

# Editorial

Wednesday, September 5, 2018

## Mental equation

"Dissent is the safety valve of democracy. If dissent is disallowed then the pressure cooker may burst". The August 29 Supreme Court ruling in intervention to the arrest of the 5 renowned personalities across the country showed a slinging hope of the marginalized minority people of the country.

Dissent against anything that the people felt wrong to the policy and programme of the government is the only way that will guarantee freedom to all the people of the country. Suppressing the people with guns and bayonets is not a sign of peaceful society. As we all know that peace is not the absence of war but the presence of justice. When dissent is disallowed it is the crumbling of the democracy and rise of dictatorial and autocratic form of government.

Times are a changing as everything ought to. Stuffs that were not even dreamt about are becoming devices and gadgets for everyday use. The peace of development and inventions is increasing at a dizzying pace and in a unbelievably complex manner. Every single gene in the human body can be identified, isolated and manipulated. Electricity can be transmitted without any wires or cables. Cars that run for more than a thousand kilometers with only a gallon of fuel is no more a fantasy today. Space travel or space tourism is here. Humans with embedded microchips can now manipulate and control his environment, well almost, as of now. Research and development in every field, being aided by sophisticated computers and robots, have quickened their pace and shortened their observation periods, leading to quicker results. It would not be much off the mark to say that the world as we know today is undergoing a paradigm shift in the way we live our lives. Through these radical changes and developments, one thing has withstood the test of time, proving to be an unseen and unaccounted yet determining factor that could make or mar everything else the human mentality.

The workings of the human mind emotions and feelings that cannot be quantitatively ascertained or expressed as an exactable scientific expression or equation, has remained an enigma a mystery that has not been unraveled till date. Here in lies the genesis of every conflict and differences. Societies created laws and statutes based on the greater good of the citizens, and a system of checks and balances to arbitrate, enforce and amend them. It is a perfect set up on paper. Unfortunately, the better reality is so far removed from the system so envisaged. We, the ordinary citizens are arrested and harassed for raising our voice against what we feel is unjust and wrong even threatened and shot by those who purpose to serve our motherland, whatever form that might take. The powers that be proclaims to work according to the wishes of the people, while the voice is subdued with threats and intimidation, or worse still, let the voice die out and be forgotten with time. And who are we to turn to for help when the terrorists are the army and police who are drug traffickers who are extortionists who are the influential and powerful? For us mere mortals, complaints and appeals entail the inherent risk of losing limb and life. Is what we are experiencing a replica of the so called jungle law? I'd like to think that a jungle law would be a far better option each one would then have a place in the set up. But then again, we are born equal. A prime minister is as human as a sweeper or a carpenter or a scientist. Each one is doing their bit for the society. The president of India or the Chief Minister of Manipur needs a weaver to weave a piece of fabric which will be sewn into a cloth by a tailor and sold at the market form where it will be brought for his use. We need to accept and embrace one another as our equals. The powerful ones wouldn't have had a concrete mansion to hider within were it not for the masons and plumbers.

# CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF INDIA & NORTH EAST FRONTIER AGENCY

Dr. Karam Manimohan Singh

The first issue of Irabot's weekly journal Anouba Jug was produced on Sunday, the 13th April, 1947. It was a handwritten cyclostyled journal having 8 (eight) pages. Due to lack of a proper technical skill the result was not of a good quality and sometimes the handwritten print was found illegible. Also backed up by a great deficiency in the arts of journalism the paper did not have a good scope of reading public and so it could not last long. But the quality of the paper was that it contained the most challenging news of the political situation and a healthy criticism on the Government policy in its Editorial columns. In the first issue of the journal Irabot wrote an article under the heading Manipur State Constitution-Making Committee:

As a matter of fact, most of the Manipuri subjects do not realize the manner in which the Constitution-Making Committee was formed. They requested to postpone the election for a few days more, but the State authorities in a most undemocratic way and without heading to the public demand had assembled in camera, and immediately formed the Committee. Also in the manner of formation, there was no mention of the responsibility for voting rights, no representative of the minority section, no applied rules of general elections. Members of the Committee had been selected on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 1947, and His Highness's announcement on the formation of the Committee was addressed on the 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1947. This Committee has been playing double roles by overriding the existing democratic principles. Moreover, the Manipur State Congress have joined hands with the Committee would have the right to give administrative advice to His Highness the Maharaja; but now the Maharaja has confessed in his royal declaration that the Committee would suggest administrative advice to the State Darbar only. It is not the proper time to realise the great loss of our national democratic rights, but the people will one day clearly understand their past mistakes when the proposed resolutions of the Committee have been approved by the Governor of Assam and the Governor General of India.

