

# Editorial

Saturday, January 12, 2019

## Mr. Chief Minister, you can't fool the people on CAB

Almost all people in the entire North Eastern states - Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya have strongly oppose the Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016, which was passed in the Lok Sabha. The Bill is passed as BJP, at the moment, is majority in the Lok Sabha. Opposition Party including the Congress Party the Trinamool Congress walked out during the passing of the Bill. More interesting thing is that the alliance partner of the NDA, National People Party (NPP) had openly announced that they are in no way going to support the Bill and if required they may untie the knot with the BJP on this issue of Citizen Amendment Bill.

The day when the Citizen Amendment Bill 2016, was passed, against the opposition from the entire people of the NE people (except some bhaks who are more like the puppet of the Narendra Modi and Amid Shah), almost all North east states, particularly Assam, Manipur and Tripura was turned into Warfield with protestors turning wild.

In Ghatol of Assam, after BJP office was targeted and set on fire by irate protestors, the BJP government of the state used every force against the protestors to appease their leadership at the Centre. In Tripura, police were allowed to use live bullet to control the democratic protest and the firing critically injured some of the protestors. In Manipur, the police actions to protestors remind everybody of the last few decades where cry for justice were suppressed using every means including mock bomb, rubber bullet and tear gas besides, lathi charge. Actions on individuals who raise voices against the government seem similar to all the three BJP rule states of North Eastern states. Anybody who spoke against the government - either through social networking sites or in public platform are treated as enemy of the state and detained under custody framing charges which were fabricated.

In Assam, few days back a 16 years old boy was detained by the police twice for making a video on YouTube. What the boy had stated was - "Himanta Biswa Sharma came in News Live. He said that Assam should concentrate on NRC Exercise, not on Citizen Amendment Bill. But We all know that during this exercise, BJP will settle lakhs of illegal Bangladesh in Assam". The boy also question to Himanta Biswa Sharma, "Are we fools?"

It is clear for the state of Meghalaya. The Chief Minister of the State has made his party's stand on the issue. A meeting of the party NPP held yesterday had re-affirmed its stand. As for the state of Manipur, Chief Minister N. Biren Singh talks in the similar way that Himanta Biswa Sharma had tried to convince his people. N. Biren said the CAB will not affect the Manipur as the state legislative Assembly had passed the "Manipur Peoples' (Protection) Act, which is yet to get assent from the president of India.

The spokesperson of BJP Ch. Bjoy, on the other hand is trying to divert the people of the state saying that, the passing of the CAB is an opportunity for the people of the state as well as the government as the government is getting privilege in giving pressure to the central leadership as well as the President of India to give assent to the pending Bill. One wanders how the Chief Minister said so when he failed to make known the public on how the Manipur Peoples' (Protection) Bill could subdue the Citizenship Amendment Bill passed by the Parliament. It is somehow relieved that the Bill is yet to pass in the Rajya Sabha. Is Mr. Bijoy, the so call spokesperson the state think that all the people of the state are "FOOLS"? If so, it is better he be consulted with a psychiatry before his mental state get worsen.

Well, to the issue of the Citizenship amendment Bill, it is better to make the people remind on what the Prime Minister Narendra Modi had stated in 2014 during election campaign. The PM said that after May 16, that is when the election was over the Bangladeshi will pack their bags and run away. Since very long issues of illegal immigrants has been haunting the North East states particularly in Manipur and Assam. Modi's speech was taken with due seriousness and the consequence was that BJP was voted to power.

Issues about the illegal immigrant also many times put the state of Manipur into turmoil with people protesting urging the government for framing of legislation. The influx of illegal immigrants had already threaten the existence of the indigenous communities of the state. During early eighties, students body upraised and the state was put under turmoil with the protest reaching its momentum. The agitation was settled only after signing of an agreement with the government of that time and then representatives of the All Manipur Students' Union, however the unfortunate part is that the content of the memorandum signed between the two have never been converted into reality.

To the leaders of the BJP both at Centre and - Manipur was burnt 2001 when there was a BJP led government in the centre. And this time too when BJP is at the Centre Manipur is likely to burn with another sentimental issue. Make sure that the ugly party of the BJP doesn't return to this state which was once an erstwhile Kingdom in Asia. Or else people might not left other option than waging war for a separate Independent Country.

