

Editorial

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Dishonouring the Constitution of India:

Has the Check and balance system failed?

Preamble of the Indian constitution says "WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens: JUSTICE, social, economic and political; LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation.

It is this preamble that the nation's constitution was framed 395 articles in 22 parts and 8 schedules at the time of commencement. At present the nation's constitution consist 448 articles in 25 parts, 12 schedules, 5 appendices and 98 amendments. All amendments are done under the preamble.

The equality term here envisages that no section of the society enjoys special privileges and individuals are provided with adequate opportunities without any discrimination. All are equal in front of law. The word secularism which was added later says that India is a country where any citizen can chose any religion.

As promise during parliamentary election campaign of 2014, where Narendra Modi spread across the country, the BJP led government has tabled Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, which allows illegal migrants from neighbouring country on the basis of religion is something which is equivalent to dishonouring the Constitution of country. The Bill says that illegal migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christian from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan will be made eligible for becoming the citizen of the country.

This concept of accepting only some particular community (illegal Migrants) on the basis of religion is a direct blow to the so call secular character of the constitution.

Article 14 which stated that all citizens are equal before law and that the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India and also prohibit discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 is the direct violation of this Article 14 of our constitution.

The Bill also stated illegal migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. When it comes to the state of Manipur it is already a known fact that Protected Area Permit System which have been imposed in the state has been lifted but continue for foreign tourist from Afghanistan and China. When the country restrict tourist from Afghanistan in visiting the state of Manipur, what actually is the agenda of accepting the illegal migrants base on religion from Afghanistan be granted citizenship if they stay for 7 years.

This concept of staying in the country for seven years is also illogical when there are Foreigners Prohibition Act.

On the other hand, the recent post election political drama in the state of Karnataka keeps many political analysts brainstorm on what went wrong in the practice of democracy in the country. It is not because that the governor of the state Vajubhai Vala inviting BS Yeddyurappa of BJP which got single majority but fails to reach the magic number to form the government. It is about differences of the conduct of Governors of each state which indirectly indicate support to ruling political party at the center.

The Karnataka episode had raised an issue in the state of Manipur, with opposition Congress coming up to point out that the way the Governor of Manipur invited BJP legislature leader which won only 21 seat to form government as violation of the constitutional provision. If Karnataka Governor is right from the perspective of the law of the land than Governor of Manipur can never be right and can be stated that the governor had violated and showed disrespect to the constitution of India.

Now the question that we as an observer wanted to know is - Where is the so call check balance of power gone? Which pillar of the democracy is going to save the sanctity of the Indian Constitution which keeps on protecting the country since the time became an independent republic.

Whether it is those with leftist or Righteous or those in the middle ideology , it is times for all to think on the matter to protect the sanctity of the Indian constitution.

Imphal Times, the only English Evening Newspaper in Imphal, provides a platform to researchers, academicians, professionals, and students in all areas of social, political, economy and human interest issues to express their views. This newspaper aims to fill the gaping hole that exists in the society . Article submitted should not have more than 2500 words.

Editor

Identity crisis: It's site

This write up is an excerpt from Prof. Angomcha Bimol's speech delivered on 10th June 2006 under the title "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, neither is Manipuri identity an uncontested idea nor the threat of fragmentation and communal tensions and conflicts alien to our reality. In short, Manipur has been going through, to use the term popularized by Erik Erikson, an identity crisis. In this segment, I shall attempt to reflect on this "crisis" and speculate on the possible ways of ensuring a wholesome holistic self.

First of all, in order to understand the "identity crisis", we need to understand what would the word identity mean here. I shall deploy this word to communicate the positionality and directionality of a given sense of being. Deploying the concept in his sense allows us to address the question of where one stands in relation to the others amidst a system or network of relationship, as well as to a sense of "knowing where one is going". It covers a self definition that implicates a "sense of continuity" and purpose (or even telos) of its being, enabling a person (by homologous extension, a collective) to "integrate" different facets of experience or "moments of self". This conceptual rendering of identity, I believe, by and large, encompasses the sense in which we use the word as lay persons as well as those nuances deployed by the professional academics.

Psychologically speaking, then, identity crisis could mean, among others, an inability to clearly define as self or a lack of "a sense of continuity" or not "knowing where one is going". It could also mean a sort of an estrangement, failing to come to terms with different aspects of one's self or experiences. Now, with this understanding, we can ask: In what sense, Manipur has been going through an identity crisis?