The Committee had their meetings consecutively on the 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of March, 1947. Some candidates of the Manipur State Congress expressly announced that all resolutions adopted by the Committee and their meetings held at the Maharaja's Darbar Hall would be made public. Now it has been proved to be apparently a Private Council in the State Darbar Hall giving no permission of entrance even to the Press-men. The Manipur Praja Sangha in this connection openly express that the Committee is not an assembly of the Legislative Members, but a soft cover to throw dust in the peoples' eyes. The committee held their meetings for 4 days, but still the Government Representatives or the Congress candidates have not revealed the proceedings so far. Dr. Leiren Singh editor of the Bhagavat Patrika, who is also a member in the Committee has not published the resolutions in his paper too.

The Manipur Praja Sangha held their 3rd Session on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of March, 1947, at Khurai under the President ship of Irabot. Some 230 representatives and people from distant areas of the State and members of Sangha nearly amounting to over one thousand attended the Session. In his presidential speech Irabot spoke on the political situation of Manipur in a comparative manner with the Indian scene. He also mentioned about the lack of a democratic principle in the formation of the

Constitution-Making Committee, non-existence of a universal franchise in Manipur and the proposed move of a division between the Hills and the Valley. Some of the resolutions adopted in the Session were as follows:

1. To reconsider the Indian States Grouping of the Khasi Hills, Tripura and Manipur which represent only one seat in the Indian Constituent Assembly, special arrangements could be made on Tripura and the Khasi States in order to facilitate Manipur to have one separate representative.

2. To move for an abolition of the undemocratic body of Constitution-Making Committee and, to join hands with the Congress leaders for a common demand of a full-fledged Legislative Assembly.

3. To reduce taxes on Loukhol etc.<sup>2</sup> As to the background of the resolution No. 1, in January, 1946, Mr. C.G. Herbert, Secretary of the Chamber of Princes, had informed the Maharaja of Manipur that as a result of the Bill taken for the group in which the Manipur State was included, one Mr. G.S. Guha, Revenue Minister of Tripura, had been declared elected to the Committee of Ministers.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Guha was to represent Mayurbhanj, Tripura, Manipur and Sikkim. When working as an Under Secretary in the Political Department, Government of Assam, sometime in 1930, Mr. Guha came in touch with the affairs of the Manipur State, and in 1934, he paid a visit to the State while working as a Judge in the Assam Valley Districts. He retired as a Deputy Commissioner from Assam in December, 1945, and accepted the offer of the Tripura State to work as one of its Ministers. Again in November, 1946, Mr. Guha was invited by His Highness the Chancellor to discuss several matters in the Special Committee, as well as in the Committee of Ministers' about the selection of Members to the Constituent Assembly from the Indian States. All of the Indian States had been allotted 93 Members based on population, one Member for each 10 lakhs of people, Sikkim, Manipur and Tripura could not, therefore, claim individual representation. It was thus suggested that these States along with the Khasi Hills State should among themselves select a representative.<sup>4</sup>

The Secretary to the Governor of Assam had strongly advised Maharaja Bodha Chandra to ask Mr. Guha to represent Manipur State and Depute Maharaja Kumar PriyaBrata as Adviser to Mr. Guha. The matter was of importance and great urgency because the Constituent Assembly of India had already begun. As the right of appointing a Member to the Constituent Assembly was based on a population of 10 lakhs, the only way for the Manipur State to participate in the Assembly was by combination with Tripura, Sikkim and the Khasi Hills State which Mr. Guha was representing. The Secretary wrote to the Maharaja of Manipur:

Unless this opportunity is taken, it will presumably not be possible for Your Highness's State to get any representation at all at the Constituent Assembly, a position which, in view of the probably great changes likely to occur in this country, might have regrettable consequences for the future of the Manipur State.

In accordance with this instruction from His Excellency the Agent to the Crown Representative, Maharaja Bodha Chandra had agreed to depute his brother Maharaj Kumar Priyabrata as Adviser to Mr. Guha so long as he was the representative of the Manipur State in the Constitutional Assembly matters.<sup>6</sup> But Maharaja Bodha Chandra was strongly impressed on his brother

to observe two important points in the discharge of his works as adviser to Mr. Guha. Firstly, he was to represent only such cases as were agreed upon between himself and the Maharajah. Secondly, each of the States of Tripura, Sikkim, Manipur and the Khasi Hills would have a chance of representing in the Constituent Assembly by turn for specified periods.<sup>7</sup>

In the last week of January, 1947, Maharaja Bodha Chandra sent a letter to the Director of the Constitutional Affairs Secretariat, Chamber of Princes at New Delhi. He Stated that in view of the grave importance and the outstanding features of the Manipur State, he determined to appoint additional Advisers (at least 2) who were well conversant with the gradual political and historical development of Manipur, the matters concerning the Hill tribes and the valley people, and the existing day-to-day political problems. The grounds on which Maharaja Bodha Chandra expressed his desire to have a separate representative of the Manipur State on the Constituent Assembly were as follows.

