishment which is greater in degree shall be imposed upon him.[3]

2. This Act has been conferred with overriding effect on the provisions of any such law which are for the time being in force and to the extent of the inconsistency with this Act. The provision of the Act shall prevail and in certain cases, it shall be in addition to such laws.[4]

In addition to these laws, there are other legislations enacted by the Parliament of India towards safeguarding the life of women in the domestic as well as social and institutional sectors such as: The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and the Sexual

Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act, 2013).

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

This Act was enacted with the primary objective of protecting woman from being a victim of domestic violence to prevent the occurrence of domestic violence in the society. The definition of domestic violence[5] inter-alia includes sexual abuse, which refers to any act of a sexual nature that abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the dignity of a woman.

The sexual harassment of women at workplace (Preventive, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013

The Act was enacted very recently to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace and for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment. This Act is made in conformity to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979.[6]

One of the most significant characteristics of the Act is the definition of 'aggrieved women'[7] inclusion of 'domestic worker'[8] and 'sexual harassment'.[9] The term 'work place'[10] is much wider, which includes any department, organisation, undertaking, establishment, enterprise, institution, office, the public sector and the private sector organisation, professional, vocational, educational institutions including dwelling place or a house.

The task ahead

From the above discussion, it is quite clear that sufficient and suitably efficient laws are in

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[1] Sections 42 and 42A of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012
[2] Sections 166(A),354(A), 354(B), 354(C), 354(D),370,370(A),375,376(A), 376(B), 376(C), 376(D), 376(E), or Section 509 of IPC
[3] Section 42 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012
[4] Section 42(A).

[5] Section 3 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
[6] The Govt. of India ratified the Convention on 25th of June 1993.
[7] Section 2(a) of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Preventive, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013
[8] Section 2(e) of the Act
[9] Section 2(n) of the Act
[10] Section 2(o) of the Act

operation in India towards protecting the right to live with dignity of women. In spite thereof, VAW are found to increase in geometrical progression. The syndromes of male dominance, discrimination, subjugation and exploitation create an obstacle and inhibition to law howsoever classic the laws may be in safeguarding the life and dignity of women.

The social health of the Indian democracy is deteriorating from all aspects and in medical term, can be labelled as a *multiple organ failure*. The recent story of a woman law intern who was sexually harassed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court adds another notorious story to the crisis India has already been facing. The Chief Justice of India P. Sadasivam assured that in such cases of complaint, appropriate action would be taken. A three-member committee consisting of Justice R.N. Lodha, Justice H.L. Dattu and Justice Ranjan Prasad Desai has been constituted and the committee will inquire into the entire matter and submit the report very soon.

Under such a confusing environment, the last straw on the camel's back is that there must be a general attitudinal change in every human being inculcating the spirit of human values and dignity. For this, an ideal environment must be created in every sector- be it domestic, social or institutional wherein every human being, right from the child to the adult, is made to realise spiritually the purpose and objective of human life and genuinely guided by wisdom- leading the life in accordance with the laws of nature. The concerted effort in bringing appropriate attitudinal change is the task ahead for all Indians. Arguably, appropriate implementation of the law can be one of the solutions, but cannot be the sole solution to the problem of the continuous rise of VAW. Hence, collaborated effort of attitudinal change is perhaps one of the solutions to this problem.

About the Author

Professor Romesh Chandra Borpatra Gohain has been serving as a law teacher in Gauhati University for the last 29 years. His area of specialisation is Jurisprudence, Constitutional and Administrative Law, International Law, Human Rights, Humanitarian Laws, Environmental Laws, Intellectual Property Rights and Cyber Laws. Till date, he has supervised the research of more than 15 research scholars.

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Forests, Tribals and the Voice of Dissent: The Story of a Social Actor

Miss Namami Sharma[†]

Abstract

This is a biography of an activist who has been working in the interiors of Madhya Pradesh with the indigenous people. He has been living amongst the tribal communities and has contributed significantly in the people's struggle for resource rights. He is one of the very few activists who has been quoted by different writers but is not written about. This article, thus, makes a humble endeavour to trace his life and his commitment towards the cause of tribal rights.

