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## Arise, Awake all true Indians

The recent demolition of few Madrassas for their alleged link with Jehadi elements is clearly an indication that the Islamists of Assam have become bold enough to come out in the open with their 'Gajb E Hind' plans. In the name of religious education the Madrassas are up to making India a 'Darul Islam' country. It is not that only the fanatic Muslims are bent on promoting Madrassa education system, many of our Hindu brethrens are also not lagging far behind to serve their vested individual and collective interests. Many of our compatriots perhaps never pondered over the facts that why for more than sixty years of our independence we allowed Kashmir to remain a state within state, why our first Prime Minister rushed to UNO for intervention when our army was on the verge of throwing out the Pakistani infiltrators in 1947, why a large tract of our land is still under the Pakistani occupation, who helped the Muslim infiltrators from Pakistan and Bangladesh to find safe haven in our country, how and why the Muslim population in India is growing so fast, why so many jihadi outfits are functional in India with impunity. There are many more questions like this sans answers. With great sadness and bitterness we cannot but admit that our first Prime Minister, who should have given a direction to our newly created Hindusthan, was more concerned about Muslim welfare. By his acts and deeds he proved himself a Muslim at heart and Hindu only in attire. The latest example of the pro-Muslim philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru's Congress party came from Sonia Gandhi made Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, who dared to declare publicly that Muslims are the first claimant of the resources of India. All true Indians should take note of the political treachery of our chosen political masters and confront them boldly. If we fail to act decisively right now, we will never be able to avoid our total annihilation. Before we take a firm stand as an Indian, we must be aware of the fact that there are over 120 Islamic extremist groups active today, all bitterly anti-Hindusthan. Amongst them 15 are most active and most dangerous. Extremism within Islam goes back to the 7th century to the Kharijites. They expanded for both religious and political reasons,

which was common at the time. When Zoroastrianism and Islam had an encounter, it resulted in the virtual disappearance of the Zoroastrianism from Sassanid Empire. Islam spread through military conquest, trade, pilgrimage, and missionaries. Arab Muslim forces conquered vast territories and built imperial structures. Muslims work to the plan chalked out by their religious masters. First they grow by rapid progeny through multiple wives fathering as many children they can, and then through illegal infiltration, conversion by force or allurements

What adds to our concern more than anything is the rise in Muslim population in the border districts of our state Assam. Hindu population in the four border districts – Dhubri, Karimganj, Cachar and South Salmara – increased from 1,33,240 in 2011 to 1,77,141 in 2021, a rise of 32.9 per cent. The Muslim population, meanwhile, grew by 29.6 per cent in these districts. The total number of Muslims in 2011 stood at 3,95,659, which increased to 5,13,126 in 2021.

The Muslim population in Assam was approximately 14.61 million, constituting over 40.03% of the total population of the state as of 2021 year estimation, making Assam the second-largest Muslim-populated state in the country after Kashmir. Islam is the fastest-growing religion in Assam. In addition to the above the fall out of the recent decision of the Government of Assam to grant recognition to five groups of Muslims of Assam as the indigenous populace of the state, is perhaps ill timed. It is a well known fact that the Char areas of Brhamaputra River are an ideal landing ground for the anti India infiltrators. Nepal and Bangladesh offer safe corridors for the international mercenaries. A large number of Rohingyas from Miyanmar have already infiltrated Assam and will, in all possibility, join the Islamic fundamentalists to advance their pan Islamic plans.

The overall demographic scenario in Assam is alarming. Misplaced secularist ideas will not serve our national interests. We must arise, awake and stop not till the evil designs of the Islamic fundamentalists are thwarted.

*Romen Chakraborty*

**Chief Editor**

# A Turning Point

□ Manash Das

This article is Heritage Explorer's homage to the newly elected President of India

## *aprâpya nâma nehâsti dhîrasya vyavasâyina*

**There is nothing unattainable to the one who is  
courageous and hard working**

21st July, 2022 dawned with new hopes and aspirations for India, as it waited with bated breath for the results of the Presidential election, 2022. By the end of the day, those hopes and aspirations had blossomed into celebrations of pure joy for Smti. Draupadi Murmu, who had been elected the 15th President of India!

This presidential election isn't a run of the mill election; its result has enormous ramifications. A Janajati lady had been elected the First Citizen of the country. A person from the Scheduled Tribe community becoming the First Citizen of India was unthinkable even a decade ago! Not only that, Smti. Murmu is the first President to be born in independent India.

Belonging to the Santhal community, Smti. Murmu's life story is one of humility and pathos and great courage. Born on 20th June, 1958 to farmer parents in Mayurbhanj, Odisha, she did her schooling at K.B. HS Uparbeda School, Mayurbhanj and later, graduated in Arts from Rama Devi Women's College, Bhubaneswar, Odisha. She had a burning desire to serve her community and the people of India and therefore, joined the Bharatiya Janata Party in 1997. The same year, she was elected as the Councillor of the Rairangpur district of Odisha — a seat reserved for tribals. She also served as the Vice-President of the BJP's Scheduled Tribes Morcha.

In 2000, Murmu won the assembly elections from the Rairangpur constituency. She was given the charge of the Department of Transport and Commerce by the then Biju Janata Dal government

that was in power in Odisha with BJP's support and she served her post with distinction and with the utmost integrity. She went on to hold various portfolios in the forthcoming years with the same dedication, because of which she was bestowed upon the Nilkantha Award for best MLA of the year by the Odisha Legislative Assembly in 2007.

However, tragedy struck in 2009 when she lost her son. This was compounded when she lost her other son and her husband in 2013 and 2014, respectively. These were debilitating blows that took her to the verge of depression. But she found succour in Brahmakumari Nirmala who helped her overcome her turbulent state of mind and the courageous soul that Smti. Murmu is, she once again reclaimed her life and went to become Governor of Jharkand from 2015 to 2021. To recover from such tremendous personal tragedy requires tremendous courage and strength which our President-elect proved that she had ample quantities of both these characteristics.

Smti. Murmu's election as President signifies a much deeper change that has been witnessed in the Indian Executive — *Parampara, Gyan, Karma and Shraddha*. All the top executives of the country today hail from very humble backgrounds, be it our Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, or our President-elect, Smti. Draupadi Murmu or our Vice President-elect, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar. These individuals have risen to the topmost positions only through a combination of *Parampara, Gyan, Karma and Shraddha*. These bring to mind some earlier stalwarts who graced Rashtrapati Bhavan as residents - Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan APJ Abdul Kalam, among others, who displayed similar characteristics of tradition, wisdom, hard work and humility. Their dedication to their selfless beliefs and the zeal to serve have etched their names in the history of Indian

Democracy. For them words like *Parampara*, *Gyan*, *Karma* and *Shraddha* were not mere words to be used in punchlines and slogans, but principles by which they lived.

*Parampara* signifies the ancient progressive Indian traditions and customs which governed the life of every spiritual Indian. People like Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan harmoniously adapted our priceless traditions into contemporary lifestyles and situations.

*Gyan* does not simply mean mere literacy, but all-encompassing wisdom and the ability to distinguish right from wrong, good from evil.

*Karma* defines who we are, and there is no deed which is more pious than the service of our fellow human beings.

*Shraddha* refers to a higher state of consciousness and a direct understanding of the Divine truth, rather than belief through blind faith.

All these principles are enumerated in the ancient Hindu texts and to lead a complete life, they must be adhered to simultaneously, for each principle complements the other.

Coming back to the issue of the latest Presidential election and the President-elect, one vital piece of information relating to India's freedom struggle has been left out of our history books; according to archival material released by The British Library, London, the first war of independence launched against British occupation of India was launched by a tribal community, the Tai Khamti in 1839, called the Tai-Khamti rebellion. According to the archival matter the Tai Khamti, armed with spears and led by Chaupha Planglu alias Ronua Gohain

attacked the British invaders on the 28th of January, 1839 at Sadiya, Assam. About 80 British soldiers lost their lives, including Col. Adam White, who was slain by Chaupha Planglu himself. This conflict lasted five long years. As this is most likely true, then the Sepoy Munity of 1857 was not, in fact, the first war of independence. This, of course, in no way, diminishes the ultimate sacrifice of the brave Indians in the Sepoy Mutiny and we bow our heads in reverence to all martyrs.

Had the aforementioned facts been published earlier the condescension and the persecution that the tribal population faced in their own land for so long may not have happened, or perhaps, to a much lesser extent. Be that as it may, times are changing and Smti. Murmu's historic win has proved just that.

It would be injustice of the highest order if the contribution of Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (ABVKA) to this momentous occasion is not mentioned. Smti. Murmu's journey to Rashtrapati Bhavan is a vindication and fruition of the gargantuan efforts of Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (ABVKA), India's largest tribal welfare organisation, which has worked tirelessly for upliftment of the 12 crore strong Janajati population of the country and to be a bridge between the traditional and the contemporary.

