

Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017

Newsdesk - On 4th of October, the Supreme Court of India expressed grave concern over the disappearance of wetlands of this country. The Bench headed by Justice Madan B Lokur said: "If there are no wetlands left, it will affect agriculture and several other things. It is a very, very important issue".

There are 2,01,503 wetlands in the country identified using ISRO's satellite imagery. Court had said earlier that these would continue to be protected by the government. The court had also asked the Centre to inventorise, protect and notify these wetlands in consultation with state governments. On the submission by the government that it is pondering change in the Wetland Rules the court had directed to do that within June 30. On June 26 the new rules were notified. On 4th of October the central government informed the court that the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 has been notified to replace the earlier set of guidelines that came into effect in 2010.

Under the new Rules, wetlands are defined as "an area of marsh, fen, peat-land or water; whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres. These classifications of wetlands does not include river channels, paddy

fields, human-made water bodies/tanks specifically constructed for drinking water purposes and structures specifically constructed for aquaculture, salt production, recreation and irrigation purposes.

But in the 2010 Rules "all inland waters such as lakes, reservoir, tanks, backwaters, lagoon, creeks, estuaries and man-made wetland and the zone of direct influence on wetlands" were included under wetlands. So, some areas have been excluded to shrug off government responsibilities to monitor those. In the new Rules wetland

management has been given to states and union territories. This change has been objected. Environmentalists say that states and UTs have never acted on wetlands protection and notification in spite of the pressure exerted by the central government — using the Central Wetlands Regulatory Authority (CWRA) — under the 2010 Rules. This being the experience, giving the responsibility of wetland management to states and UTs, as also doing away with the CWRA entirely is really vexing. CWRA's place has been taken by the National Wetland Committee,

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100 years of first performance of 'Dakghar'

Newsdesk - 'Dakghar' the great play by Rabindranath was written in the autumn of 1911. The poet wrote it while he was in Shantiniketan. He himself did say, "There is no story in it. It is a prose-lyric. According to aestheticians it is not a play, it is a tale."

While in London, during the autumn and winter of 1912, poet translated Dakghar, along with Chitrangada and other



Picture courtesy: https://www.parabaas.com/rabindranath/images/pAlokeranjan_pic_Dakghar.jpg

plays. On 18th October 1912 he wrote in a letter, "Last night I met Yeats. He liked my translation of Dakghar very much. He is now interested to get it performed in his Irish theatre."

On 10th May 1913 the English translation of Dakghar, 'The Post Office' was performed in Irish theatre. This was the first performance of Rabindranath's plays on foreign land. Not only that, this performance in translation was the first performance of the play itself. 'The Post Office' struck the right chord of troubled European mind during the hostilities and mass destruction during World War I and again during World War II. As Meena Alexander writes reminiscing about her own experiences of performing or visiting the play since her childhood, "It took me many years to learn about the afterlife of The Post Office. ...The play was broadcast on French radio, during World War II when the country was under Nazi Occupation. On July 18, 1942 there was an extraordinary performance—in the Warsaw Ghetto, in an orphanage run by Janusz Korczak, who put on the play with the children as actors. He said this of his young troupe: 'The play is more than a text, it is a mood, it conveys more than emotions, it is an experience . . . and the actors are more than actors, they are children.' Asked why he had chosen Tagore's play, he is said to have replied: 'We must all learn to

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Hunger index

Is increasing hunger a paradoxical poser for an otherwise developing country? Or fallout succinctly proving, the anti-people nature of the set of policies which is guiding so-called 'development'? Why the people of the forests hungry? Because, their forest rights have been snatched away, either by legal prohibitions or by leasing out the forest lands to multinationals, capitalists (the 'developers') or in the name of anti-insurgency operations.

Why the farmers are hungry? Because prematurely, from a regime of building food-sufficiency and subsistence a regime of market-driven agriculture has been promoted over a long period which is driving the farmers to un-repayable high-interest bank loans, loans from micro-finance agencies, clutches of metamorphosed landlords of newer generation and eventual destitution and suicides.

Why the millions of workers in the unorganized sector are hungry? Because of low wages, that also half-paid through the contractor agencies/individuals, literally zero service-security in practice, seasonal unemployment and unemployment due to various policy-related reasons, e.g. demonetization of the year 2016.