Let me address this question by acknowledging that "Manipuri" is a contested word with divergent meanings. The contestation could be framed by noting the two broad senses in which this word Manipuri has been usually deployed" One, a geo-political sense and the other, the cultural-linguistic sense. In its geo-political sense, Manipuri refers to something that is to do with Manipur as a geo-political entity; in this sense, it also refers to those native inhabitants of the State. But in its cultural-linguistic sense, the meaning of Manipuri has a strong association with those people whose mother tongue is the language called Manipuri, particularly the one spoken by the Meitei, the "ethnic" group that constitutes the majority of the state's population, and by the pangall as their mother tongue. This cultural-linguistic sense is non-territorial or territorially no confined to the State of Manipur in so far as it includes all those people who speak the language as their mother tongue (in places like Assam, Tripura, Burma, Bangladesh etc.).

The major crisis of Manipuri identity comes from a lack of fit or disjunction between these two senses of the word. Taken in terms of the cultural-linguistic sense, Manipuri thus excludes many communities, who are otherwise included under the geo-political sense of the word. Of course, there is a connotation of Manipuri as the lingua franca of the State of Manipur that seeks to incorporate all those native inhabitants of the State. This claim of being the lingua franca is arguably true as the language serves as a medium of communication amongst different communities who speak different languages and dialects in the State. In this sense, this linguistic usage seems to make the two meanings

(cultural-linguistic and geo-political) coterminous. However, this usage as a derivative one; it grows out of or is informed by the geo-political sense of the word. And, therefore, it does not necessarily create a fit between the two meanings (cultural-linguistic and geo-political) of the word "Manipuri". In fact, this derivative usage, while seemingly makes the cultural-linguistic and geo-political meanings coterminous, paradoxically serves to register the lack of fit between the two. As shown by the controversy around the Manipuri as an "official language", it has been a site where some of the ugly contestations on Manipuri identity have taken place. Just to remind ourselves, we are all familiar with the responses from a section of our population, particularly from the hills, during the agitation for the inclusion of Manipuri as a "national language" under the VIII Schedule of the Constitution, or in matters related to the introduction of the language in the curricula of the schools in Manipur etc.; I need not go into the details of these familiar contestations.

With this lack of fit as a backdrop, the site of this identity crisis has been articulated in terms of "inter-community" or "inter-ethnic" relations. Consequently, the resolutions to the "crisis" have also been sought in terms of those relations. However, contrary to the popular belief, the site of this crisis may very well be located in the domain of the ways in which the identities, including that of Manipuri as a geo-political entity, have been articulated with the modern discursive categories such as "history", "nation", and "nation-state". In short, the problem may lie in the way we articulate the identities with these modern discursive categories. Allow me to elaborate this proposition by looking at the popular articulation of Manipuri.

One of the most popular articulations that has caught the imagination of the people is that Manipuri is a "nation-state" with 2000 years old "history". And this history of Manipur as a "nation-state" usually begins, following the records of the Royal Chronicles such as the *Cheitharol Kumpapa*, with the story of the accession of Meidingu Pakhangba in 33 A.D. The expansion and growth of the reign of this dynasty forms the main, if not the, axis of this popular history of Manipur as a "nation-state". This articulation of self is problematic in many ways. Let me mention two crucial aspects of the problem.

First, the above history is undoubtedly a product of a "state-centric" historiography, and if some historians are to be believed, "state-centric" historiography often takes the form of majoritarian articulation. This view is not an unwarranted position. A history that forms its axis around the expansion of political authority of the Ningthouja dynasty, with the concomitant stories of defeats and subjugations of various peoples along the way, understandably becomes the history of the Meiteis. And to articulate a collective self through such history obviously excludes others (other than those under the rubric of Meitei), on the one hand and, ironically, on the other, makes subjugated selves out of fellow citizen in the present. Thus, if some people say that "they have never a part of Manipur", I am afraid, their claim must have something to do with the above popular history that articulates the identity of Manipur. And if such historiography is inevitable, the conflict and estrangement that marked the

present-day Manipur is also inevitable. Perhaps, then, we need to rethink such historiography, any notions of its "inevitability".

Second, such history seeks legitimacy for an anachronistically imagined Manipur, which is temporally and spatially frozen throughout the 2000 years of its history. The idea of Manipur as a "nation" with "firm boundary" since "time immemorial" is an example of such narrative. While this is an understandable need or even an imperative of a "nationalist" imagination, it is nonetheless problematic. It restrains us from doing an objective rendering of the evolution of the structure of the political authority or the spatiality of "state" or the shades and spectrum of the people's consciousness in the making of Manipur as we know today. In the process, how different peoples from different spatial locations with different "cultural" practices have interacted, intermingled under different regimes of power or political authorities in the evolution of the present state, are left outside our purview. As a result, the partaking of different peoples across times and spaces in the making of present-day Manipur, arguably an important element of a narrative to produce a sense of belonging or wholesome and holistic self, have been subsequently subverted.

