Editorial

Challenges to Digital India initiatives

In today's connected world, it is becoming increasingly impossible to stay off the grid for even a single day. Digital network has invaded the personal space to such an extent that almost every aspect of our social life- be it relating to work, commerce, education, leisure or health have increasingly been depending on it, the most significant feature of the digital revolution being the convenience and transparency it afforded. The government of India, as a significant part of its plan to revolutionise and revamp the country and make it a truly digital nation by offering a plethora of e-governance services across sectors using mobility, cloud, analytics etc have envisaged a mission which, if implemented systematically and efficiently, will pave the way for an improved and efficient administration and transparent governance.

But there still is many a slip between the cup and the lip. While the vision which will propel our country into its next phase of growth can be applauded and appreciated, it is imperative that various concerns of which there are quite a few are addressed and analysed to make the mission attain its objective. The Digital India programme with the expenditure doubled to rupees 3,073 crore for the next fiscal year against rupees 1,425.63 crore in 2017-18 has been welcomed by the industry and is expected to make significant changes for the better. The operating model and management on the supply side of the proposed transformation requires thoughtful and meticulous planning and phased implementation with continuous feedback to ensure that the impact is as radical and far reaching as envisaged. For that to happen, the digital infrastructure is required to be put in place, of which the telecom infrastructure will form the base on top of which software, apps etc of IT infrastructure is required. More importantly, the contents of these websites, apps, softwares etc needs to be relevant to the needs and requirements of the citizens and address their real time requirements- an issue that is proving to be the biggest hurdle that the government and its resources have yet to effectively tackle, and also the capacity of the infrastructure to cater to the digital demand of the citizens of the country.

The biggest challenge to the whole mission still remains that of the change management as the government as an established system of administration has been working in its own particular and well-oiled manner with its in-built sub-systems of considerations, unofficial deals and other forms of inducements to work the chain. The mentality and outlook of these employees and other human resources needs to be changed to be able to attune to the changing work environment and the challenges it brings. The removal of avenues for unofficial personal gains might deter a number of these employees to embrace the change or adapt themselves to the new work culture.

Every departmental heads must be handed the onus of inducing a sense of excitement and positive challenge to the changes that must be made for the grand mission to succeed. Reorientation workshops, seminars and departmental debates with experienced resource persons can motivate the human workforce in no small measure. At the end of the day, it is the human factor that will determine whether the digital dream will be realized or otherwise. Machines and gadgets are as effective and efficient as the person operating them. Human effort, or the lack of it will be the ultimate decider on the grand dream the country is still dreaming.

Letter to the Editor

Kindly arrange some hawker to deliver Imphal Times

Discovery and Estrangement: Coloniality of the Postcolonial

*This write up is an excerpt from **Prof. Angomcha Bimol's** speech delivered on 10th June 2006 under the tittle "**Towards a Wholesome Holistic Self On Silence, Identity and Coloniality of the Postcolonial**", on occasion of Arambam Somorendra Memorial Lecture here in Imphal*

Ladies and Gentlemen, sometimes we become aware of certain aspects of ourselves through our encounter with certain specific experiences, and some of them leave behind lasting impact on our sense of self. For the people in the ex-colonies of the former European powers, that experience has been their encounter with the ideas, practices and conditions of colonial modernity. In fact, if some historians are to be believed, most of the "categories" that form the basis of the present identities in South Asia – including Manipur – were, and still are, mediated by the colonial mappings of lands and their inhabitants initiated by the British administration.

The exercise that began in the later part of the 19th century was a response to the imperatives of colonial administration of the British Raj in South Asia. Colonial modernity, a specific set of ideas, practices and institutions born of an unholy marriage between European modernity and colonialism, informed this exercise. With certain characteristic ideas of history and progress of the European modernity, Hegel announces, while acknowledging that "the English are the lords" of South Asia, that "it is the necessary fate of Asiatic empires to be subjected to Europeans". In a similar vein, Marx also terms the British rule in South Asia as the "unconscious tool of history" to transform the people from their "Asiatic mode of production". The "civilized" Europeans with "history" were contrasted with the "primitive savages", the "people without history", to use the Hegelian phrase, while mapping the peoples and lands in South Asia. It was also an exercise conditioned by the imperative to politically control the "natives" – especially after 1857 – and to organize and enhance the revenue collection of the Raj. It was under such imperatives of colonial modernity that the British also mapped the people in Manipur valley as people with "comparative civilization" and those in its hills as "barbarians". Such classification was further reified with institutional measures such as the introduction of administrative separation between the valley and hills. While certain forms of pre-colonial distinction between groups of people we re-rendered, consolidated and reified, earlier forms of relation and shared spaces were reordered in terms of new distinct and separate categories.