Why the self-employed, petty traders hungry? Again, due to policy decisions taken in the name of development, from national level decisions like 100% FDI in retail sector to municipal decisions barring access to trading areas, roads and so many other things.

After making crores of people prey to hunger through the policies of liberalization, privatization and globalization over the decades, when the situation becomes explosive, you start talking about 'globalization with human face', sops like '2 Rs/KG rice', 'daal-bhaat meals for 5 Rs. and then again, to prevent that also, you raise the tricky question of 'entitlement or empowerment?' Then, to reduce, to exclude people even from that minimal entitlement you raise the bogey of fictitious identities! You order linking ration cards with Aadhaar! A child dies of hunger and administration is made hell-bent to find other excuses for that death!

Hence, India's ranking 100 among 119 countries, going down 45 positions since 2014 in Global Hunger Index, is not a paradox. It is the crux of that 'development' which is inflating the numbers of billionaires in this country.

Last-resort antibiotic sales jump

New Delhi: The sale of drug combinations containing last-resort antibiotics is rising faster than overall antibiotics sales in India, health researchers have said in a study that also highlights the government's failure to stop the sale of irrational and unapproved antibiotic cocktails.

While total antibiotics sales in India rose 26 per cent over a four-year period, says the study, there was a 174 per cent increase in the sales of drug combinations containing antibiotics that should be used only after other medicines have failed. Many of the so-called fixed-dose combinations of antibiotics have not been approved by the Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation, the country's apex drug regulatory agency, and should thus be considered illegal drugs, the researchers said.

Although the drug regulator had acknowledged the problem and banned dozens of fixed-dose combinations, including antibiotic combinations, last year, most of these drugs remain in the market with their companies getting the ban quashed in court. The recent study, by British and Indian researchers, examined antibiotic sales between 2008 and 2012 and found that 75 (64 per cent) among 118 fixed-dose combinations of antibiotics sold in India lacked regulatory approval, while 43 (36 per cent) had the approval. The findings were published this week in the journal Lancet Global Health.

Only five of the 43 approved fixed-dose combinations have also been

- G.S. Mudur approved by drug regulators in Britain and America.

"The sales of antibiotics that require the most careful control and regulation are increasing at the fastest rate," Patricia McGettigan, a clinical pharmacologist at the Queen Mary University of London who led the study, said in a media release.

"Even worse, many (of these) formulations had never been approved by the national drug regulator."

The study has found that: Sales of fixed-dose combinations containing antibiotics that the World Health Organisation has classified as "key access" (which should be widely available) increased by about 20 per cent over the four-year period;

Sales of fixed-dose combinations with antibiotics that the WHO has labelled "watch group" (which should be used restrictively for a small number of infections) grew at 73 per cent; and

Sales of fixed-dose combinations containing antibiotics from the WHO's "reserve group" (last-resort antibiotics) grew by 174 per cent. Among two-drug anti-microbial combinations unapproved by the drug regulator are ciprofloxacin-tinidazole, ceftriaxone-vancomycin, and norfloxacin-metronidazole. Some of the fixed-dose combinations containing "reserve group" antibiotics have regulatory approval.

"Even for the fixed-dose

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Sister Nivedita

(Ms. Mararet E. Noble)

Born: October 28, 1867, County Tyrone, United Kingdom

Died: October 13, 1911, Darjeeling

"She lived our life and came to know us by becoming one of ourselves"

- Rabindranath Thakur

BIHAR - Sister Nivedita



From Patna on the east to Benares on the west, stretch in the month of January fields of white poppies* all abloom. In this Holy Land of the Buddhist nations blossoms today this flower of death. The earth where it grows was made sacred long ago by the feet of Buddha. At the site of the ancient Pataliputra, almost where Bankipore stands today, He entered the kingdom of Magadha. For ages they called the river-crossing Gautama's Ferry, and told how on his last journey north He stood and watched the building of the first of its fortifications, foretelling the future greatness of the capital. In remote villages one constantly comes upon images of Buddha, worshipped inside or outside the temples of Brahman priests. In any field the peasant ploughing may turn up a relic or a fragment of carved stone. And under trees and bushes along the high-road one notes the three little heaps of mud standing side by side, that indicate a shrine of Jagannath the Lord of the Universe, name and symbol of Buddha himself. They have forgotten Him maybe, yet remember His memory, these simple worshippers of the Bihari villages. To far distant lands, and to scriptures written in a long-forgotten tongue, the modern organisation of scholarship has to go, to bring back to them the knowledge of Him whom under obscure names they worship to this day, in the very countryside where He lived and taught. A vague tradition of Infinite Mercy is all that remains amongst the unlearned of that wondrous personality. But this, after two thousand years, they cherish still. He belongs in a special degree to this peasantry of Magadha. There runs in their veins the blood of those whom He patted on the head as children.