Mr. Chairperson, different forms of consciousness of collectivities and relationships have presumably accompanied the transformation of spaces dotted by small human settlements, villages and principalities into a kingdom, then to a monarchic state and a modern state. The consciousness and cosmologies of the people under the social order of kinship groups, insulated (and often fortified) villages under the chiefs and the suzerainty of a sovereign monarch, are bound to be different from that of the secularized political order inhabited by the enfranchised people in a modern state. Manipur as an entity marked by a hierarchy of loyalty with the King at the top with his officials, the village chiefs and *sagei aahals* (family patriarchs) below, is not the same Manipur under a democratic and republican order inhabited by equal, at least in principle, individual citizens. A history that produces, sustains and legitimizes an anachronistically imagined Manipur is against such an understanding.

I believe that the popular historical narrative renders the Meiteis a la "national mainstream", and reduces the different trajectories and life-forms of the people to a monochromatic narrative of that "mainstream". It has a propensity to propagate implicitly, if not explicitly, the idea that all other communities are mere peripheral appendices to the "mainstream" Meitei. It even nurtures an assumption that the Meiteis constitute the necessary as well as sufficient condition that underlies the geo-political reality of Manipur. In such a worldview, "integration" often represents a wish to have a homogenous entity, which comes in direct contradiction with the realities of heterogeneity of life. The alienation and fragmentation of identities in Manipur today is a direct manifestation of that contradiction. In short, the popular history neither captures the historicity of the evolution of Manipur as a geo-political reality nor is it enabling the reality to sustain itself.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that such rendering of history is as

mythical as the refusal to acknowledge the historicity of the reality called Manipur as a geo-political entity amongst certain sections of our society. In fact, in a way, both could be taken as the two sides of the same coin. Or perhaps, like the interlocking quantum particles of Physics, I might as well venture to suggest that a change in position of one might bring about a reciprocal change in the other. Of course, this suggestion is a statement of "probability", based on an assumption, as in quantum state, which is reportedly pretty "unpredictable" as suggested by the Heisenberg's "uncertainty principle", that human affairs cannot be accurately predicted.

Mr. Chairperson, if such a history is problematic, what is the alternative? The answer is perhaps producing alternative histories, to use the expression popular amongst the subaltern historians. These alternative histories could be in the form of social histories, "histories from below", histories of the marginal communities, women etc. One can also think of histories that critically engage with the nationalist and state-centric narratives. Though not a professional historian, I am aware that these are not only popular amongst, but also fairly representative of, much of the works of many contemporary historians. However, to get a flavour of the implications of writing such alternative histories for us in Manipur, allow me to share an example. Let us think of writing a history on the evolution or nature of YU Shungba (brewing of local liquor) in Manipur. In terms of its production and consumption, and cultural meanings and economy, one is likely to come across shared spaces as well as markers of specific enclaves amongst different communities. I believe that the identities we might see through such history would be different from the history that produce identities of the modern "nation-state". While the former is likely to reveal "fuzzy" identities, that is, identities that are codified and performed differently in temporally specific spaces for specific purposes, the latter is likely to register and justify reified, bounded and enumerated identities. A work of this kind shall not be a rare specimen, as I have indicated, amongst the contemporary historians.

Mr. Chairperson, let me come to the last issue that I want to address in our search for a wholesome holistic self: that is, the context of our identities. In a way, the text of identity, ie, the narrative that allows us to make sense of our identity, has a context, certain specific socio-political and historical conditions/circumstances. In the absence of that context, the text might lose its meaning. For instance, in Kathakali, the movement of the eyes as the text of the performance cannot be fully appreciated, if at all it can be comprehended, without its context, namely the face and mask. Thus, the text of identity can only be meaningfully understood in relation to its socio-political and historical contexts. As we shall see soon, a look at the context of articulations of identity would reveal some of the critical factors behind the estrangement that we see in Manipur today.

Corrigendum: Yesterday's write up in this column was also from the same speech delivered by Prof. Angomcha Bimol on June 10, 2006. Imphal Times wrongly mention the date of the lecture as June 10, 2012. The error is regretted and we tender apology for the same. Editor.