The elevation of Smti. Murmu to the highest office in India is in keeping with the inclusive policies of the NDA government; APJ Abdul Kalam, a Muslim, Ran Nath Kovind, a Dalit, and now, Smti. Draupadi Murmu, a Janajati lady. A young India is now confident that a resurgent India is now becoming clearly visible. \*\*

- \* "Here is a mantra, a short one that I give you. The mantra is: 'Do or Die'. We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery."  
Mahatma Gandhi
- \* One whose mind is not free, though he may not be in prison, is a prisoner and not a free man. One whose mind is not free though alive, is no better than dead. Freedom of mind is the proof of one's existence."  
BR Ambedkar
- \* "Every citizen of India must remember that he is an Indian and he has every right in this country but with certain duties."  
Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

## LEST WE FORGET : THE MANY PARTITIONS AND THEIR LEGACIES IN NORTHEAST INDIA

□ Prof. Binayak Dutta

### A. The Predicament of Writing Partition

It is ironical that, for a state that celebrates the rhetoric of non-violence, the birth of modern India was conspicuously marked by conflicts and bloodshed leaving over fifteen million people displaced and over one million dead. These are only conservative estimates, primarily emerging from Punjab and marginally from Bengal. It is even more curious that despite these experiences, the post-colonial state in India has been reluctant to enter into any official public engagement with it. Official history of the same is marginal and there are no memorials erected to remember those who lost their lives in what Madhav Godbole calls, ‘the holocaust of India’s partition’.[1] In fact, attempts to write of violence in India are fraught with grave risks. On the one hand, there are fears of rekindling old wounds, which the state presumed to have healed over the last seven decades and on the other; it often leads many to suspect such scholarship as a conscious campaign against the policy of secularism.

Some scholars even argued that attempts to talk of violence were only a part of the fascist agenda, which sought to destroy the unifying strains of the Indian state. Engaging with the issue, Neeladri Bhattacharyya from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in one of his pieces argued that, “[w]here communal historians can only see the hard lines of the boundaries that separate communities, secular historians have emphasized the porosity and open-endedness of these boundaries.”[2] This crisis is even more pronounced in state sponsored Indian history texts, where for example, discussions of the violence were almost kept to a minimum.[3] The emphasis in these texts were to assert the antiquity of syncretism in Indian social life and the unitary character of the new nation and were replete with the conscious suppression of parts of its history which were seen as undesirable to national interests of ‘unity’ and

‘integrity’.[4] The will of the state is to create a history that reflected the ethos of ‘unity’, as systematically built into the institutions that the state established and the pedagogy that it promoted. Unfortunately, many sections of society lost their voice in the history that emerged as a result of this statist policy. Marginal sections of society such as the Dalits, tribal communities, religious minorities and women were the worst victims of such memocide.

In a country where geographical proximity to the national capital has ensured overwhelming attention within Partition history to Punjab, it is important to remember the multivocality of Indian Partition discourse. Beyond Punjab, Bengal is the other big site of Partition experience in the sub-continent in the east along with Assam. It is also pertinent to record that Assam, in the context of this narrative, is the colonial province of Assam, which in today’s terms includes the states of Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram. And yet, there is so little of the Partition story that emerges from these sites. Perhaps, the focus was on *Azadi* and not on *Batwara*; Pierre Nora probably summed up the Indian situation well when she said, “History’s goal and ambition is not to exult but to annihilate what has in reality taken place.”[5] It is interesting to observe that in recent years, this is a trend which is under challenge as individuals and communities affected by Partition have come forward to either correct these statist narratives or write and compile their alternative narratives that contest statist history. This shift has been to focus public attention on state betrayal of the displaced who perceived the Indian State to be their own as they gave up their home and hearth to migrate to India.

Celebration of Independence Day in recent years and a plethora of texts that have seen the light of print to commemorate the occasion have only helped to assert this crisis. While some of these texts have



attempted to articulate the question of victimhood, and the story of violence and territorial loss, they have only succeeded in exposing the fault-lines within Indian Partition historiography. [6] In recent years, when revisionist writings on Partition of India emerged, as Bengal finally came to find space in it, the story of the Partition in Northeast India is still absent. This story is perhaps more complex and multilayered than what has been hitherto imagined by Partition scholarship. Here, Partition is not an event of 1947 but a process that has spread itself [7] over two centuries engaging early colonial cartography, ethnicity and religion. The genesis of Partition as the corner-stone of political map-making can be traced to the inception of colonial rule in eastern India, when the English East India Company Government in Bengal decided to constitute the district of Sylhet and subsequently separate the hills of the Khasi-Jaintia lands from their plains in the 18th Century and make it a part of this new colonial frontier district.

## B. Northeast India: Writing 'Absence'

Sketch of the British military with Nagas, 1875  
(Wikimedia Commons)

The Bengal Boundary Commission Award made on the eve of transfer of power in India demarcating the boundary between India and East Pakistan in 1947 by Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the barrister who headed the Commission, was the culmination of a long process of cartographic maneuvers by the colonial state in India. Political scientist and policy maker Sanjoy Hazarika sums up the situation well as he points out that, "what is not often understood is that the North-East suffered the impact of not one but two partitions." [8] The first was the separation of Burma in 1937 which partitioned the Nagas, Mizos, Manipuris and the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh between two independent administrations, devastating kinship relations and trade connectivities, and the second was the partition of Bengal and Assam in 1947, culminating in the Radcliffe Line of 1947. However, most scholars engaging with the Partition of India and working in India remain silent about the

fact that this Partition was also the culmination of a process that began as early as the eighteenth century. In the context of northeast India today, it is pertinent to mention that the coming of the English East India rule in the Brahmaputra valley as administrators in 1826 accelerated a series of cartographic maneuvers and map-making in the region, both in the hills and the plains. In sharp contrast to the area being at the centre of connectivity between South Asia and Southeast Asia, the region was steadily transformed to acquire the shape of international borders in the twentieth century between India and Tibet, Burma and East Pakistan.

In the early 1820s, company officers visited the Naga hills and that became an interesting precursor of expanding colonial interest over areas that would transform into a contested borderland. Since 1834, the Patkai range watershed came to be recognized by the British as the boundary for colonial control cutting across Naga inhabited areas. Such cartographic exercises were also rampant in the Manipur frontier as the defeat of the Burmese forces by the Company in the First Anglo-Burmese War brought about British colonial hegemony over Manipur. Pradip Phanjoubam, one of the scholars from Manipur points out in his texts that, "in the Manipur sector the border was officially made in 1834. After ending Ava (Burmese) occupation of Manipur and Assam in 1826 at the end of the first Anglo-Burmese War and the signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo, the Chindwin river was deemed the boundary of the British protectorate Manipur, putting the Kabaw valley under Manipur. But in 1834, [...] the British persuaded the Manipuri king that a new boundary should be negotiated and Captain R. Boileau Pemberton as Boundary Commissioner drew what came to be known as the Pemberton Line along the foot of the 'Murring Hills' on the western edge of the Kabaw valley [...] In 1881, this boundary was realigned by the then British political agent in Manipur, Major James Johnstone. [...] In 1896, another British political agent in Manipur, Colonel Maxwell put 38 boundary pillars along this boundary which then came to be known as the Pemberton-Johnstone-Maxwell line" [9] that subsequently was

ratified by India and Burma as international borders in 1967.

In Tripura, the colonial interests of revenue and resource appropriation combined with demands of law and order and succession conflicts to culminate in an elaborate process of boundary demarcation which “worked with contrasting dimensions.”[10] Therefore in 1782, “when the Rani of Tripura asked the Tippera Collector to assist her son’s succession, the Collector obliged, and in return, secured a new boundary at the base of the hills, inducing the Raja to move his capital to Agartala. The Raja kept private landholdings in Tippera District, but in 1782, his royal authority had officially retreated to mountains east of Comilla.”[11] The Company was therefore now free to constitute the district of Tippera in 1790. But subsequent disputes between the English East India Company and the Maharaja of Tripura over *khas* lands located in the bordering Parganna led the English Company Government to appoint Mr. Henry Rickett to demarcate the boundary between Tripura and Tippera in 1846, who ordered a couple of surveys in 1848. But it was only by 1854 that the boundary between the state of Hill Tripura and the British district of Tippera came to be settled after survey by arbitrators Messers Leycester and Campbell. Brick boundary pillars were erected in 1866 which were maintained by the colonial government. This boundary was not only the district boundary but also the imperial frontier line of British India.[12]

The process of boundary demarcation cutting across the Zo territories was concluded in 1901 as the colonial state drew a boundary between the Lushai hills and the Chin hills. This boundary has persisted and has since been legitimized as the boundary between the Mizo Hills District/ Mizoram and the Chin State of Myanmar. The process of boundary demarcations was not limited to the eastern borders of Northeast India alone. In the north, the boundary between Tibet and India in the eastern Himalayas came to be formalized with an agreement signed between the representatives of the British and Tibetan representatives in July 1914, which came to be known as the McMahon line, named after the man who negotiated the treaty on behalf of the British

government. The result of this exercise was the drawing of an 850 mile line which ran from the northern edge of Bhutan to upper Burma and “reflected the colonial concerns for a militarily defensible boundary alignment”.[13]

The partition of Bengal and Assam in 1947, culminating in the Radcliffe Line of 1947 divided not only the Hindus and Muslims of this region on religious and ethnic lines, it also divided the smaller ethnic communities like the Khasis, Garos, Hajongs, Rabhas, Karbis Koch-Rajbongshis, the Reangs and the Chakmas, to name a few. It is interesting to note that within a few days of partition of the subcontinent, boundary disputes arose between the Khasi States and the Sylhet district of East Pakistan. A boundary that was demarcated as early as 1886 was converted into an international boundary by the departing colonial government.[14] An interesting note from a colonial officer to the Advisor to the Governor of Assam on the 3rd of July, 1947, says that “the boundary of the Khasi States and Sylhet and Khasi States and Kamrup [...] has never been demarcated. The notifications are in many cases vague quoting such boundaries as the foot of the hills, where the hills gradually merges into the plains, it is impossible to say where the foot is.”[15] These cartographic alignments though initially introduced to assist the needs of colonial exploitation continue to divide people and create disputed borders both internally and internationally, shaping the politics of this region and determining India’s relations with its immediate neighbours.

