

Editorial

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MU crisis: Emerging questions

The people of the state took a giant leap of faith during the last state assembly election by electing enough representatives of the BJP which emerged as the most promising alternative, to ensure that the then incumbent government is shaken out of their self-induced reverie and increasingly whimsical manner of governance.

The chest thumping declarations, speeches and projections of progress as well as the incredible feats of showmanship displayed by the national leaders during the keenly contested campaigns helped in no small measure in convincing the voters of the approaching 'good days'. More than anything, it was an exercise in effecting change and in doing so have proven beyond any shred of doubt that in this time and age, it will not be possible to fool the informed people who have started to vocalize and express their concerns and opinions more openly and succinctly. It was also a message that the people will no longer wait for the promised change but will take matters into their hands and will not tolerate inordinate delays. The message of the mass to the leaders of the state could not have been clearer- or one would have wished so.

After an initial dream run, things have started falling in the same old rhythm of bandhs, blockades, strikes and shutdowns, the latest and the most serious one being the hardening standoff at Manipur University which has crossed 100 days of disruptions and is well and truly set not only continue but also to spill over and affect the state as a whole.

What started as a protest against alleged irregularities has now assumed a more virulent and far-reaching dimension, and going by the clippings and updates circulating in various social media platforms, what should have been a case of maladministration and mismanagement have turned into a personal attack on an individual who have shown increasing defiance of the concerns and efforts of not only the staffs and students of the university but also the state government as well as the MHRD. Why has the whole exercise emerging as a form of witch-hunt against AP Pandey? How did the highest seat of learning in the state crumbled to such a woeful position? Has the evidently vigilant and ever watchful students, teachers and staffs failed or rather hesitated in raising the red flag at the right time, and why? What made the Chief Minister of Manipur who have the moral obligation to spearhead efforts to find an amicable and lasting solution to the ongoing issue acting uncharacteristically restrained and subdued, evidently focused on damage control exercises rather than taking proactive measures to bring closure to the increasingly virulent and rapidly widening problem? Why has a set of students started demanding separate university thereby compounding the problem and further threatening the already vitiated law and order situation in the state by announcing blockades? Is Pandey the first and only head of Manipur University who have indulged in maladministration and willful mismanagement for personal interests? Is there absolutely no other alternative or means to continue the agitation without disturbing the academic proceedings in the interest of thousands of students whose future are at stake? - uncomfortable questions whose answers will ultimately reveal the absolute truth and thereby a way out of the present quandary.

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By Mehek Sharma

One of the most famous concepts to be talked of these days is the concept of democracy and democratic space. The debate ranges, among other things, from providing free and equal democratic space to women in the workplace to the issue of right to privacy. The fact is that the source of equal rights and freedom is considered to be the found in the concept of democracy, which is in sharp contrast to a dictatorship where there is no place for freedom of its citizen as such. The question that becomes important is, "Why Democracy is the most celebrated concept?" It is simply because of the fact that a well functioning democracy is the form of government that provides its citizens with the most freedom, the most opportunity, the greatest prosperity, and the "good" life. It is the reason that today every country wants to be fit in to the list of democratic countries whether practically it exists there or not.

What do we mean by democracy? If one goes back to the most popular definition of democracy, it is provided by Abraham Lincoln. According to Lincoln, "Democracy is the rule of the people, by the people and for the people". It is often said that India is one of the most important democratic countries as Indian democracy today is as old as sixty-two years

and it has survived despite the fact many countries have yielded to dictatorship and military rule. Secondly, there is a peaceful coexistence of different ideas and ideals. Then what is wrong with democracy in India?

It would be wrong to talk of India to be the most successful democratic countries if one goes by the classic definition of democracy i.e. "rule of the people, for the people and by the people". Claiming that would mean to ignore the suppressed demands of the citizens of the Indian Nation, whether it's the demand of the separate nation by Kashmir or the demand of the formation of a separate Bodoland nation. The use of AFSPA in order to keep these forces in check can't be considered as the decision of a democratic nation because democracy does not mean holding on to the units of the nation through the use of force and threat. It is rule for the people and not on the people.

The use of force in order to curb the demands of the people, not only goes against the classic definition of democracy but it goes against all the underlying principles of which democracy is composed of. These are the equality, freedom and justice. No amount of justification can be given if it is at the cost of curbing the people's voices and demands.

On the contrary, democracy gets its strength from the dissent only. It is something that helps democracy to grow. Throughout the history of



world, dissent has been important to bring change. Without dissent and protest, people would still practice sati, people would still own other people as slaves, women would not have the vote. Democracy is a living form of government that provides the right to its citizens to protest against the decisions that they disagree with. According to Abbie Hoffman, "You measure a democracy by the freedom it gives its dissidents and not the freedom it gives its assimilated conformists". Promoting a world view that doesn't allow citizens to protest the actions of their government is to take on the philosophy of a despot and not democrats.

Aristotle was right in saying that if city-state is a whole then family is a part. Based on the same grounds, one can draw an analogy between the functioning of a family and a state. When a state tries to hold on to its unit by the use of force, it is similar to holding on to the members of the family through force by going against their wish which usually ends up into nothing but a disastrous collapse of its very structure.

Courtesy- The Readers

After Water Woes: Designing A Residential Settlement

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The woe of recent flood triggered me an idea of possible alternatives to avoid or mitigate the recurrent of same difficulties in future. As we know, there are multifold factors and causes of such frequent water worries in Manipur. They are unattended deforestation in the catchments, anarchical drainage system, chaotic residential occupation, mindless garbage dumping into the rivers, discriminatory Ithai barrage and Loktak Project. On top of this the tragic burial of Pats/lakes and wetlands in and around Imphal is crucial.