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Contd. from yesterday issue

## "Humane Journey into the Nature of Human Culture: A Personal Narrative"

This article is the lecture delivered by Dr. S. B. Chakrabarti, Former Deputy Director, Anthropological Survey of India, Government of India General Secretary, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, on the @nd Gangmumei Kamei memorial Lecture

The whole country has undergone a systemic adoption of agricultural development programmes since the first Five Year Plan period. Occasional shifts have been effected depending on the priority for improving a target group. Thus, for the improvement of production and income of the small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers down to the specific poverty stricken rural families, lot of occasional programmes have been launched during each plan period. Conceptually, the use of 'appropriate technology', 'balanced growth', 'inclusive development' and so on have been the idealized emphasis in each induced programme. In spite of all these measures and efforts towards the desired target the neat observable result has been questioned and debated by the academics, administrators, planner and the social activists. I am not going into any technical details or statistically based assessment or counter assessment at the moment excepting making a mention that the question of poverty in India has basically a rural dimension. Therefore, in order to grapple with the ground reality we have to fall back upon the micro-level data base usually generated by the researchers in specific field situations. This approach in a sense help us understand how, despite the advance of technological development in agricultural production, a substantial number of the rural people engaged in cultivation have perpetually remained below the so called poverty line. Further, and interestingly enough, how all the possible constraints notwithstanding, the cultivators of different descriptions manage to maintain in a village situation the internal social relations and sharing of common cultural values embedded in the very structure of a particular mode of production. Once these grass root realities are retrieved with a dependable data base it will automatically drive us towards taking correct initiative based on macro politico-economic considerations inherent in all major development programmes, specially in the agrarian sector, including a review of the various Land Reform measures and Tenancy Acts in different states of the country.

My narrative began with the journey among the so called backward primitive food gathering tribes. Eventually it passed through the villages of the settled cultivators - both in dry and wetland cultivation regions. Now the narrative will enter into my journey in the urban towns - one is situated in West Bengal and the other is island town of Port Blair, Andaman. As a student of Anthropology we had to take course in human evolution. This included both biological and cultural evolution of mankind. One could perhaps notice that while the narrative proceeded through the sections as used in the preceding pages it has taken an evolutionary approach starting with food gathering communities, passing through the peasant communities, and landed into the urban communities. Our basic concern has been to understand human culture from the relatively simple stages of societal development that still exist. Then we have moved gradually to the complex stages. These stages are normally determined by the social organisations where the respective communities are encapsulated along the tradition that they inherit through the ages. In order to get in to the root of human culture for a comprehensive understanding my task as a student of cultural anthropology has been to depend primarily on close and intimate

observations on these communities as they express themselves through their performances in various activities - social, cultural, political and religious. In the process they combine or recombine their mutual interpersonal or intergroup relations. Perhaps this journey is not that easy into the human terrain, because it entails lot of complicated entry points. As a researcher in the field one has to evolve differential strategy during any field journey and adopt certain techniques in eliciting required information from the people. It is relatively easy to observe a Jarao or a Kadar, but difficult to communicate with them. The constraint is not only language but the nature of their movement in the jungles during day time. It is nearly impossible even now to stay close to them in a camp in the evening. The rural cultivators are rather accessible within reach but one has to care enough for all kinds of social and economic divides that constitute the village life. In urban centres it requires a different strategy to capture the realities of life contextually diverse in nature. The basic approach in taking up two different small urban centres was to pick up an immediately observable and directly accessible spatial unit. The management size of the population in such a given universe normally remains rooted in a common mode of social and economic interactions. The most question that haunted us initially was what happens when a land space (cadastral unit) changes its character in terms of the basic modes of production. It is assumed that with the changes in land use pattern the concomitant social relations and cultural responses will be certainly affected. In view of this I led a team of cultural anthropologists and human geographers in a field work in Barnipur town under the district of 24 Parganas (south) in West Bengal. This small town in situated within easy access Kolkata by road and rail transport being the hinterland of an encircling rural milieu. Originally an enlarged village, which stood by the side of an important stream (Adi Ganga) and a life line for trade and transport, Barnipur carries with it number of important historical events. It is known, from available records as well as from the peoples' responses to our queries, that SriChaitanya Mahaprabu stayed here about 500 years ago. The Barnipur area had the first municipality in 1869. The famous litterateur Bankim Chandra Chattopdhay became the Deputy Magistrate in the local court here between 1864 to 1868. The historical Hindu Mela, known for its link with India's struggle for freedom, was organised here during the late nineteenth century. A high school was established here way back in 1858. Large scale migration of rural population had taken place for seeking opportunities in advanced education, various employments, business and so on. The place initially known for production of betel leafs, gradually turned into large scale plantation of different fruits, and finally turned into urban agglomeration with the establishment of modern buildings for dwelling and office accommodation of various institutions, extension of road and modern transport network and so on. The changes in the land use pattern was recorded from the Land

Revenue and Settlement offices and visibly reflected on the cartographic maps that were prepared based on 1932, 1962 Survey records and compared with the data collected during 1998-99.

