

Editorial

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NRC and "We Don't, So Shouldn't You" syndrome of Mayangs

"We Don't, So Shouldn't You" is a fragility syndrome that many mayangs suffer from whenever people from the "north east" nation-states voice their opinion against the oppressive mayangs, the Indian state and its Acts and laws.

It is a condescending speech and a tone of voice that attempts to speak over and silence the indigenous voices, claiming moral superiority. This fragility syndrome has been identified many a times in various protest-situations and has become a mayang pattern. When the movie Mary Kom was in the making and even after its release, many from the "north east" nation-states protested against the casting of a mayang in the role of a Manipuri from the Kom community. There was no identity or cultural relevance between the mayang actor and Mary Kom. The use of prosthetic to make Priyanka Chopra "look like" Mary Kom was racist and an ideal example of "chinki face" - a mayang donning chinky look with over-emphasis on slanty eyes, which has been a racial marker and the highlight of most of the racial aggression and violence against people from the "north east" nation-states for ages.

The capitalization on cultural misappropriation in the movie is a whole different bizarre narrative. During this time, people from the "north east" nation-states voiced their anger on different platforms, but it had received the "We Don't, So Shouldn't You" syndrome as response from the mayangs. When indigenous people said that we protest Priyanka Chopra playing the role of Mary Kom, the mayangs came up with responses on the lines of "We don't protest Ben Kingsley playing Gandhi in a Hollywood movie, so shouldn't you." When brought up even today, their response is, "We don't protest Saif Ali Khan playing a Sikh in Sacred Games, so shouldn't you." At the time of the protest against CAB in the NER, it was only the people of "north east" nation-states going out on the streets and protesting against it. Apart from those mayangs who opposed it using the Hindu-Muslim narrative (which wasn't the main problem with CAB), the CAB-supporting mayangs resorted to responses on the lines of "We don't protest people from other states coming to Mumbai/Delhi/Bangalore and other metro cities, so shouldn't you." Recently, during the debate around NRC, the mainland Indians were again drawing their same go-to-for-everything Hindu-Muslim narrative and calling NRC islamophobic and Assamese xenophobic without knowing/realising the main purpose of NRC from indigenous people perspective.

To their surprise, when the NRC result came out, the majority of foreigners identified were Hindus. However, since the population identified as foreigners was 19 lakhs, they started focusing more on "NRC making poor people stateless" without knowing/realising what the indigenous people have been going through because of the huge influx of Bangladeshi Bengalis, both Hindus and Muslims.

It was at this time that some started to show "We Don't, So Shouldn't You" fragility syndrome with arguments on the lines of "We don't protest for NRC in adivasi areas in India, so shouldn't you." In this whole set of pattern, they have always either skipped or ignored the only relevant lens through which they could see the reality, which was the indigenous-settler lens in order to see the settler colonialism. On top of it, this "We Don't, So Shouldn't You" fragility syndrome translates to the 'mayangspaining' narrative that indigenous people are not capable of framing their own opinion and it is always the mayangs who should be guiding them to show the right path. It portrays indigenous people as a stupid bunch of people with no ability to think critically or even decide for their own good. This narrative goes back to 1950 when their beloved Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said, "So far as the two states of Manipur and Tripura are concerned, election will not be possible, for the simple reason that so far as these two states are concerned, there are hardly any local authorities existing there. Tripura is really a tribal area. Manipur is a very backward area. There are hardly any local bodies and organizations. The education status of these two states is also very backward." It was a different kind of mayang superiority complex then, it is a different kind of mayang superiority complex now. Listening to the indigenous people is not their forte or an area of interest; "We Don't, So Shouldn't You" is.

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In Fighting for NRC-Excluded, Rights and Aspirations of Assamese People Cannot be Ignored

Courtesy The Wire
By: Walter Fernandes

The long-awaited final National Register of Citizens (NRC) of Assam is out, but the questions raised by the July 2018 draft remain unanswered. The final register has excluded 19,06,657 persons from the list of citizens, down from 40,07,707 in the last draft. For this reduction, one has human rights groups to thank, who trained volunteers to put documents together and present them to the NRC authorities. They will have to continue to support the over 19 lakh who have now been left out.