*It was British policy to grow poppies for producing Opium.

[This is the beginning lines of an article 'Bihar' by her]

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Wetlands ...

which has a merely advisory role — for instance, to advise the central government on proposals received from states/UTs for "omission of the prohibited activities", to evolve "norms and guidelines" for integrated management of wetlands based on wise-use principle; recommend trans-boundary wetlands for notification, and review progress of integrated management of Ramsar Convention sites (of which the country has 26).

Under the new Rules, the State or UT Wetlands Authority will "prepare a list of all wetlands... within three months, and a list of wetlands to be notified within six months, from the date of publication of these Rules; taking into cognizance any existing list of wetlands prepared/notified under other relevant state Acts".

A comprehensive digital inventory of all wetlands is to be prepared within a year; however, it is up to the states to decide which wetlands are to be notified.

There are many other lacuna in the new Wetland Rules 2017. Two things are clear. The central government has in fact shrugged of its responsibilities to monitor the maintenance of wetlands, keeping them clean from waste and encroachment. Whereas by giving away these responsibilities to the state and UT governments it has passed on the signal to the corporate hawks and land grabbers of realty sector to build

nexus with the required quarter of the state governments to get the wetlands needed by them to be denotified and de-inventorised. Time will sent those stolen wetlands to oblivion as it has happened with so many.

A brief count of the shortfalls*

Definition - The 2010 Rules included in the definition of wetlands all inland waters such as lakes, reservoir, tanks, backwaters, lagoon, creeks, estuaries, etc.

It also included man-made wetland and the zone of direct influence on wetlands.

However, the 2017 Rules are not as comprehensive as this.

It does not include river channels, paddy fields, human-made water bodies/tanks specifically for drinking water purposes, aquaculture, salt production, recreation and irrigation purposes.

It also does not include wetlands under forest and coastal regulation zones..

Management - There were lethargic response from states and UTs, in the past, on wetlands protection.

So devolving management to states and UTs could be ineffective

Restrictions - The term 'wise use' is subjective and could dilute the earlier restrictions.

There is also no timeline specified for phasing out solid waste and untreated waste from being dumped into wetlands.

The restrictions on "any other activity likely to have an adverse impact on the ecosystem of the wetland", are not specified clearly in the Rules.

Appeal - The older provision of appealing to the National Green Tribunal does not exist in the 2017 Rules.

*Source: The Indian Express
http://www.iasparliament.com/current-affairs/wetlands-rules-2017

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100 years of first ...

face the angel of death ...' Three weeks later, together with the children he was taken to Treblinka death camp." [Translated Lives: Rabindranath Tagores "Post Office", By Meena Alexander, WWB Daily, Courtesy: <http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/dispatches/article/translated-lives-rabindranath-tagores-post-office1>]

But the first public performance of the original play in Bengali had to wait for six long years. As Kolkata Blog records, with photographs of the performance as well, "It was 10 October, and the year was 1917 when the famous play of Rabindranath 'Dakghar' was for the first time staged at Bichitra Bhavan of Jorasanko Thakur Bari. The artists were Gaganendranath, Abanindranath, Soumendranath and Rabindranath Tagore. The second day's play was remarkable due to the presence of Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Madan Mohan Malabya, C F Andrews etc. Once, the play Dakghar (The Post Office) was played at Bichitra hall for seven days at a stretch. Surupa Debi, the daughter of Abanindranath was played the role of Sudha and Ashamukul played the role of Amal. Rabindranath used to play the roles of prahari, rajkibiraj, thakurda and baul.

[Courtesy: <http://calcutta-kolkata-asim.blogspot.in/2013/05/historical-dakghar-play-at-jorasanko.html?m=1>]

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Last-resort antibiotic...

combinations approved by the regulator, we do not know the rationale for the approvals because there is no public access to the information or evidence underpinning those approvals," McGettigan told The Telegraph.