(a) It was not quite safe to have a representative who would mainly depend upon information supplied by the Advisers without having full, personal and local knowledge of the matters he was dealing with.

(b) The representative for the Manipur State should for all practical purposes be a person, whether official, who was well conversant with, and experience in the Eastern Frontier problems which were of major importance to the coming Commonwealth of United India. And even this representative would have to be assisted by a special Advisory Committee consisting of the representatives of diverse Hill tribes and the valley people.

(c) With regard to the method of selection of representative, as there was no elected legislature in Manipur, Maharaja Bodha Chandra expressed his desire to reserve the power of special reference to the Darbar and public bodies competent to advise him where necessary and this would be subject to change of personal and demanded by circumstances from time to time. Further the idea of a formation of common panel, or popular bodies, or an electoral college for the selection of representative of the proposed group of Eastern States was quite impractical and, moreover, there were difficulties of communications, geographical positions and diversity of political and social ideas. There were different sentiments of diverse tribes speaking different languages in each of the States especially in Manipur, and a total absence of affinity and collaboration in the political development among the proposed groups of the Eastern States.

Taking these factors together, Maharaja Bodha Chandra on behalf of the Manipur State, expressed his wishes to press for the inclusion of a distinct representative for each of the Eastern States, especially the Chamber States, in the Constituent Assembly of India.<sup>8</sup>

In the 3rd issue of Anouba Jug, dated 27th April, Sunday, 1947, Irabot wrote in his serialized article, Manipur State Constitution Making Committee.

A Sub-Committee has been formed in order to work out the Hills constitution. This plan of separation between the Hills and the plains has already been one of the important rearrangements of the British officials and it suggests a materialization of Professor Reginald Coupland's plans into action.<sup>9</sup> In short, Coupland's plan was that - the Hill regions of the North Eastern portions of Assam

could be amalgamated to form an Uttar Paschim Simanta. Beginning from the Sadiya Hills in the northern Assam, the Naga Hills, Manipur, Lushai Hills, the Arkan Hills, and the Chin Hills of Burma would form a province under the administration of a Commissioner. This secret policy of the British Political officers has already been made public in the Shillong Times in the Second week of November, 1946.

Thus the formation of a separate Province of the Hill regions has been a point of discussion in the first phase of the sitting by the Manipur State Constitution - Making Committee. If the proposed plan is put into effect, Manipur will be totally segregated from the Hills and thus became an incomplete geographical entity, Assam will also be incomplete and India a country without the Hills.<sup>10</sup>

The following were the background stories on the formation of a separate Province comprising of the North, Eastern Frontier areas of Assam. Early in June, 1946, His Excellency the Governor of Assam had invited the Political Agent of Manipur to attend a conference of Hill Officers on the 26th and 27th of July, 1946. In the conference Mr. Gimson was instructed to present the case of the Hill Tribes of Manipur to the Advisory Committee proposed in the statement by the Cabinet Mission to India on 16th May, 1946. The Proposal was read as follows:

20. The Advisory Committee on the rights of citizens, Minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas will contain due representation of the interests affected and their function will be to report to the Union Constituent Assembly upon the list of fundamental rights, clauses for protecting Minorities, and a scheme for the administration of Tribal and Excluded areas, and to advise whether these rights should be incorporated in the Provincial, the group or the Union Constitutions.<sup>11</sup> But all that the British officials in Assam knew was that the Constituent Assembly was to set up this Advisory Committee, and that part of this Committee's duty would be to advise on the future of the Tribal and the Excluded Areas. They did not know what shape this Committee was likely to take. But His Excellency the Governor of Assam had assumed that some representatives of such a Committee would visit the Hill areas and take evidence on the spot.

It was impossible for His Excellency the Governor of Assam to say how far the major political parties in India had ever applied their minds to the problems of the North East Frontier as a whole. By the North East Frontier, it was meant from Nepal inclusive to Burma exclusive. The Muslim League solution was the affiliation of this entire frontier to a strong Assam-Bengal Group, though no doubt the Centre would be closely concerned on the side of external affairs and defence. This solution was of course prima facie logical and geographically sound. But the Assamese generally, not excluding the indigenous Muslim population, were strongly opposed to Bengal domination, and it was understood that the Mongolian Fringe was even less in sympathy with Bengal.

The Congress, locally the Caste Hindus, solution was that Assam could stand on its own legs, negotiating with Bengal merely in matters relating to trade, inland waterways and economic matters. But this party did not consider the neighboring Indian States at all, or the danger of pressure from China through Tibet. Such a Province would be very weak economically and could probably afford to do very little for the Hill tribes.

(To be contd...)

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