However, the final NRC has not satisfied anyone. Political parties had claimed a high number of 'illegal Bangladeshi immigrants' varying from 30-50 lakhs. As a result, the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) is disappointed with what they consider is a small number of exclusions from the NRC.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders, on their part, also expected to see a higher number - all Muslims whom they threatened to expel to Bangladesh. While the names of those excluded have not yet been published, preliminary reports suggest that around a lakh are Nepali Hindus, a high number are Bengali-speaking Hindus and a few are Biharis. Some BJP leaders, therefore, claim that a significant number of illegal Muslim migrants have been included in the list and have demand re-verification. What stands out amid the controversy around numbers, is the absence of a policy. Neither the Central nor the state government has said how they plan to deal with those who have been excluded. Expelling them to

Bangladesh is out of the question because the country cannot afford to receive them.

Moreover, how does one prove that those who have been excluded are 'Bangladeshi' when India doesn't even have an accurate figure of what it calls 'illegal migrants'. While some put their numbers between 30 and 50 lakhs, the census - the only reliable source - indicates that there is a difference of 19,44,444 from 1951 to 2001 between what would have been the population of Assam if it had kept to the national average of growth and its real decennial growth.

This number of actual migrants would have multiplied and grown to around 40 lakhs. Estimates put the number of Bengali-speaking Muslims among them at around 17 lakhs. The rest would be Nepali, Hindi and Bengali-speaking Hindus. One has to find out how many of them entered Assam from Bangladesh after March 24, 1971, which is the cut-off date accepted by the Assam Accord of 1985 between the government of India and AASU that organised the Assam agitation of 1979-1985. So the stalemate continues. On the other hand, human rights organisations from peninsular India (known in the Northeast as 'mainland India') have made significant efforts towards supporting those who were excluded from the July 2018 draft NRC. However, most of them have been exclusive in their view. They limit themselves to protecting the rights of those who have been excluded, failing to understand why the people of Assam are concerned about migrants. Assam's residents have seen what has happened in Tripura, where the proportion of the indigenous tribal population has been reduced from

59.1% in 1951 to 31.1% in 2011. Only around two lakh of the seven lakh East Pakistani migrants who entered the state till 1960 are Partition refugees who came prior to 1951.

The rest are landless peasants who came in search of land. The state government changed the land laws to de-recognise community-managed land, where the tribals lived. The migrants were resettled on that land and are now in control of the state. The fear of Assamese speakers - who are only around 50% of the state's population - is around their land and identity.

The rights activists of mainland India, who have rushed to support people who are excluded from the NRC, either don't seem to understand this issue or are simply ignoring it. They are rightly raising their voice against what they feel are inhumane conditions in detention camps. But their failure to understand the concerns of the Assamese population makes a dialogue between them and the local people near impossible.

That is where the country as a whole has to ask some serious questions. The first is whether they should stop at condemning Assam for what the human rights activists consider the violation of the rights of the excluded people. Instead, one should ask whether one state should be asked to bear the burden of rehabilitating all of them and let the rest of India sit back and condemn their failures. That is what happened in Tripura. When its indigenous people revolted against the loss of their land and identity, they were called terrorists.

No one asked whether the rest of India had an obligation to resettle some people who have reduced the Tripura

tribal communities to a minority. Activists from mainland India have a right to speak of the rights of those who are excluded from the NRC. But should they not be concerned about the land and identity of the indigenous people?

While trying to protect the rights of those who are excluded from the NRC, the country as a whole needs to reflect on the future of Assam and its people. One cannot expect those who are excluded to Bangladesh. With its high density of around 1,400 per sq. km, it cannot afford to receive more people. Assam, on its part, cannot be condemned for its apparent failures. Their point of view has to be understood and dealt with. Is the rest of India ready to rehabilitate some of them in other states or will it sit back and expect Assam to rehabilitate all of them and then condemn it for its failures?

Are there alternatives like work permits without voting rights? Can the rest of India afford to keep quiet when the Centre is trying to introduce a communal element through the Citizenship Amendment Bill, which states that people from the minority (read Hindu) communities of Bangladesh and Pakistan should be accepted as Indian citizens within three years and Muslim are to be excluded? Should an identity and land issue be turned into a communal one? These are questions for human rights activists from all over India, not merely from Assam or the Northeast.

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What Are the Accounting Dynamics Behind the RBI's Big Payout to the Centre?

Courtesy The Wire
By: Sushant Hede

Ask any Class 12 student or newly-minted accountant about the utmost joy or contentment while doing accounts and the immediate response would be: to see both sides of the balance sheet tallied. Every debit has to have a corresponding credit entry - or, to put it otherwise, "every asset/expense should have a corresponding liability/income and vice versa".