### C. Partition of Sylhet and Tripura and the making of Northeast India in 1947

Assam became enmeshed in partition politics through the district of Sylhet, which was a part of the province of Assam from 1874 to 1947, except for a brief period when Assam itself was made a part of a larger province called Eastern Bengal and Assam between 1905 and 1911. Therefore, when agreement came on the decision to partition the Indian subcontinent, the Assam Pradesh Congress and the Muslim League agreed that only the Muslim majority district of Sylhet in Assam would be put up for a

referendum to decide whether it should be amalgamated with East Pakistan or retained in India and the province of Assam. When the result of the Referendum was made public, it came to light that a majority of the votes were in favour of amalgamation with East Pakistan. Sylhet was put on the dissection table of the Boundary Commission, and both sides in the contest were apprehensive about the role of the Bengal Boundary Commission. Many Congress leaders both in Assam and the central leadership felt that the Bengal Commission would not do justice to the cause of Assam and demanded that a separate Boundary Commission be constituted for Sylhet. The Viceroy, on his part, dismissed these apprehensions and rejected the Congress demand for paucity of time, leaving no option but for the Sylhet question to be placed before the Bengal Boundary Commission.

On the 14th of August, Sylhet (except for three and a half thanas) became a part of East Pakistan. What remained in India became part of the Cachar district of the composite state of Assam in post-colonial India. Along with Sylhet, the Khasi-Jaintia, Garo and Mizo lands were also partitioned, and it is important to place the experiences of these communities on record within Partition historiography as these communities suddenly found themselves invented as border communities as a result of colonial cartography. This is despite Sir Cyril mentioning in his report that, "In my view, the question is limited to the district of Sylhet and Cachar since the other districts of Assam that can be said to adjoin Sylhet, neither the Garo Hills nor the Khasi and Jaintia Hills nor the Lushai hills have anything approaching a Muslim majority of population in respect of which a claim could be made." [16]

Such statements reflected a complete ignorance of the Boundary Commission about the situations at the ground, both administrative and social. What the Commission failed to appreciate was that the boundary between Sylhet and the Khasi native states on the one hand and the Jaintia hills on the other, till 1947 were inter-district demarcations which had no real impact on the transactions and movement of people on the ground. That was set to change completely with the transformation of inter-district boundaries into international boundaries. The

passage of more than seven decades since the moment of parting has not contributed to understanding the process of Partition beyond its religious stereotype of Hindu-Muslim antagonism. The tribal communities in Northeast India were the unacknowledged victims of India's partitions that spread itself over the last decade of colonial rule.

As has been discussed in the previous section, the Tripura Kings were the rulers of both the hills and some areas in the plains of eastern Bengal since the fifteenth century especially Comilla and parts of Sylhet, Noakhali and Chittagong districts. These plains areas came under the sway of the colonial control in 1761 after an operation led by Lieutenant Mathews on behalf of the Chittagong Council instituted a legal fiction whereby the Maharaja was reduced to the status of a zamindar of the lands that he controlled in the plains of eastern Bengal, "known as *Chakla Roshnabad*," [17] a total area of 555 square miles. This was only a legal fiction as, in the perception of the people, the Maharaja was the ruler of both the hills and the plains. A reference to the plains is important in the context of Partition as lakhs of people migrated to Hills-Tripura from their homes in East Bengal between 1946 and 1971 [18] which had a significant impact on the politics and administration in the border province. Though the Maharani, as the President of the Regency Council signed the Instrument of Accession to the Indian Union on the 13th of August, 1947, [19] there was no separate reference to *Chakla Roshnabad* in the Instrument. The award of the Boundary commission also did not make any separate reference to Tripura, unlike Assam. Though the Commission formalized the process of Partition and accordingly the estates of *Chakla Roshnabad* which belonged to the Maharaja of Tripura as a zamindari found itself located within East Pakistan, technically the areas should have been acceded to India along with Hills-Tripura. But that was not to be as both the Maharani along with the Regency Council and the Government of India were conspicuously silent about the Tripura territories in the plains of Bengal. Thus with the Partition of India, princely Tripura, along with Punjab, Bengal and Assam also experienced the process of Partition and the people living in the



princely state of Tripura were also exposed to the vicissitudes of post-Partition politics.

Confident about the wisdom of the rulers, the Hindu subjects of *Chakla Roshnabad* did not submit any memorandum to the Radcliffe Commission for inclusion of the zamindari into post-partition Tripura, though they were an inalienable part of the territorial possessions of the king of Tripura much before the onset of colonial rule. Thus after 1949, Tripura was made a Chief Commissioner's province and *Chakla Roshnabad* became "the absolute private property"[20] of the Tripura royal family, over which they had no real political control, with the creation of Pakistan. With the formation of East Pakistan, *Chakla Roshnabad* was lost on transfer of power to East Pakistan despite the protests by Hindu subjects and the subordinate zamindars,[21] completing the partition of Tripura as well.

#### D. Partition's Lingering Legacies

Beyond the narratives of the administrative history of Partition politics, when Partition finally took place, it affected politics and the lives of the people in Assam in many ways. It physically separated northeast India from the rest of the country except for a small passage of 22 km commonly known as the chicken's neck. Assam lost 4,769 square miles of territory and a population of 2,825,282 persons. But the loss of territory was not as significant as was the loss in paddy fields, lime and cement industries and tea gardens of Sylhet.[22] The adverse impact of the transfer of the Sylhet district to East Pakistan was noted in the Census Report of 1951 which observed that "the far reaching effects of this loss will continue to be felt by Assam as well as India for many years to come." [23] Partition disrupted the natural channels of riverine communication, rail and roads networks that linked the hill areas of colonial Assam through the Surma valley. One of the scholars crisply noted that, "Assam's rail link with the rest of the country was snapped following Partition. It was only in January, 1950 that the rail-link was restored by a metre-gauge line through the narrow chicken-neck

corridor of north Bengal. The disruption of the rail link had a very adverse effect on Assam's economy. Partition also resulted in the loss of Chittagong port which was a major outlet for Assam tea." [24] Partition of Assam and the loss of Sylhet [25] made Assam a land locked province as its outlet to the sea since 1904 [26] was through the port of Chittagong that became a part of East Pakistan.

Partition of colonial Assam in 1947 also adversely affected the social and economic lives of the various tribal communities residing within colonial Assam. It disrupted the traditional links that the tribal communities such as the Khasis, Jaintias and the Garos had with the East Pakistani districts of Sylhet and Mymensingh respectively. These tribes were settled not only in the hill districts of Assam but also in the plains of Sylhet and Mymensingh. At the stroke of a pen these people were internally split into Indians and Pakistanis depending on their residence. The traditional inter-community linkages in the area was so strong that these hill tribes "for ages depended on their trade with the plains [...]" [27] Centuries old prosperous border-trade based economy was destroyed by closing the borders and erection of check-posts. [28] In the pre-Partition scenario, the plains of Sylhet used to be the main market for the produce of the hills and foothills of the Khasi-Jaintia lands.

As a result of the partition of Sylhet, a border of about 150 miles in length was created across the Khasi-Jaintia hills. The boundary of the new state of East Pakistan partitioned the lands inhabited by the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo as a boundary came to be demarcated "from boundary pillar No. 1071 located at the tri-junction of Rangpur district of Bangladesh, west Garo Hills district of Meghalaya and Goalpara district of Assam and ends at the boundary pillar No. 1338 at the tri-junction of Sylhet district of Bangladesh, Jaintia Hills district and Cachar district of Assam." [29] Partition and the amalgamation of Sylhet with East Pakistan caused "a virtual economic blockade of the Khasi hills." [30] The movement of goods were initially discouraged and subsequently stopped from moving between Khasi-Jaintia hills and

East Pakistan. While the Khasi-Jaintia people of the hills found themselves cut away from their kinsmen in the plains they were also reduced to penury without a market for their agricultural produce and mineral resources. Trade which amounted to more than three crores of rupees annually in the pre-Partition days came to a standstill which resulted in the tribal communities residing at the borders between Khasi Hills and Sylhet being brought to the brink of starvation.[31] The affected in the Khasi Hills district amounted to about 80,000 people and about 16,000 households. This resulted in large-scale migration of people from these border areas to new settlements selected for their relocation in the Ri-Bhoi region of present day Meghalaya.[32]

Partition in northeast India was therefore not just religious but also ethnic and was not limited to the machinations of the colonial officialdom. Indian middle class leaders who were now aspiring to contest for public and elected offices were also responsible for encouraging the philosophy of partition between the two largest ethnic communities sharing this region, that is, the Assamese and the Bengali. Such support for separatist philosophy could be seen in a promise that the Assamese leaders had made to their electors as early as 1945 through the APCC Manifesto arguing that,

*“unless the province of Assam is organized on the basis of Assamese language and culture the survival of Assamese nationality and culture will become impossible. The inclusion of Bengali speaking Sylhet and Cachar and the immigration of lakhs of Bengali settlers on wastelands has been threatening to destroy the distinctiveness of Assam...”*[33]

The visit of Gopinath Bordoloi to the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, after the elections only reinforced this sentiment. In his report of the meeting, the viceroy observed that,

*“He said ‘Assam would be quite prepared to hand over Sylhet to Eastern Bengal.’”*[34]

In post-Partition India, the idea of ethnic partitions found new advocates in Assam. The Governor, addressing the first Assembly session after the

transfer of power on the 5th of September, 1947, pointed out that,

*The natives of Assam are now masters of their own house. They have a government which is both responsible and responsible to them. The Bengali no longer has the power, even if he had the will, to impose anything on the people of these hills and valleys which constitute Assam.*[35].