Key words: activist, tribal communities, people's movements, tribal rights

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Introduction

'A voice from the ether becomes the voice of the God'- anonymous

In the poem '*Satpura ke Ghane Jungle*' (Through the dense forests of the Satpuras) the poet Bhavani Prasad Mishra, takes one through the dense green mystic forests of the Satpura mountain range and gives the visions of the eclectic wildlife in the jungles. In the romantic visualisations of the forest, one would imagine the wild as 'an inviolate space' immersed in 'wildernesses'. Seldom would the imagination include the indigenous groups in the community who are often found in a very vulnerable position. In these remote forests of the Satpura Hill Range in Central India, the voice of a young man has been able to revive the nature-culture equation among the *Baiga* tribes, which has been long lost. This paper makes a humble attempt to trace the endeavours of this young man, who by means of his 'silent ways', found them their voices.

Geographical location

Here, the area is *Baiga Chak*,[1] which is located in the state of Madhya Pradesh (MP) in the central Indian plains. The name of this young man is Balwant Rahangdale popularly known as Balwantji or Balwant *bhai* (brother). Balwantji works in the tribal[2] (Xaxa, 1999) block of Samnapur, which is situated in the district of Dindori in MP. Over the years, Samnapur has witnessed many researchers and journalists come to the area and cover the issues of the *Baiga* tribe with the help of Balwantji. Invariably his 'quotes' and 'comments' figure in most of those articles without him coming to the foreground (Pallavi, 2012; Desor, 2013). Many might not agree with him being called an 'active' activist but his engagement with the tribals of Dindori has triggered a silent movement, which could bring back their lost voices.

The author came to learn about this young man during one of her field visits in the area. Before that, she did come across several magazine and newspaper articles quoting his statements in the context of the Baiga struggle in Dindori. However, only on the field visit, did she realise that the 'Balwant' quoted in the articles and 'Balwant Bhai' referred, as by the villagers is the same person. During the visit, she could comprehend the impact this person had on the villagers in making them aware of their rights. In the course of the first meeting, the author witnessed a persona of commitment and heard an untold story, which deserves to be told.

Life sketch of Balwantji

Balwantji is a person who could leave a lasting impression at the very first meeting. Donned with grey hair and armed with a soft voice, he speaks passionately about the *Baiga* tribe and their struggle for resource rights. He has been working in the *Baiga Chak* area since last 15 years and all this while he has been in the background of all the people's struggles for resource rights in the area.

To highlight the significance of Balwantji's work, it is important to give a background of the *Baigas*. The *Baigas* are indigenous people found in the central Indian plains of the Indian subcontinent. The tribe is a very shy one and used to dwell in the forests of the Satpura hill range. Their relationship with nature has been very intricate but the forest policies and legislations have failed to take an account of the same. The contemporary wildlife conservation discourses often seems to be considering 'human' as an intruder in the constructed 'inviolate spaces' without taking into account the intrinsic value of nature that indigenous cultures adhere to (Soule and Terborgh, 2009; Madhusudan, 2005; Kabra, 2006).

MP has been the place of inception of many a movements and struggles in India. However,

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[1] *Baiga Chak* is a congregation of 52 villages located in the district Dindori of the state MP. These villages were settles in the later part of 19th century as a means of confining their shifting agriculture or *bewar* to a limited area.

[2] Although, the term 'tribe' has been debated much in academic parlance, however, 'this term of administrative convenience have been adopted by the tribals themselves....attaching self -esteem and pride to the same' (Xaxa, 1999: 3589).

the *Baigas* has often found themselves in the midst of these movements without understanding the purpose of the same. It would not be wrong to say that, most of the struggles were at the larger frame of tribal rights and the *Baigas* found it difficult to comprehend the same in their immediate context.

The journey of Balwantji began in the year 1995. It was spring season in another remote village in the district of Balaghat and the boys in his village were having a relaxed time after their high school exams. Balwantji was a pupil then and was enjoying the post-examination lull. However, he was reading literature on tribal movements during that time which triggered certain questions in his zealous mind. He was born to a farmer in a village in Balaghat and was one among eight siblings. He was very fond of dreaming and visioning but often he would be clueless on how to go about realising them. Nevertheless, he sought solace in books and became a voracious reader. Some of the readings would answer his queries while others would raise even more questions.