It was these categories of colonial state of the British Indian Empire which was re-rendered by the postcolonial Indian state in the 1950s in terms of "scheduled tribes", "scheduled castes" and "general category" in Manipur. Subsequent conversion of the "general category" into "OBC" has only deepened the power of the exogenously derived self-definition of the people under the postcolonial state that has inherited mush of its structures and spirit from its preceding colonial state.

Those exogenously ascribed self-definition of the people inform the way people in Manipur think about themselves and how they relate to each other. In fact, the pride derived from a self-definition rooted in the Aryan narrative, which itself has not been free from the idea of the "Indic civilization" discovered by the Western modernity through its orientalist enterprise, has been complimented by the definition of being called a "singular oasis of comparative civilization". Incidentally, the underlying "exceptionalism" that affirms the assumptions of the non-Europeans as "savages" or "people without history" and the implied "regressive history" in the works of European ethnographers, seem to have escaped most people as they take pride in the masters' acknowledgement of their self as a "comparative civilization"! Of course, the pride of the self also embraces a new selfhood of being a "backward" community on the basis of expected material benefits. Similarly, some live with the pejorative aspects of being a "tribe", which itself is not free from the "conceptual-ideological structuring" of the colonial knowledge, along with the sense of security as a Scheduled Tribe under the patronage of the postcolonial state.

With these self-definitions, the people in Manipur are also located within a schizophrenic ambience. The dominant historical narrative of the "Indian nation", while giving legitimacy to the postcolonial Indian state, renders them historically "invisible". (Histories from Manipur and the Northeast are more or less absent in the renderings of the history of India; perhaps following the legacy of colonial modernity that they are "tribes" and "people without history" or simply that they are not Indians in the eyes of that history). Similarly, the state claims them as "citizens" while simultaneously "suspecting" their "loyalty" and "devotion". (Founding fathers of postcolonial Indian state like Sardar Patel had expressed such a suspicion to Jawaharlal Nehru in one of his letters in 1950).

Besides these ideological moorings, the people of Manipur, and Northeast in general, also find themselves structurally caught in a political economy marked by the "patron-client" relation between New Delhi and the region. These ideological and structural aspects of the postcolonial state crucially structure the estrangement of identities. The identity-based conflicts in the region, suspicion between communities, efforts to draw more attention and favours from New Delhi for one community over the other, or fight for a little more share of the spoil (of the grant-in-aid economy) for oneself, are not the only ones that mark such an estrangement. Even the capacity to come to terms with one's own "different moments of self" is also jeopardized by such a context.

Mr. Chairperson, let me end this lecture with a few posers for us to reflect on this aspect. For that, allow me to get back to one of my favourite ways of knowing: sharing a story. This is a part of a story that I call the "Discovery of 'Mother Manipur'". Recounting his experiences as a Manipuri outside Manipur in his youth in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Shri Nongmaithem Pahari, the "melody king of Manipur", wrote in his memoire, *Eigee Diary-da-gee*:

Mapan-da leiraba matam-da
Manipur Ima-gee
Aasheng-ba mashak aa-do
khanglak-le. Mapan-
Gee mee-shingna aekhoi-bu
mashak khang-bee-
-da-ba, Manipur kadai-da lei
hai-ba khang-
-da-ba, aekhoi-bu yam-na
hantha-na lou-ba
puum-namak aasee khanglak-
le.
(We began to know the real identity of Mother Manipur after we had been staying outside(the State). That the outsiders (people outside Manipur) do not know "us" (our identity), that they do not even know where Manipur is, and their comtemptuous outlook towards us – all these we came to know.) a – n

These lies register a moment of coming of awareness of a self through a simultaneous awareness of its own "invisibility" in the eyes of the others, and a humiliating experience with those others. In my reading, these lines powerfully and poignantly communicate the discovery of atext within a context, which smacks of coloniality. The inferior and humiliating status of the historically "invisible" subjects – "people without history" – is not alien to the colonial condition. The story of this discovery of "Mother Manipur" by Shri Pahari is by no means a unique individual story; many generations of Manipuris who have gone outside the State have encountered similar moments of awareness. It is this nature of the discovery that has critically shaped the tenor of the narrative of Manipuri selfhood during the period we call the "postcolonial". Fired by a need that "we must have a history", the culturally humiliated colonial subjects in South Asia ventured into a nationalist enterprise to counter the colonial insinuation of their inferiority, which led to the "discovery of India".