Post-colonial state of Assam began to work towards making Assam a predominantly Assamese province. Though there was no restriction on movement of people from East Pakistan to Assam in the initial years after independence, gradually the provincial governments and the Government of India began to discourage migration of people from East Pakistan to India by 1950. Partition introduced the ‘foreigners’ dimension into politics in northeast India with the introduction of the passport system in 1952. The situation became critical as the initial trickle of people wanting to migrate to India from East Pakistan became a flood by 1950 as the political atmosphere in East Pakistan became increasingly hostile to the minority communities. The Census Report for Assam, Manipur and Tripura, 1951 observed that,

*“the recent influx of Hindu refugees from Pakistan constitutes the biggest migration stream into Assam during the last decade. Following partition, there has been an almost steady and continuous exodus of the Hindus of Pakistan into Assam. The number of displaced almost touched about half a million people by April, 1950. The grave situation led the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan to meet in April and come up with an agreement, popularly known as the Nehru – Liaquat Pact. But despite the pact there was no improvement in the situation on the ground and a large number of displaced preferred to settle down in Assam. The Census of 1951 revealed that as many as 274,455 persons were settled in Assam, predominantly in the plains. Partition of Sylhet from Assam and its amalgamation with East Pakistan had a major impact on the flow of refugees from East Pakistan to Assam. The Census report pointed out that “most of the refugees come from the bordering district of Sylhet.”*[36] (Contd. to Page 18)

# DEVELOPMENT OF LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY IN ASSAM

by

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The “ARM” a light house approach to attract, retain and mobilize the human resources into asset for a changed society. Assam being the agrarian state whose land is vitalized by mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries, is a constituent unit of Eastern Himalayan biodiversity region and is one of the major biodiversity hotspots of the country. Besides being the nature blessed state, it often faces spurt of natural calamities (especially flood) from meager to very severe state, devastating the agricultural field along with breakdown of the agrarian and all the stakeholders’ morals. With all the even and odds, Assam agrarian mass are marching ahead to fill the stomach of 3.4 crores of human population besides housing substantial number of livestock population.

## A brief of livestock sector in Assam:

Livestock is the integral part of the socio-cultural and mixed farming system that characterizes the agriculture sector in Assam. Besides their contribution to the food basket of the state, they are considered as potential power house of the rural economy. The major livestock production is dominated by rural smallholder production system, with livestock and poultry of low productivity, however, in recent past few specialized and commercial intensive production system has emerged with livestock and poultry of superior germplasm. Still at present, the state evidences huge demand and supply gap of livestock and poultry products. The per capita availability of milk, meat and egg was 78 ml, 1.5 kg and 15 numbers respectively (Livestock Census, 2019), against the respective ICMR recommendations of 300 ml, 10.75 Kg and 180 numbers. In various forums the region for such a huge gap is blamed to the low productivity of indigenous

livestock and poultry, poor service delivery or overall weak value chain along with the traditional mindset of zero-input production system.

## Few pointers causing migration of rural youth:

Migration in general is an obvious phenomenon which we can see in various strata of living being. It’s a survival strategy in many species of birds or animals, where seasonal migrations are noticed. However, the situation in human society is different and few reasons of human migration are mentioned below which will help in framing the strategies –

1. No job opportunities
2. Unfair or low wages at village level
3. Conversion of fertile agricultural land into barren unproductive one due to natural calamities
4. Low motivation or low work culture
5. Societal pressure
6. Superior / modern lifestyle
7. Higher migration rate in resource poor families
8. Low risk-taking capability
9. Less glamorous traditional homestead industries

## Strategies:

Taking the advantage of an organized system like “Panchayati Raj” the strategies are designed keeping the Panchayat as an ARM epicenter of growth. The strategic pointers are –

1. Identification and Development of inventory for high-risk Panchayat where migration was more intense.

2. Counseling and mapping of core competent skills or wills amongst the high-risk section of youth.
3. Meticulous development of entire value chain taking into confidence the existing value chain players. The congenial work ecosystem should be created avoiding any potential conflict especially from the so called middle man. It will be a win-win situation to acknowledge their work of forward and backward linkages and renaming them as “Change Agent of ARM”.-
4. Mobilization of the line departments and converging the existing schemes or programmes into the ARM epicenter for institutionalizing the planned value chain.

Industries creation for inputs  
(feed, supplements, medicines, feed or breed)

Skill Training, exposure visit  
Attitudinal transformation,  
Skill Training, Exposure visit

### Customised Production Unit (PPO)

Planning and Upscaling  
Service Delivery, Market Intelligence &  
Marketing Team

Aggregation of Production Units into  
FPC

Byproduct Industries

Preprocessing Centres

### Fig. Schematic diagram of ARM model

#### Anticipated outcome:

The ARM model will not only attract and retain the workforce in the rural areas but is a push forward to revolutionize the agriculture and allied sector towards industrialization leading to a healthy and happy society. \*\*

## Atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh

□ Dr. Jnanendra Barman

“...societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out” – Aime Cesaire’s observation on the conditions of the African natives under the colonial regime may well explain the present conditions of Minorities, especially Hindu minorities of Bangladesh. Rape, murder, destruction of temples and forceful occupation of land of the Hindus seem to be the recurring themes of Bangladesh’s socio-political discourse. In the last six months itself, reports say, 79 Hindus were killed, 77 Hindus were kidnapped and 95 were forcibly converted to Islam in Bangladesh. Last year from 13th to 19th October more than 50 temples and makeshift worship arrangements were vandalized all over the country. According to Ain o Salish Kendra, 3679 attacks took place against Hindus in Bangladesh between January 2013 and September 2021. Hindus which constituted 30% of East Pakistan’s (now Bangladesh) population in 1947 declined to 8.5% in 2011. In 2001-2011, 9 lakhs Hindus went missing.

Year	1951	1961	1974	1981	1991	2001	2011
Muslim	76.9	80.4	85.4	86.7	88.3	89.7	90.4
Hindu	22.0	18.5	13.5	12.1	10.5	9.2	8.5
Buddhist	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7
Christian	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Others	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1

Demographic Change in Bangladesh

Religious persecution, Forceful conversion, exodus have resulted in decline of Hindu population in Bangladesh. Professor Abul Barakat of Dhaka University observes, “There will be no Hindus left within Bangladesh within 30 years...the rate of exodus over the past 49 years points to that direction.” Research shows that around 1.13 crore Hindus were compelled to flee Bangladesh due to religious persecution from 1964 to 2013. Kushtia Islamic University professor Dr. Rashid Askari observes “This steep decline has mostly resulted from the overall effect of the persecution inflicted



on the Hindus over the decades...the people who once constituted one third of the total population, have been reduced almost to a vanishing breed always threatened with extinction.” Bangladesh was founded on the ideals of “nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism’ pleading that ‘the high ideals of nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism, which inspired our heroic people to dedicate themselves, and our brave martyrs to sacrifice their lives in, the national liberation struggle, shall be the fundamental principles of the constitution.’ But the fundamental Principles were overthrown by the fifth amendment in 1978 ; ‘secularism’ was replaced by ‘absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah’. Rise of Islamic fundamentalist groups not only marginalise the minorities but also threaten the secular fabric. The Eighth amendment in 1988 declares Islam to be the state religion: “The state religion of the Republic is Islam, but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in the republic.” The fifteenth amendment in 2011 brings back the ideals of secularism enshrined in the constitution in 1972. But rise of Islamic extremist groups continue to pose serious threat to the secular fabric of the country. In 2013, 376 fatalities were recorded in Islamist extremism-linked violence. According to National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), around 944 terrorist attacks took place between 2000 and 2015 in the country. . By 2 July 2016, 48 people including 20 foreigners were killed by the Islamist groups. On 17th March, 2017 terror incident of suicide bombing by ISIS took place at Dhaka Rapid Action Battalion Camp. Terror groups like Ansarulla Bangla Team, Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh, and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria have intruded into the socio-cultural space of Bangladesh. In 2021 Hafazat-e-Islam, a Qawmi Madrasa-based radical Islamist Group created mayhem in Bangladesh targeting Hindus; atleast 17 Hindus were killed.