In 1995, a programme was launched by the MP government called the Madhya Pradesh Forestry Project. This project commenced in India in 1995 with a loan of 58 million USD. The first four-year phase of the project ended in December 2009. The objectives of the project were appropriately articulated as highlighting the importance of community participation in biodiversity conservation (Bramhane and Panda, 2000). The overall goal of the programme being biodiversity conservation, the project focussed upon the extension of protected and reserved forest areas. The project rejected the intrinsic existence of the indigenous people of the region, leading to the relocation of several villages. The Kanha National Park being one of the significant parks was also under scrutiny. The park was 940 sq. kms and now it was increased to 1060 sq. kms. With this expansion, around 161 villages across three districts namely, Mandla*,* Rajnandgaon and Balaghat were impacted. Many relocation and rehabilitation programmes were going on

but one could see several discrepancies in the implementation of the orders. People rose up in protests and it was during this time that Balwantji's young mind decided to seek answers to his queries. He could never understand how the state could conserve forests without the involvement of people. In his understanding, people were an intrinsic part of any ecosystem. His village was one of the affected ones and he could sense the plight of the people on the face of the tenuous relocations. People were literally uprooted from their roots and planted in the middle of nowhere. There was a strong consensus to protest the new moves of the state. A movement had begun and a *padyatra* (street march) called the *Jungle Jeevan Bachao Yatra* (Save Forest, Save Life) was initiated by a few leading tribal activists of those times. Around 15 individuals had set out on a 15000 km walkathon through the protected areas and national parks. Meera Iyer (1995) terms it as a 'missionary voyage', wading through the 'indigenous waters' and trying to address the issues of the people on the face of the draconian forest projects. There was a very dynamic activist called Kusum Karnik who was leading the protest in the district of *Balaghat* in MP, which was home to Balwantji. On one of the many rallies, he was standing by the side of the road as a spectator and watching the rally pass by under the efficient leadership of Kusum Tai. In Balwantji's words, 'My heart pulled me ….and the next moment I found myself in the middle of it all …. and now I am yet to get out of it'. He was just 14 year old and since then he has been associated with the movement. He joined the rallies and helped in participating and conducting many after that. The cause remains the same and so does the slogan. '*Jal Jungle aur Zameen, Yeh Hain Janta ke Aadhin'* (Land, Water and Forests: These are solely under the People's Authority) still rings in his heart, he says.

There was a strong movement on the forests rights going on during the late nineties in MP. It was a people's movement and the collective was popularly known as *Ekta Parishad* (Forum of Unity). Balwantji was a part of it and under

the guidance of many eminent activists; he continued participating in the activities of the struggle. To address the larger issue of relocation and rehabilitation, the *Ekta Parishad* launched a six-month *padyatra* on December 10, 1990. The *padyatra* began in the extreme west of MP and ended in *Rajgarh*, which was a part of the then eastern MP and now is located in Chhattisgarh. The main issue was that of relocation and rehabilitation of the tribal communities from the newly-demarcated protected areas. The struggle was also aiming at ensuring the rights on their resources. After the *padyatra*, to his disappointment, the *Ekta Parishad* members got into an agreement with the government, which eventually snapped the movement at a pre-matured stage. This pushed Balwantji to a phase of disillusionment, which led him to think of his future strategies. He says that he realised that grandiosity has its own limitations. He tried to re-examine the statement 'small is beautiful' in the context of his work. Taking small steps at a time from a micro level was thought to be more realistic, he explains. He then decided to realise his 'dreams of change' from an inconspicuous locale and resolved to work with the people.

He says he was always mesmerised by the rich culture of the *Baiga*s. From his field experiences, he also realised that in the race of development, the *Baiga*s have been left far behind. On one hand, if a group of anthropologists romanticises the *Baiga* culture, the policy makers very conveniently chooses to overlook that very culture. With this realisation, as stated above, he chose a very remote part of MP called the *Baiga Chak* to work in. This area was being demarcated by the British in the late 19th century as a part of the process of settling down the *Baiga* community from Swidden[1] to settled agriculture. Since then, the *Baiga*s are residing in the area but hardly have been able to find ground on the face of the draconian forests laws.

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[1]Swidden agriculture refers to shifting agriculture where the trees and vegetation in a patch of forest is lopped and burnt. Seeds are generally broadcasted in the cleared patch. This form of cultivation is popularly considered damaging to the forest cover.

During his first stint in the area, he settled down in a hut within a *Baiga* village known as *Dhaba.* He realised that it is high time; the *Baiga*s moved beyond the pages of anthropological accounts and enter the realm of social justice. As mentioned before, the *Baiga*s are shy by nature. Moreover, the limited exposure and the almost stunted development in the area have brought them to a state of utter ignorance. The *Baiga*s living in the region had no awareness of exercising their fundamental rights. They were living a life totally at the mercy of the Forest Department. As mentioned above, Balwantji entered the area almost 15 years ago with the intention of understanding the issues and carrying them forward with a renewed vigour. His approach was totally bottom-up and he began with 'inculcating a culture of questioning'. He says, the *Baiga*s were suppressed and subjugated for so many decades that they had never thought exercising their will.