Likewise, Manipuris also seemed to have ventured into a similar journey of nationalist self-discovery. A strand of political consciousness and turmoil that have marked Manipur since 1960s are not alien to this journey.

Significantly, the above lines from the memoires appeared in a section where Shri Pahari was narrating a meeting with his old friend Shri Arambam Somorendra in Lucknow while they were in their late 20s. One of the things they shared in that meeting was also the question of Merger of Manipur in 1949. Given the familiar developments that followed their coming back to Manipur in the early parts of 1960s,the two seemed to have discovered not only "Mother Manipur" but also the nature of postcolonial India in the "hindi-Hindu heartland" of the Indian nation. This discovery seems to have produced discernible impacts on many Manipuris.

Mr. Chairperson, the denials and rejections that accompanied the discovery have been a part of the self-estrangement that we see in Manipur today. Many in the second generation of Manipuris of the twentieth century find it difficult to own up the legacies of the first generation. Just as "India" seems to have become alien (oppressor) to many of the former, the latter also seems to have become an uneasy aspect of their collective self. To many, in fact, the first generation appeared as "collaborators", albeit seen as innocent or ignorant, of building India with the blood of Manipur. To them, the Merger of Manipur in 1949 comes to be the moment "Manipur became a part of India", the beginning of a subjugated life.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are the parts of the stories of our selfhood. And we will continue to tell these stories time and again as we week to reaffirm and refashion our selfhood. However, we need to understand that the story of the predicament of the postcolonial to be "post" even after the end of formal colonialism are not confined to South Asia, including Manipur. It has been a story of the ex-colonies, and even the ex-colonizers, across the globe. People informed by postcolonial consciousness seem to have the confidence to engage with those predicaments. Many of them are going through critical self-appraisals of themselves and others to understand and refashion their lives. If this is the case, allow me to leave behind two questions, which I think, are crucial for us to refashion a wholesome holistic self.

First, when did Manipur become a part of "India"? Was it 27 April 1891 or 11 August 1947 or 15 October 1949 or any other date?

Second, did coloniality depart or arrive in Manipur in the "postcolonial"?

Looking beyond ideal relationship for want of baby boy

By: Lalita

There are many schemes to encourage giving birth to girl child. Already many schemes like paying of few amount, or depositing of insurance for the girl child at the time birth has been introduced by the government of India. Beti Padoa , Beti Bachoa is the new scheme launched by the government. In a country like India the more the girl child are deprived the more new schemes were introduced for them.

In our state, Manipur , where women are uphold to the highest position, many parents are not happy until they get a boy child.

At many incident husband were compelled to marry another wife just because his wife could not deliver any baby boy: Recently a woman was literally forced to stay separately from her husband and in-laws in a village in Kakching district allegedly for giving birth to three daughters and not bearing a male child in eight years of married life.

This is not an isolated incident that happened in the state. We keep hearing about these cases on and off.

In the land where women's courage was the talk of every politicians or civil rights activist there are families or spouse where the girl child is murdered in the foetus. What a pitiable state of affairs!

The problem is also common in South Indian States too. A writer wrote, "We had a young attendant for my ailing mother at home and this girl whose name was Pothum Ponnu (Enough of girls). She was the fifth girl in the family and she was not perturbed by the name. But we were. She explained that it was common in their villages to name the girl thus to ensure that the next child would be a boy". What logic!

In the state of Manipur, it is not the husband which have the feeling of unsecure unless his wife have a sex boy but it was either the mother in law or the wife that were worried if they fail to give birth to girl child.

The issue of parents desire for baby boy has never been looked upon for a scientific solution so far. Scientist or medical experts now finds that using chromosomes which lacks in male can be injected to fulfil the desire of the wife or family.

Men determine the sex of a baby depending on whether their sperm is carrying an X or Y chromosome. An X chromosome combines with the mother's X chromosome to make a baby girl (XX) and a Y chromosome will combine with the mother's to make a boy (XY). This is the medical explanation for the sex of a child.

The government, that is blasting all around with the need to build toilets, should bring to the public domain that it is the man who decides if the baby is going to be a boy or girl.