The Hindus in Bangladesh( earlier East Pakistan ), like rest of the sub-continent, fought for a united country. But at the stroke of the midnight hour the line was drawn separating brothers from brothers. Millions of Hindus were compelled to live a

subjugated life in an Islamic state. They have been dehumanised, mutilated marginalized in the Islamic state. US Senator Edward Kennedy’s November 1, 1971 report submitted to the Senate committee testifies to the violence committed against the Hindus: “Hardest hit have been members of the Hindu community who have been robbed of their lands and shops, systematically slaughtered, and in some places, painted with yellow patches marked “H”. All of this has been officially sanctioned, ordered and implemented under martial law from Islamabad”.

Healing the wounds left by colonial history and giving shelter and citizenship to the persecuted minorities in Islamic theocratic Pakistan was a national commitment of Indian leadership which remains unfulfilled. Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution on November 25, 1947 declaring that “the Congress is bound to afford full protection to all those non-Muslim from Pakistan who have crossed the border and come over to India or those who have done so to save their life and honour.” Mahatma Gandhi on September 26, 1947 declared in a prayer meeting that ‘the Hindus and the Sikhs staying in Pakistan, can come to India by all means, if, they do not wish to continue there. In that case, it is the duty of Indian Government to give them jobs and make their lives comfortable.” Congress was committed to these people until recently. Manmohan Singh as leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha maintained on December 18th, 2003 that the minorities in countries like Bangladesh have faced persecution and it is our moral obligation, that, if circumstances force people, these unfortunate people, to seek refugee in our country, approach to granting citizenship to these unfortunate persons should be more liberal. The Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019 proposes to give citizenship to those persecuted people from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh who have been staying in India for more than 6 years till 31st Dec, 2014. Today, Congress and other so called liberals are opposing the move. Some ethnic groups from Assam are also opposing on the ground that it may pose a threat to the linguistic identity of the Assamese once

( Contd. to Page 18)

# Agricultural Development in Assam through Horticultural Production and Business Activities

By

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## ABSTRACT

This approach paper attempts to elucidate a gamut of strategies for addressing the chronic and contemporary challenges encountered by the horticultural sector in Assam so as to usher in a vivid transformation of the current production & management system into a buoyant & robust horti-business entity. A prime focus has been laid on inclusive systematization of the entire farming community of the state in form of producer organization for enabling the marginal & small holders to pursue agri-horticultural activities on profitable scale. It is proposed to consider the Gram Panchayats (GPs) as the base for configuring the FPOs with an ideation to give birth to 2200 FPOs covering all the GPs of the state in phased manner. The Panchayat & Rural Development Department of the state has been proposed to act as the Nodal Agency for implementation of the project with a operational model “**REGAIN 2200**” (*Reviving the Economy through Growth in Agriculture via Integration & Networking of 2200 Gram Panchayats in Assam*). Various ways & means have been suggested including the scope of imbibing support from ongoing promotional schemes for building up a vibrant horti-production & business system with total value chain management of the prioritized commodities for sustainable furtherance of the FPOs. The slogan of this movement will be Economic Upsurge through Organized Farming and the core activities will be based on the ADMIRE (Activity, Database, Manpower, Infra-innovation & Resources Encircling) model of convergence of ongoing endeavours, BLISS (Betterment through Leveraging Internal Scope & Strength) model of harnessing internal strengths and LESS (Low External Support & Supplementation) model of low external dependence. Strategies have also been prescribed for designing the overall approach accordingly with prime

focus on commercialization of indigenous horticultural resources aiming at attaining self reliance by the FPOs for showing up an Aatmanirbhor Bharat being Vocal for Local with Global Outreach. Particular measures have been prescribed for empowering the vulnerable section of the rural youth to perform the horticultural activities profitably and keep glued to farming. Implementation of the project could be expected to trigger an organized movement on part of the farming community to transform the existing horticulture into business mode for realizing economic empowerment at individual level, strengthening the rural economy at macro level, conserving & unlocking the hidden potential of horticultural bio-resources for synthesizing items of commerce, pledging nutritional security, ensuring retention of rural youth in the horticultural sector, fostering development of a self reliant industrious horti- based production platform at the rural front and enhancing the contribution of horticultural sector to the growth of the state GDP.

## (I) Brief account of the scenario of state horticulture

History depicts long standing association of horticulture with the agrarian mainstay of Assam. The sector received royal patronage during the reign of the Ahom dynasty. Being impressed by the beauty & grandeur of the home garden developed by a common man named “Momai Tamuli”, the Swargadeu (King) Pratap Singha hauled him up to a high administrative position “Bortamuli”, the Superintendent of Royal Gardens, and bestowed the historic responsibility for initiating a movement on the development and furtherance of horti-centric homestead gardens in the ancient Assam during 16th century. Beginning with that, Assam is now endowed with a mammoth 27 lakh homestead

gardens presenting a robust production system with a wide array of horticultural resources having a direct bearing on nutrition and livelihood of rural mass. Noteworthy is the fact that the homestead gardens of Assam were established primarily to cater to the family need for protective foods and these were not basically oriented in commercial mode. It is also interesting to note that though agriculture had been the backbone of Assam's economy, the impact of Green Revolution had not been that vivid in the state including other parts of NER compared to the other parts of the country. Despite that, the state of Assam was enjoying a proud position in the agricultural scenario of the country. Till the turn of 20th century, horticulture had been visualized as a homestead entity in the state. In an attempt to unlock the hidden potential of horticulture in the north east region of the country including Assam, a mission mode approach (Technology Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture in North East Region: TM-IDH-NER) was launched by the then Ministry of Agriculture & Cooperation, Govt. of India in the beginning of 21st century which still continues in form of HMNEH- MIDH. The past as well as contemporary impact analysis reports amply depict that this mission has been instrumental and successful in ushering significant development in the state horticultural sector. At present, the state registers about 7.00 lakh ha area producing around 73.00 lakh MT of diverse commodities in five major domains, i.e., homestead gardens, winter paddy vacated lands, riverine tracts, hill farms and small tea gardens. However, Assam is yet to find a place within the circle of horticulturally advanced states of the country despite having a vast inherent potential. As of now, Assam's share in country's horticultural production is measurably low figuring 2.56% in fruits, 2.18% in vegetables and 3.36% in spices. As such there lies tremendous scope for boosting up the quantum of production through planned approaches triggering expansion of the sector both horizontally and vertically. Considering the current-day significance of provisioning nutritional security and surging farm income, the horticulture sector

demands renewed thrust for harnessing the manifold benefits and forthcoming fortunes under the changing scenario of global agriculture.

## **(II) Short perusal of the sector with its sub- sector components**

In contrast to the existence of enormous potential, the relative contribution of agriculture & allied sector to the growth of state's GDP has not been vibrant over the recent years. Studies revealed that while there has been increasing contribution of industry and service sector to the state GDP in between the period from 2011-12 to 2018-19, the relative contribution of agriculture including horticulture & allied sectors exhibited a decreasing trend from 19.89% to 15.80%. The Annual Growth Rate of state GDP in agriculture including horticulture & allied sector for 2018-19 has been estimated to be 5.68% at current price. These amply warrant the need for taking up massive and strategic measures for accelerated development in the horticulture sector considering the inherent untapped potential and the ever increasing market demand. Studies & analyses undertaken in the horticultural sector have underlined the high potential of sub-sectors like banana with 36.43% share in total state production, pineapple (12.26%), mandarin (8.49%), jackfruit (8.04%), papaya (5.95%), Assam lemon (4.74%), guava (3.86%), litchi (2.04%), others indigenous fruits (16.25%), potato (19.05%), cabbage (17.20%), cauliflower (10.36%), tomato (10.29%), brinjal (7.58%), radish (5.40%), okra (4.13%), onion (2.09%), ginger (53.64%), garlic (20.11%), coriander (9.72%), turmeric (6.26%) and chilli (6.12%) for developing a full-bodied production system considering their competitive as well as comparative advantages to fulfill the consumption needs both in raw and/or processed forms.

## **(III) Critical gaps/barriers (Physical, Technological, Financial & Administrative) in the sectoral development process and suggested intervention strategies & remedial measures for acceleration of horti-production & business activities**

Despite the efforts & endeavours of different development agencies including the state departments, agricultural universities, R&D organizations, commodity boards, financial institutions, marketing & export development authorities etc., the horticultural sector of the state has been shrouded by a wide spectrum of constraints/ barriers which have been decelerating the pace of development over the years. Some of these are chronic in nature and need inclusive strategy for appropriating solutions.

It has been observed that the farming community of the state is by and large unorganized. Owing to small & marginal nature, the individual farmer becomes unable to manage & take forward the production system in an efficient manner, gets encircled by different kinds of problems & uncertainties, lacks ability to connect market and eventually falls a prey to the unscrupulous middlemen more particularly when the produces are of perishable nature and there is occurrence of market glut. In order to ease out the problems of stand-alone farming by small & marginal farmers pertaining to management of seed & other production input, technology connect & capacity building, curbing production cost, accessing mechanization including irrigation, undertaking appropriate post harvest handling & farm level processing, generating critical volumes through collective aggregation of produces, market aggression, acquisition of quality tag for farm produces, acquiring credit worthiness etc. the following intervention strategies and measures have been suggested.