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had the onerous task of adjusting the "excess reserves" from its balance sheet and then subsequently transferring it to the government just before releasing its annual accounts for the financial year 2018-19 (July-June).

The annual accounts of 2018-19 explains majority of the deviations from the previous year but also brings out some interesting and thought worthy puzzles.

Composition of RBI's balance sheet and profit and loss

The three charts below provides a snapshot of the composition of RBI's liabilities, assets and income respectively. Understanding this becomes critical before going ahead.

The total balance sheet of RBI is almost Rs 41 lakh crore, which is almost one-fifth the GDP of India (at current prices) and almost Rs 14 lakh crore higher than the government's budget size. The total balance sheet size as of June, 2019 is 13.4% higher than a year ago and this perceptible increase can be primarily attributed to the increase in the government securities (owing to open market operations-purchase by RBI) which consequently has led to an increase in notes issued (liquidity infusion). The liability side of the balance sheet chiefly comprises of notes issued (53%), deposits by



commercial banks held by RBI or the cash reserve ratio (19%) and other liabilities and provisions (28%). This last component comprises mainly the currency and gold revaluation reserves (57%) and contingency fund (17%). On the other end, the assets include investment in forex securities (68%) and government instruments (24%).

Rationale for the variations
The RBI's total income has more than doubled in 2018-19, with interest income growing by 44% while other income growing by 1854%. The total expenses of RBI has contracted by 39%, and thus a growth in revenues and contraction in expenditure has led to a jump in available balance (profits) by 250% in 2018-19.

The more than doubling of total income has been on account of higher interest earnings on rupee securities owing to OMO purchases and more repo transactions, which has led to more government securities held by RBI during the year. In simple words, as the banking system was in liquidity deficit mode during September '18 to May '19, it led to the RBI infusing liquidity via OMO purchase and more repo agreements with banks. Another aspect which explains the variations is that no funds have been transferred to the contingency

reserves as the provisions have declined from Rs 14,190 crore in 2017-18 to merely Rs 64 crore in 2018-19.

The third important reason can be attributed to the increase in other income, part of which is owing to Rs 52,637 crore transferred from the contingent reserves under "provisions no longer required".

Trick in the forex accounting
The second rationale for the significant jump in other income is on account of an accounting change in recording the exchange gains or losses from foreign transactions. Historically, the RBI has been recording both realised and unrealised gains on account of foreign exchange transactions straight into the 'gold and currency revaluation account' which falls under the liability side of the balance sheet.

This simply means that the both realised and unrealised gains from buying or selling dollars were not recorded in the income statement. From this year onwards, a more conventional accounting method has been followed wherein realised gains owing to selling of US dollars has been recorded in the income statement and purely on account of this change the one-time gain realised aggregates Rs 21,464 crore.

The puzzles in the annual accounts
There are two puzzles which the

annual accounts have thrown up. First of it pertains to the accounting of Rs 52,637 crore under other income owing to the excess reserves transfer. As per the Bimal Jalan's report on the economic capital framework, only the contingency reserves was to be used in the transfer.

With there being no additions in the contingent reserves/fund this year, the difference in the contingent fund between the two years has been a decline of Rs 35,764 crore. The difference of Rs 16,873 crore is a puzzling aspect and it would be interesting to know which other provisions have been reversed.

The second is the surplus payable to the central government (as per the balance sheet), which stood at Rs 1.76 lakh crore as of June 30, 2019. Moving on to the income statement, the available balance (difference of income and expenditure) is Rs 1.76 lakh crore. This amount includes the interim dividend amount transferred to the government, aggregating Rs 28,000 crore. If this amount is already paid to the government, it is perplexing why the liability side still accounts for Rs 1.76 lakh crore as of June end.

To sum it up, the release of the annual accounts by the RBI immediately following the Bimal Jalan committee report does explain the significant gain to the government in the form of dividends. Higher OMO purchases, one-time transfer of excess reserves to other income, no provisions to the contingent fund coupled with anomalous forex accounting change aided in boosting the profit numbers. What would be interesting to see is whether this significant increase in annual dividend to the government would continue going ahead. At present, the accounts are tallied with the ball in the government's court to observe the efficacy in the usage of this additional income to propel the economy.

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