It was reported that only 31% of the population of this urban centre are original settlers while the rest are migrants who came to the town at a later date. That is why the town having an area of 3.5 square miles and with five municipal wards rose to 17 wards during the field investigation. The population strength rose from 4,217 (1901 census) to 44,964 (2001 census) representing major religious groups, such as Hindu, Muslim and Christian. Among the migrants there is an apparent socio-economic divide. In the municipal town under reference here there are more than 35 ethnic groups of all social categories - high caste, medium level caste and so called low caste in the Hindu hierarchy, apart from the Muslim and Christian families. In the naming of the neighbourhood one gets a clear reference of the traditional social ties and the modern secular trends. The same trend is also visible in the existence of varieties of religious and cultural institutions on the one hand and through the activities of the recent educational and literary institutions/associations on the other.

The growing town in a rural milieu thus reflects, as we have observed, a surviving feudal touch of the existing zamindar families in matters of social relations and cultural performances in the life of the urban people. The impact of SriChaitanya and his Bhakti movement is still continuing side by side with secular political activities among the town dwellers both the earlier and migrant population in their own respective areas. This has been a rich experience to observe how the people in the midst of a transformation handle their growing diversities in society, culture and polity and ultimately try to maintain a mutually re-enforcing moral community more of a rural nature than of an alienated urban characteristic. In case of the present case study it was observed that the noisy scene of the whole day in the core of town life ultimately returns to a calm environ produced in the greenery around which presents the vestige of an encircling rural milieu. Now, I will take up a brief review of my last leg of journey into an island town i.e. Port Blair in Andaman Island. I had a done a quick survey there during 2000-2002. This only island town fall under the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Port Blair stands at a distance of 1225 Km from Kolkata, 1190 km from Chennai and 1200Km from Vishakhapatnam. Historically, since its inception as a penal settlement during the colonial occupation, Port Blair has remained unique in its social character. Declared as a municipal town in 1951 it was basically peopled by the migrant population. Migration as a spatial, socio-cultural, politico-economic phenomena has already figured substantially in the academic research throughout the world. From a record it is seen that 1931 census enumerated 19223 population in Andamans. About 98% out of them were Indians. Among the Indians, 4704 persons out of 18845 were born in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The others migrated there form different part of India rendering it a true

reflection of cosmopolitan character. Immediately after independence lot of fresh batches of migrant came to Port Blair from mainland in search of job or fortune in business or miscellaneous economic activities. Thus the township with 7.7sq.km in 1971 expanded to 14.14 sq.km in 1981 and 16.00 sq.km in 1995 with the inclusion of more and more neighbouring village area. It appears form a record that the number of population rose from 7789 in 1951 to 100186 in 2001. They came from various parts of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The combined three southern states constitute about 73% of the total migrant population followed by Bihar (7.72%), West Bengal (6.46%) and Uttar Pradesh (5.73%). The major ethnic groups in the town of Port Blair and around initially were the locals, who were born out of the union among the convicted parents and known to be pre-1942 people. Most of them were the Moplahs (a mix of Arabs and Malayales of Kerala), Bhatius (known in UP as the criminal tribes), the Ranchi people (mainly from Chotanagpur area). Among the Bengalees, Madraeses, Telengis etc. a number of various caste people form different regions of the respective states came gradually and got settled. Among the locals of pre-1942 and even among others who migrated later, the ethnic identity was more apparent than real. A new breed of population dominated the social scenario in terms of their typical social aggregation and interaction which were not governed by the traditional caste hierarchy of the places of their origin. Over the years with the increasing availability of opportunities through education, job facilities, trade and commerce on the one hand and consolidation of community based social and cultural institutions along with diverse activities in the field of art, literature, performing arts and so on the township of Port Blair accommodated elements of varieties in all fronts across all divides and thereby justifying it to be considered as mini India in all senses of the term.

Now I am on my last leg in this journey of a personal narrative, incidentally focussing on certain aspects of human culture as were observed in various field situations. It was part of my professional enquiry trying to understand the perceptions of people who created the self-cultivated meaning of life as they exist. The same set of people also confronted many adverse situations in course of this existence and tried out ways and means to get adjusted or adapted to the system. In the long journey of human civilization people also evolved or adopted newer mechanisms which were transcended down the generations. This is how a particular social formation takes its shape. Prof. Gangmumei Kamei throughout his professional life very seriously looked for studying the problems of social formation. As an eminent historian he was well aware of the importance of this subject. Naturally, he spent lot of his time studying it very minutely. I will cite only two instances, among others, which will justify my statement. He delivered the Presidential Address during the eighth annual session of the North East India History Association, held at Kohima, Nagaland in 1987. He talked on "State Formation: An Enquiry into the Process of the Emergence of States with Special Reference to North East India - A Review". (Contd. on page 3)