#### • **Systematization of the farming community into Producer Organization**

The manifold benefits of organizing small & marginal farmers into Producer Collectives are well established. In Assam, the FPO movement had its start in 2017 and presently showing a good run. In order to systematize the farming community statewide, the farmers may be organized into Producer Collective/ Organization at Gram Panchayat (GP) level. Usually, a GP covers 10 villages and 1000 households @ 100 households per village. This offers a unique opportunity to give birth to one FPO with 1000 shareholder farmers under each & every GP. In this way,

there could be 2200 FPOs corresponding to all the GPs of the state. This needs to be done in a phased manner creating a scope for every single farmer of the state to find himself within an organized production system. Presently, several agencies are involved in the promotion of FPO in Assam. Appropriate policy needs to be in place for proliferation of the ongoing schemes with additional provisions for formation and promotion of more FPOs within a definite timeframe.

#### • **Creation of a Nodal Agency to take care of the massive FPO movement in the state**

The Panchayat and Rural Development Department of the Govt. of Assam may be the State Nodal Agency for looking after the proposed GP-based FPO formation & furthering process. The Nodal Agency will coordinate with different FPO promoting organizations for expansion of their activities to reach out all the GPs of the state. A multidisciplinary Technical Support Group (TSG) may be created at the Block level by pulling experts from State Agricultural/ Horticultural Department and State Agricultural University including KVKs on deputation to offer technical handholding services for all the GP-based FPOs under a particular Block embracing development of business plan, knowledge & skill empowerment, input connect, market integration etc. This TSG will be working in close coordination with the Resource Institutions (RIs) and CBBOs belonging to FPO promoting organizations like Department of Horticulture & Food Processing, GoA; ARIAS Society- World Bank assisted APART; NABARD, NCDC & SFAC- Scheme for promotion of 10000 FPOs; MSME etc.

#### • **Preparation of business plan for the FPOs**

The TSG in coordination with the RIs will prepare the business plan for the FPOs paying due consideration to agro-ecological situation, resource-base of the farmer, traditional knowledge & skill available with the farmers, availability & predominance of commodity with competitive & comparative advantages, market potential and scope of value addition. ( Contd. to Next Issue )



## Looking at Security Scenario of Assam

□ Col Ranjit Kumar Talukdar

Three aspects come to our minds when we think of the security perspective of Assam. Its geographical location, influx of foreigners adversely affecting the demography and threats from China in the long run impacts. Security, although the 'small war' as security expert Jaideep Saikia calls the several insurgencies like ULFA, NSCN etc is another factor of immense concern. All the seven sisters of North-East have similar problems in varying degrees. I would like to avoid going into the historical perspectives and bring out my views basically on the current and likely future security, hazards of the state from three angles-External threat mainly from China and other neighbors, internal threat from the ethnic rights leading to formation of insurgent groups and most importantly the omnipresence of Islamist extremism which is on the rise.

Assam does not share border with China. The fear that comes to mind is of cutting off Assam and NER at Chicken Neck, the 26 km corridor or Siliguri corridor as it is known to us in the event of hostilities with China. It is a nightmare if we think from strategic point of view. A hostile and aggressive China has shown its card in 2017 Doklam stand off to a Heup dominating the corridor from a renbaga point at the trijunction of Bhutan, India, China. Although construction work at Doklam stopped due to our strong stand with troops force to face China has built infrastructure next east of Doklam in Chumki valley close to the corridor. The intentions and actions are clear. China does not recognise McMohan Line which generally follow the present line of control and claims whole of Arunachal Pradesh a part of Tibet and Pt Nehru accepted Tibet as part of communist China in 1954. Those were Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai days. Today Chinese PLA is a much stronger force and road, rail and air infrastructure close to the Line of control in Tibet has been constructed. Three airbases in eastern Tibet can hit any part of Assam and the communication line and vulnerable targets can be hit with its highly Superior Airforce. That we are aware

of and our armed forces are prepared to take on the PLA. We do not see any problem from Bhutan or Nepal. Myanmar is neither foe nor a friend. Its under Chinese influence to a great extent. We do not have border with it. Insurgent groups like ULFA(I) still operates from the Myanmar territory along with other insurgent groups. Assam do not have too many Rohyngias entering but we cannot overlook this aspect.

When it comes to Bangladesh, Assam has a huge interest from several front. Assam being Central to Look East policy, the flow of trade and commerce from Assam to Bangladesh and North-East Asia, is of vital importance. India and Bangladesh share a very close friendship relations. Recent visits of Bangladeshi convoys and muktibahini retirees etc to Assam including exchange of gifts from President Begum Khalid Zia to Chiefminister Himanta Biswa Sarma are sine-qua-nano of a growing relation about infiltration and deportation of Bangladeshies identified by NRC are thorny issues to be dealt. We must take full advantage of the situation. Issues of illegal cattle trad, smuggling etc should be dealt with amicably.

However, the most disturbing reality is the expansion of Islamist terrorism. We have the Bangladeshi infiltrators problems that led to the longest peaceful agitation in eighties and nineties. Formation of ULFA as an armed ofshoot etc well known to the public. But the extremism carried into this country specially Assam is what worries us. The indigenous muslim population of Assam have also shown equal concern at the rise of the Bangladeshi muslim population in India and Assam in particular. All of us are worried to note the entry of militant jihadi elements from Bangladesh who are nurtured by ISI of Pakistan and even Directorate General of Intelligence of Bangladesh had a role to play. Organisations like HUGI, HUM are jihadi groups operating from Bangladesh and the huge 40 % population of muslims as per them is good enough

for initiating the agenda islamist groups do which is no big secret. Reknown scholar Jaideep Saikia in his well researched book Terror Sans Frontiers wrote and I quote, “The insurgency situation in North-East India, however, beginning to witness a unique phenomenon which could well launch an unusual order of extremism than has traditionally been known to exist. Islamist militant activities have began to breed in the religion with an urgency that could well have not only a motivation to usurp the mantle from the ethnically based insurgent movements which have been flourishing in the religion, but also with a conspiracy to further an agenda which has religious fanaticism and division of important co-ordinates.”

The unusually high growth of Muslim population in Assam is a pointer to the days ahead for a peaceful (sic) Assam. Extremist elements grabing political power in a democratic way and then furthering their hidden agenda is lurking on the immediate future of Assam. Already the second largest Muslim populated state next to J&K, Assam cannot go the Kashmir way. Inimical forces are working hard to change the demography and in eleven districts Muslims are already majority. Some other districts of the state are on the verge of becoming Muslim majority. While the society at large must be aware of the dangers of religious extremism and work with commitment to thwart any such attempt. While the spirit of Srimanta Sankar-Azan Pir must be carried forward with utmost sincerity, the danger from extremism and the acts of terrorism must not be brushed under the carpet. The society and the government must initiate urgent step to see that future of Assam remains with the indigenous people of Assamese. \*\*

## LEST WE FORGET : THE MANY PARTITIONS AND THEIR LEGACIES IN NORTHEAST INDIA

( Contd. from Page 10)

### E. Partitions in Inter- Community Relations in North-East India

As community lives were disrupted in post-colonial Assam by the operation of Partition, migration of refugees from East Pakistan had an adverse impact on community relations both in the plains and the hills of Assam. Settlement of these refugees in the various districts of Assam was viewed as a threat to the idea of political homogenization of spaces. In Shillong, located in the Khasi Hills District, 66 acres of land was requisitioned by the Government of Assam in two blocks of Bhagyakul estate and Umpling village for the settlement of 351 families, due to which tribal-non tribal relations deteriorated and the non-tribals came to be perceived as ‘*dkhars*’ or foreigners for the first time. Inclusion of non-tribals in the District Council established under the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution led to staging of black flag demonstrations on 27th June, 1952[37] and attempts to obstruct the inaugural ceremony. The protests was accompanied by a procession which “was dispersed by the police with tear gas that was used for the first time in Khasi and Jaintia Hills to break a political procession.”[38] It was almost prophetically noted in the Census Report of 1951 that, “the far reaching effects of this loss will continue to be felt by Assam as well as India for many years to come.”[39] ( Contd. to Next Issue )

### Atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh

( Contd. from Page 13 )

Bengali Hindus pour into the state. But census report reveals that Hindu population in Assam declined from 72.5% in 1971 to 61.5% in 2011; it clearly indicates there was no Hindu Bengali migration during the period which otherwise should have increased. Of those who came prior to 1971, some six lakhs Bengali Hindus’ names have been left out of the NRC because the Supreme court rejected migration certificate as valid document to claim one’s citizenship. The migration certificate was issued by the central Govt in 1956 who came to India in the aftermath of partition. On the other hand Muslim population witnessed a sharp rise from 24% in 1971 to 34% in 2011. Vote bank politics has added complexity to the issue now which was otherwise a consensus.\*\*

## RAINBOW RESISTANCE AND FREEDOM MOVEMENT AGAINST BRITISH COLONIALISM

□ Lt. Gen. (Dr.) Konsam Himalay Singh

The Indian independence movement was a series of events during British Raj. It is believed that revolutionary movement for independence emerged from erstwhile Bengal Province of which many parts of the North East India such as present day Assam were part of. Assam of that time included present day Nagaland (Naga Hills District), Mizoram (Lushai Hills District), Meghalay (Khasi, Garo and Jaintia Hills) and Arunachal Pradesh (North Eastern frontier Agency). Manipur and Tripura were princely kingdoms under the suzerainty of the British since 1891 and 1806 respectively. Hence, these two kingdoms were not part of Assam. There were very little influence of the Indian Freedom movements in the hilly areas of the region except in the Brahmaputra and Surma Valleys of the then Assam province. However, isolated and unorganized resistance to the British incursion into the region during early 19<sup>th</sup> century were marked by very fierce resistance to the British by multiple tribes and the kingdoms in the region such as Manipur. In the Resistance to the British rule indigenous communities organized numerous rebellions in many parts of Eastern India during the early days of East India company in the region. A few Naga, Kukis, Lushai tribes carried out raids and kidnapping against the British intrusion from the beginning ie 1826 onwards.