Therefore, logical response to the situation towards transforming the flood bottleneck is to attack all the factors and causes. In the meantime, one project idea floating in my mind that connects to the solution not only to the flood but also to other current issues of sustainable development is – build model villages along the foothills of Manipur. By doing this, finally flood will not able to touch us.

This could be postulated on the two grounds. First, decades ago Manipur valley was dwelled by many wetlands and we may give back them some. Second, we desire to leave our frayed and unrectifiable dens of Imphal and the Leikais of the other towns.

Although restoring the Pats to their former form, appears kind of difficulty at the moment, still there will be better side of trade off. Because it will help to resurface natural flora and fauna, and can lower the global warming effect in Manipur. The aesthetic landscape of Manipur will be elevated in some ways, economic beneficial will also come along.

Many of us living in and around Imphal and other towns feel stuffy, smelly which repels us to settle away somewhere afresh. Also ours is such a haywire unplanned town, the renovation and rebuilding may be possibly costly and ungraceful.

New Residential Shift: In the earlier years of mine, whenever I was travelling along the Tiddim Road from Imphal to my village, I was always lost in the thought,

looking from the bus window at western side of valley I saw something new and different. There are really beautiful spaces in the green and fresh air foothills of Manipur. The location is not only lovely in scenic landscape but much ideal for compounding reasons for residential settlements. In a nutshell, this will be a better endeavor for socio economic political alternative. The provincial Government of Manipur is always in the principal position to extend a committing help to the new minds in transforming the foothills to a sustainable and environment friendly residential settlements. All around the valley, there are plenty of such sites which can also be reconciled by streams for water supply and fertile soil for kitchen garden.

Sovereign Livelihood: For this project philosophy, the Government is crucially desired to allocate land to group or community. One of the foremost beautiful segment of this design is to restore the sovereignty of self-sustained livelihood and make it operational in the world of 21st century. A different and meaningful live in a community setting where social harmony prevails, organic healthy food are not bought from the outside and maximum clean energy generates within independently. The sewage will be managed in low scale volume as it will be converted into the source of biogas for electricity and other useful purposes. A gas plant will be installed for each household or groupwise towards producing electricity and cooking gas. Solar energy installation and micro hydel power plants can be very functional for the village. It will be independent at the maximum in terms food, water and power.

Family and Community: The families and individuals who are taking into account the prevailing difficulties and very much willing to avoid the existing inconvenience, can be part of this new idea and be members of this new model village. Their understanding and volunteerism will be of great help in shifting to a new environment. The community in this village may be at the average of thirty families and can

include some single individuals. Should be a village of multi ethnic community. Therefore, mandatory to include Meetei, Naga, Kuki, Pangal and others. Any religious family or individual can be in the community. They can entertain liberty to go to and join the religious ceremonies and occasions outside the village and anytime anywhere. There will be no public shrine, church, mosque and temple in the village. However a community centre will be to provide space for occasional social events. The family rituals and prayers should be restricted to their respective houses without undesirable effect to their neighbors.

Housing and Farming: The shape of the village can be a linear cluster of the houses with about one kilometer in width. It may be for administrative and other functional convenience. Each family can build their own house with a minimum and convenient budget yet scientific, hygienic and lovely one. They can accomplish it with a fair share and the support from the Government's schemes.

The assistant can be in the form of either housing materials or monetary kind. Each family is going to commit to kitchen garden farming for maximum food sovereignty. Therefore they have to own an ideal land space. The farming will include seasonal vegetables, corns, cereals, fruits, other life stock of fowls, dairy especially indigenous breed. There can be as big as medium size farming towards extensive purposes for individuals and groups' economic activities. The vegetables and other plants will be grown nearby, in and around the family houses. For animal husbandry, it may be set out at a reasonable distance, at the fringe of the village in order to avoid smelly disturbances and unhygienic contacts.

Education: The families of the village will be in need of a good education input for their young hearts and minds in such fresh village lifestyle. The Government

has to extend infrastructural supports at least for elementary and middle schools, equip them with productive teachers. Interested individuals but qualified ones from the community can volunteer in teaching the children as well. The community members can also extend voluntary in designing learning curriculum for children.

Transport and communication: An unbumpy approach road free from dust and pot-holes, and flanked with cycle way and footpath is required to stretch from the main roads to the village. Also there will be one inter village road to connect the model villages one another. A public transport set up at least with a bus in tuning with timely frequency will be plying up and down. Since the Government has got reasonable fund and budget for such purposes they must take the responsibility. The community also will use the private cars at the least and optimize the cycling and walking.

Security: A small number of 5-7 selected, active security persons either from police or VDF will be deployed to take care of the day to day crimes and violence of theft, robbery and other nuisances tend to occur in and around the village. In case of the requirement of reinforcement in certain situation, they will coordinate with the police station and Superintendent of Police concerned.

In the beginning for trial experience, about five villages can be set up. Once the villages are in places and run accordingly then hundreds will be followed in no time. Because such is Manipur to copy new things. This could also be an ideal aspect for meaningful tourism in Manipur. This model village will yield home-stay facility for tourists from within and outside. Again, in order to make a meaningful accomplishment good few supports and assistance from the Government and relevant experts are prerequisite. Best and healthiest farming methodologies, effective maintenance of sewage and drainage technology are much beneficial.