Balwantji continued staying in *Dhaba* and developed a good rapport with the community. On one occasion he once learnt that, the Forest department (FD) is proposing to make a pond in the village and the site has also been decided by the forest officials without taking the opinion of the villagers into consideration. This has been a regular practice and the villagers were used to the FD making structures, which eventually proved to be not of much use to them. Balwantji was witnessing everything very closely. He approached the people in the village and took their suggestion on deciding on an appropriate site for the pond. The people chose a site and explained very well on how a pond in the said site would be of optimal use to the village. He then coaxed the people to make the same suggestion to the officials. Next day the officials came and as decided a few persons from the village went forward and made their suggestions. The officials were perturbed and called off the work. This again caused some differences in opinion amongst different section of people. Some started blaming the rest and also Balwantji, for being instrumental in halting the work since this work was one of their few sources of income. The next day the

officials came with a hired tractor to till the land. Three women went forward and lay down on the ground obstructing the tractor. This made the officials leave in a huff. They then came a few days later only to start work at the said site. This was the first time people had gathered courage to speak against the authorities. This 'voice of dissent' was recorded in the history of Baiga Chak as the '*tractor virodh*' (tractor protest).

Gradually, Balwantji was observing that the *Baiga*s has immense dependency on the forest resources but were not able to exercise any rights over the same. He felt the urgency to work on the same. He stayed in the background and started mobilising people. His strategies were not in the form of protest, rallies or slogans. Rather, he believed in 'insitu expression of dissent', where he mobilised people within their smaller environments. This belief stemmed out from the disillusioned he underwent during the six-month rally, which had happened with *Ekta Parishad*. People had a very simple question to raise, 'If the FD is protecting forests in such a big way, where has all the species gone?' After much dialogue in the villages, the people took up the issue of seriously protecting their areas. The *Baiga*s were culturally connected to nature and Balwantji could stir the people's ecological consciousness, which remained suppressed for decades. He worked with the people of one village and the rest followed. There was a collective voice from *Baiga Chak*. On one occasion, every household of a village decided to adopt a tree. When coupe operation by the FD took place, each one of them hugged the trees thus avoiding the 'axe' of the FD's. On another occasion, people from another village tied *rakhis*[1] on '*Raksha Bandhan*' to the trees promising to protect each one of them. The people in the villages worked relentlessly to manage forest fires and the people's efforts were applauded. Balwantji had to come to the front to dialogue with the state

representatives. The FD was also surprised and was bound to appreciate the initiatives of the *Baiga*s.

By the year 2006, the Forest Rights Act (FRA) came into force. This legislation opened the doors of hope for the *Baiga*s in ensuring their resource rights. Institutions were evolved at the village level for the purpose of forest protection. Though the FD came up with various extracting operations, the villagers went on a 'non-cooperation' mode. Norms and regulations were laid down to protect their forests and this time the rules were in sync with the tribal cultural beliefs. Balwantji was very prompt in documenting the indigenous culture and often he pointed out the relevance of the same to the people. He started representing the *Baiga*s and their causes in many national forums. He was seldom heard. However, he was able to convey the issues of the *Baiga*s in larger platforms like the National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers. He was also a part of the national review team of community forest rights and deliberated actively on the issues.

With the coming of the FRA, Balwantji facilitated the people of four *Baiga Chak* villages to file for community rights. In 2013, *Baiga Chak* marked history. A total of 15000 acres were brought under community forests rights across four villages. The Baigas could exercise their rights over the resources, but most importantly, the struggle gave them the confidence of voicing out their rights. Newspaper reports spoke at length about the success stories, though a few ever came to know about the man behind it. The *Baiga*s, who had traversed through various image constructions over the time, has managed to get back his original and most deserved status of a 'nature's man'. A single man's voice truly became the voice of the Gods in Baiga Chak.

About the Author

The author is presently pursuing her PhD from the Department of Social Work, University of Delhi, in which she is exploring the community-based forest conservation practices of the Monpa tribe in Arunachal Pradesh. Prior to this,

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[1] *Rakhi is* a symbolic thread tied by the sisters around the wrist of their brothers, signifying a bond of love and protection.

she was working in the field of forest conservation and tribal rights in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Her quest for research emerged out of her lived experiences in the field. She is interested in exploring the equation of nature and culture through the lens of cultural ecology.

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We welcome you to the second issue of 'Publication Watch'. Below is a list of latest publications in the field of social sciences. However, it is not exhaustive by any means.

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