Many wars were also fought by princely kingdoms in various parts of India against the British all over the Indian Sub-continent during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Events in the sub-continent had its own ripples in the remote corners of the NE Region as well even though these were isolated in nature, mostly to protect their own customs and identity. These events in the North East seldom find mention in the historical narrative of India's freedom movement. It is a matter of debate as to whether or not these isolated resistance to the British in the region was inspired or influenced by the unfolding events during the period in the rest of India.

The aim of this article is to briefly scan the panorama of various movements and events in the NE region which contributed to the overall Freedom Movements of India.

North East is an enigma to most of our countrymen and women. With an area of approximately 8% of India land mass and a population share of about 2% of the country the region is home to hundreds of tribes and sub-tribes. A distant land connected by a narrow strip of 22Kms in the Siliguri Corridor and is bounded by China, Nepal, Bangla Desh and Myanmar. It is a region where hundreds of ethnic groups of Indic, mongoloid, austic races formed a melting pot of races to make the region an Anthropologist's delight and where the snow clad mountains, the blue hills, the riverine landscape of the vales, bamboo and tropical forests extends hundreds of miles. It is also the region where people practice Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Budhism uninterrupted by the evolutions of these faiths from the ancient years. Not to speak of the multiple faiths among the natives for nature worship and locally adjusted form of the mainstream religions and cultures.

According to some, Idu Mishmi tribe of Arunachal are considered to be from the lineage of Rukmini (Lord Krishna's wife). Kachari kingdom is believed to be the ancient kingdom of the Kiratas mentioned in the Mahabharata. Hidimba, wife of Bhim in Mahabharata is also believed by some to be a Kachari. Even as far as Ukhrul in Manipur, some claim as the birth place of Uloopi, the wife of Arjuna. Be that as it may, never will anyone and anytime in future, these fairy tales will be proved or disproved. Some even claim these to be a figment of imagination.

There is no denying that Gupta empire, Ashoka empires in particular have had significant impact in the western part of the North Eastern region and mingling of culture and other aspects with the Gangetic civilization. Between 4<sup>th</sup> century AD to 12<sup>th</sup> century, the region was largely free from foreign interventions.

The kingdoms of Kamtapur, Cacharis, Chutias were in various stages of formation and consolidation in the region. The Kingdom of present day Manipur is believed to have been in existence before the millenium. The arrival of the Tai Ahoms from the East (present day Myanmar) in late 12th and early 13th century resulted in the consolidation of the Ahomkingdom, further driving the earlier settlers like Koch Borok and Kacharis( tibeto-Burman speaking people) further to the West and to the South. However, the Ahomrulers adopted the local customs and traditions in every facet of their lives to gradually form the Assamese identity as we know today ,even though there are over 300 ethnic groups/tribes and sub-tribes in the Greater Assam of the yore. The dwellers in the mountainous regions and the thick forests of the region continued to remain partly isolated from the emerging historical and social fabric. Yet, many of these tribes were very much part of the one kingdom or the other from time to time with a kind of confederacy and loose sharing of powers. Such arrangements existed due to the remoteness, hostile terrain and the nature of the social structures among the tribes.

The Khiljis and the Moghuls( who were in power in parts of the then Bengal province) carried out 17 attacks between 13th and 17th century to capture the Brahmaputra plains to expand their territory. However , the Moguls were decisively defeated in the battle of Saraighat( Near Present day Guwahati) by the Ahom Army led by LachitBorphukan in 1671. On the other hand, a great rivalry for domination and power play between the Burmese and the Kathes( Manipuris) between 14-19th century led to numerous wars between the two kingdoms, the final of which was fought in 1819 and led to the defeat of the Manipuris and the Ahom Kingdoms. Thereafter, Burmese occupied the Ahom and Manipur kingdoms. This led to intolerable suffering to the people of the Kingdom of Manipu and most parts of present day Assam.

In the modern times, it all began with the arrival of British and their interests to control the frontiers of British India that, exploratory expeditions were launched in Sikkim, Bhutan, Arunachal, Manipur and the Assam & Arakan Hills. The aim was to keep an eye on the Chinese and Russian activities in Tibet

in the North and Burmese empire to the east and south. The British , on the request of the Manipuri and Ahom Kingdoms intervened and were successful in driving away the Burmese from the region which led to the signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo 1826 between the British and the Burmese. The treaty effectively ended the Ahom Kingdom in Assam and limited the powers of the King of Manipur thus a beginning was made for a British administration. Discovery of tea and oil in the region further added to the colonization efforts of the Britishers. Coal industry and huge natural resources including teak in the region gave further impetus to their efforts. With the commercialization of the region, railways and other transport systems to sustain the commercial activities were brought in. Their policy of keeping a large tract of the land of the "Frontiers" largely unadministered thereby facilitating the proselytization of the population residing in these areas also led to further alienation among the various ethnic groups in the region over a few centuries. The identity and the culture of hundreds of tribes were threatened with the arrival of Christianity. The legacy of various laws to isolate most tribes from the regular administrations persists even today. The monarchs of Ahoms, the Meiteis, the Dimasas, Tripuris and other local chieftains in the region ruled with iron hand in the yesteryears to consolidate the ever divisive identity conscious population in the region . The arrival of British in the region and the subjugation of many tribes and their territories by them further accelerated the arrival of the modern era. The Rise and fall of the kingdoms through the ages in the region tell the story of the ethnic cauldron in the region. The early history of British relations with the indigenous people of North East were one of perpetual conflict. To control the tribes the British had to undertake many expeditions to the tribal areas. The British coined the terms such as, Backward Tracts, Excluded and Partially excluded tracts in order to extend their scheme of administration in these areas.

The British sooner than later consolidated their grip on the existing kingdoms of Ahoms, the Manipuris, Tripuris and Jaintias who were the rulers in their respective geographical regions through Carrot and stick policies. Ahom kingdom was dismantled soon after the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 and the



entire kingdom was merged into the British India with little resistance. The Kingdom of Manipur fought the British in 1891 at Khongjom, a village about 34 Kms from the capital Imphal. The Manipuri army was defeated thus bringing the kingdom under British suzerainty. Similarly the other smaller kingdoms like Tripura and Jaintia were also brought under indirect control of the British. The frontiers of these kingdoms were inhabited by hundreds of tribes of whom many were at some time or the other subjugated by these rulers and exacted tributes even though they were not fully integrated to the mainstream. The Britishers found that "civilizing" (?) and developing these tribes were best achieved through proselytization to Christianity. Today one finds that 95% of these tribes follow Christianity.

The resistance to the British hegemony and their administration began soon after their entry into the region. In 1832, the Khasis fought the British forces by a series of guerilla actions against the British to ensure that the British intrusion into the area was stopped. The Britishers wanted to occupy the Khasi Hills due to its salubrious climate akin to Scotland. The Jaintias, another tribal group who inhabited the eastern part of the present day Maghalaya fought the British against their taxation system and to protect the traditional customs. However they were defeated and British control was established in early 19th century..

During the 1857 rebellion or the First War of Independence, people of Assam offered resistance in the form of Non-cooperation. Many leaders in Assam were executed for their role in the Non-Cooperation movement particularly in the Nagaon district of Assam. The winds of organized resistance as part of overall Indian freedom movement against the British were first felt in the Brahmaputra and the Surma valleys ( Cachar District) of Assam.

British intrusion into the Angami village Khonoma, in present day Nagaland during 1880 resulted in heavy losses of British infantry and of the Angamis by the swift retaliation of the British. The Angamis made treaty with the Britishers soon thereafter. This resistance is one of the fiercest episode in the Naga territory.

The Anglo-Manipuri war in 1891 is also manifestations of revolt against the British

Govtpolicies when the later tried to ensure extinction of the kingdom of Manipur. The Kingdom of Manipur was used as a buffer against the Burmese empire by the British during the early days of British arrival in the region. However after the British victory in 3rd Anglo-Burmese war in 1885, the British saw no reason to tolerate a strong Manipuri kingdom. Hence, the British decided to annex Manipur by taking advantage of alleged palace in fighting and intrigues was reported. The British employed over 4000 troops against approximately 4000 Manipuri soldiers to protect the kingdom. Victoria Cross was awarded to Lt Grant of British Army during the campaign against the brave Manipur Army. The king of Manipur, Maharaja Kulachandra was imprisoned in Andaman island after the defeat of Manipur. Recently, Mount Harriet in the Andamans where the Maharaja was lodged in a jail was renamed as Mount Manipur by the Union Home Minister. The British is believed to have offered the throne to the same Maharaja in return for his allegiance to the British Empire. However, the king chose to remain in jail rather than be under the British rule in the kingdom. A few others like Maj Gen Thangal and the regent Bir Tikendrajit who played a role in the killings of British officers in Kangla (Capital Fort) were hanged for waging war against the empire.

On the other hand resistance to the British were also building up in the Manipur hills. Rani Gaidielu of Manipur Hills consolidated her followers to reject Christianity and challenge the British administration in the hills of Manipur and erstwhile Assam during 1930s. Armed resistance against the British were carried out under her leadership. Mr Nehru honored her after independence of India. Kukis and Lushais from Southern Hills carried out a number of raids against British expansion eastwards from Chittagong. These raids were against British expansion in the hills of the region. The tribes also carried away heads of the Britishers and looted their belongings. During 1871, the first of the military operations against Lushais were undertaken to subjugate the tribe.

The Kuki rebellion took place in Manipur Hills during 1918-1920 to challenge the British policy of forced recruitment to the Labour Corps during WW1. The Kukis also challenged the British taxation system

in the hills. The Kukis fought bravely in the hills of Manipur as well as in a few parts of present day Assam and Myanmar as well.

In the present day Arunachal Pradesh, various tribes like Daflas and Akka resisted British intrusions in the region during 1850-1880s. The tribes carried out multiple raids and carried away prisoners and properties of the British. However, these tribes were also subdued in due course of time. In this connection British Expeditions of 1850 and 1883 in the present day Arunachal Pradesh are notable.

Most of these uprisings against the British colonization over a period between 1826 (Treaty of Yandaboo) were isolated and un-coordinated efforts by the kings and local Chieftains to challenge the hegemony of the British in their respective areas except in Brahmaputra Valley and Surma Valley where freedom movements as part of the national awakening were seen. Further Gandhiji's visit to Assam in 1921 invigorated the freedom struggle in the region. Quit India Movement in 1942 also saw a very active participation of the Assamese people including women folk once again in the Brahmaputra valley in particular. A prominent leader of Assam, Kushal Konwar was hanged after the movement for his role in the movement.

World War 2 (1942-44) saw the emergence of INA (*Indian National Army*) under Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. INA forces were part of the Japanese Invasion of Manipur and Naga hills in 1943. Many people from these areas opted to assist the INA in their struggle to liberate India from the clutches of the British. These individuals were later given the status of Freedom fighters. World War 2 brought the Japanese and British forces against each other in the battles of Imphal and Kohima. There was considerable support to the INA in their fight alongside the Japanese to liberate India from the British. The Japanese forces and the INA forces reached within 20 miles of the capital Imphal. It is believed that many Kuki leaders in the region also supported the Japanese forces and the INA during the war. There are over a hundred freedom fighters from Manipur who joined or directly collaborated with the INA during the period. The first INA flag was hoisted at Moirang a small town in the south of Capital City Imphal on 14th April 1944 by Colonel Shaukat Ali Malik of the INA with

the help of many Manipuris in the area. As part of the scheme to honor and project the INA, the erstwhile brigade HQ of the INA at Moirang has been given a facelift with the generous funding from the centre. Hence, Moirang in Manipur stands out as a symbol of freedom movement of India. On the other hand the raising of the Assam regiment in 1941 brought many to join the regiment to serve the British Indian army. Such towering personalities like Captain Maaraj Kumar Piyobarta, the younger brother of the King of Manipur and Brig T Sailo of Mizoram who later became the Chief Ministers of Manipur and Mizoram respectively and also served in the Assam regiment. Major Kating of the same Regiment earned his Military Cross while fighting alongside the British against the Japanese forces. The British Indian army also played a significant role in India's gaining freedom as well and Assam Regiment was part of the British Indian army even though they were fighting for the British during the great war.

The mainstream Indian history does not find much mention of the resistance by various North Eastern tribes and princely kingdoms. It is however an undeniable fact that various groups carried out relentless and fierce resistance to the British Rule right from the beginning of their incursion to the region till the British left India in 1947. The contribution of the people of the region towards overall efforts of the mainstream Indian freedom movement need to be recorded and recognized by the historians. These rainbow resistance may have been isolated ones, and their actions were largely to protect their land and identities. But, these certainly contributed in no small measure directly or indirectly to the matrix of the overall freedom movement of India.

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# KHARCHI PUJA

□ Dilip Debbarma

Kharchi puja is the worship of the dynasty deity of Tripuri people, the fourteen gods. It is performed in the month of July August on the eight day of new moon. The fourteen gods are worshipped by the royal priest Chantai. They are all Tripuri by birth, and it is hereditary one. Only members of chantai family descendants are allowed to take the post of Chantai, since the time it had started for more than 3000 years ago, and it is still continuing till date. All the attendants of chantai are also belong to Tripuri people, since the beginning and are followed. This is the only one puja is exclusively performed by the pujari or the priests belonging to Tripuri people.

The word Kharchi is derived from two Tripuri words 'Khar' or Kharta meaning Sin, 'chi' or si meaning cleaning. Final meaning is cleaning of the sins of the people or the kingdom. The Kharchi puja is performed after 15 days of Ama pechi or Ambubachi. According to Tripuri legends Ama Pechi is menstruation of mother goddess or mother earth.



So the soil is not ploughed or dug up during Ama pechi days. Among Tripuri people the menstruation of a woman is considered as unholy which is why during this period all the religious performances or auspicious functions by women are prohibited. Even any priest whose wife is menstruating is prohibited to perform any auspicious or religious function. So after the menstruation of mother earth during Ama pechi, the earth is considered to become unholy. The kharchi puja is performed to wash out the sins, to clean up the post menstrual dirtiness of mother earth. That is why it is performed for seven consecutive days.



Kharchi puja lasts for seven days. The festivals are held at Old Agartala, at the temple premises of fourteen gods. On the day of puja, the fourteen deities are carried by members of chantai to river Saidra, where it is bathed in the holy water and brought back to temple. They are placed in the temple again, decorated by various flowers, vermillion in the fore head of the deities.

Every day large number of people throng the festivals venue. Both Tripuri and non-





Tripuri people participate in the festivals. People offer different types of offerings like goat, buffalo, fowls, sweets etc. Now a days many cultural programs are performed in the night. A large fair is also organized on the occasion. People seek their welfare as well as the welfare of the society and the state in general.

#### FOURTEEN GODS

##### The Origin of Hindu

The fourteen gods are the ancestral Kula Devta of Tripuri people. Since when the fourteen gods had been worshiped by the people of Tripura is obscure by mysteries. It can however be linked to the early history of Tripuri people. There are many mythological stories about the origin of these fourteen gods and goddess. There are both the god and goddess, all of whom are benevolent gods. These gods had been around the Tripuri people for their wellbeing, peace, prosperity, and victory over the enemies. By the grace of these gods the Tripuri people had been able to rule over the vast majority of Bengal, Assam and whole of the eastern tract for centuries.

According to the royal chronicle of Tripura, the Rajmala, these fourteen gods were being worshiped by the kings of Tripura since time immemorial. King Tripur ascended the throne of Tripura, after his father Daitya's death. He was the mightiest among all the kings of Tripura. After ascending the throne of Tripura, he subjugated all

the neighbouring kingdoms. He became very much arrogant. He presumed himself the god rather than the representative of Gods. He asked all his subjects not to worship any god, rather all the subjects must worship him and his deity only. He was oppressive, cruel, egoistic, and over confident. The people of Tripura became frustrated by the torture

of king Tripur and begged Lord Shiva, to protect them from the iron fist of Tripur. The Lord Shiva appeared before the king Tripur, and reprimanded him, asked not to be unkind or oppress his subjects. But Tripur would not change his behavior, so lastly Lord Shiva appeared before the king and killed him with his Trishul.

After the death of king Tripur, there was total lawlessness, anarchy and chaos in Tripuri. There was no rule of law, no king and no civil administration. The people again approached the Lord Siva, asked relieve from this anarchy. At that time lord Siva told the widow queen of Tripur, Hiravati, to re-establish the temple of fourteen gods and worship every day, celebrate the Kharchi, worship fourteen gods on the eight lunar day of Shravana month for continuous seven days; then only the queen will be blessed with a son, who will be the best king of Tripura, his name would be Trilochana, as he will have third eye like him, as he is born by his blessing he will also be called Sibrai or Subria Raja. So the fourteen gods were being worshiped, even before the king Trilochana, but he reintroduced worshipping of Kharchi to throw her Risa on the buffalo so that it is pacified. She did accordingly and, the buffalo left the place. Then the queen was told by the gods to take them and worship them as her racial gods or Kula devta. Since then these fourteen gods are being worshipped by the Tripuri people. \*\*