"From a transparency perspective, rigorous regulation would include making the supporting evidence and the rationale for decisions available for public scrutiny."

The researchers say their findings highlight the challenges India faces in curbing the growth of multi-drug-resistant bacteria, or superbugs, that can emerge through the widespread abuse of antibiotics.

McGettigan and her colleagues say the obvious practical steps are to ban the sale of unapproved fixed-dose combinations and enforce the existing regulations to prevent unapproved and illegal drugs from reaching the market.

"The Indian government has been unsuccessful on both counts," the researchers wrote in their paper.

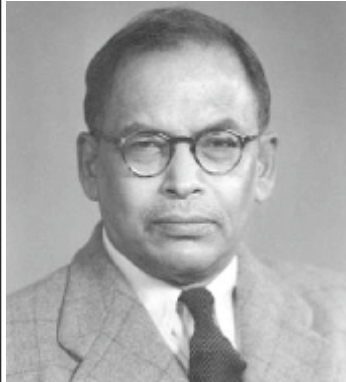
However, public health activists fighting for a ban on irrational fixed-dose combinations in India said the drug regulator had signalled the government's intention to ban fixed-dose combinations.

Delhi High Court, responding to multiple petitions from drug companies, had quashed a ban on certain fixed-dose combinations imposed by the drug regulator last year, but the government has appealed to the Supreme Court.

"We do see a momentum now from the drug regulator in pushing through the ban," said Sourirajan Srinivasan, a member of the All India Drug Action Network, a consortium of health activists and doctors that has joined the government in its petition seeking a ban.

Courtesy: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/last-resort-antibiotic-sales-jump-178696>

October Memoriam



Meghnad Saha

The great Indian Astrophysicist



Atul Prasad Sen

The great Bengali Lyricist & Musician

From page 6

Bengal boys of ...

two Indian allies, he managed to escape and reached the Swiss border. After the war, he lived in England, married an English woman and continued to practise medicine.

Ajit came to Calcutta at the end of the war and never went back to Dhaka. World War II was closely followed by the rupturing of the Indian subcontinent, horrific communal violence and riots of the Partition. The soldier Ajit now worked as a government official in the railways, and lived in Behala, where he helped to establish societies for the displaced people of East Bengal - Juba Sangathan Club for the youth; Sishu Tirtha, a school for children from less privileged families, and the South Suburban Club.

Clearly a figurehead in his local community, Ajit also acknowledged to his grandson that he himself had killed many people during his war years. "I was so young that I never questioned the morality of his actions," said Aniket.

"I never got around to asking him how he felt about the fact of taking someone's life. As a 10-year-old boy, it just felt part of the whole adventure."

Was it for adventure that Biren and Ajit volunteered? Reconstructing the past and recovering narratives is not an easy task. There are many gaps and elisions in our memories, both personal and cultural; in how and what we remember. Two-and-a-half million soldiers from undivided India fought in World War II, forming the largest volunteer army in the world at the time. Today, this is a largely overlooked fact. The challenge lies in piecing together a new, non-Eurocentric perspective of this war and of its forgotten people. Biren and Ajit's stories are a start.

Diya Gupta is a Phd researcher at King's College London, working on Indian soldiers in World War II. If you had someone in your family who took part in this war, she can be reached at diya.80@gmail.com
Courtesy: https://www.telegraphindia.com/1150405/jsp/calcutta/story_12739.jsp

71 years back

Behar Herald

Vol. 73, No. 2, Oct. 19, 1946

Editor - M. C. Samaddar

FUTURE OF THE BENGALEE ASSOCIATION

The second general meeting of the Bengalee Association towards the end of this month calls for a re-examination of the future of the Association. In this issue we print many articles on the subject.

Our society is full of cynics, and there are many who would doubt if the Bengalee Association has a future. We hold a different view. If there is a future for the Bengalee community in Bihar, there is a future for their Association as well. To state it rather bluntly, the future activity of the Association would determine to a large extent the future of the community. Hence, the need for a right lead.

Some critics would say that the Bengalee Association is being revived because a Congress ministry is once more in office. That is not true, and we publish elsewhere in this issue a communication from a member of the Provincial Congress Cabinet*, that the Bengalees in Bihar do not oppose anybody for the sake of opposition alone. They are critical of the present ministry because they feel that the policy of the ministry needs amendment, not in the interests of the Bengalees in Bihar but of the entire population of the province.

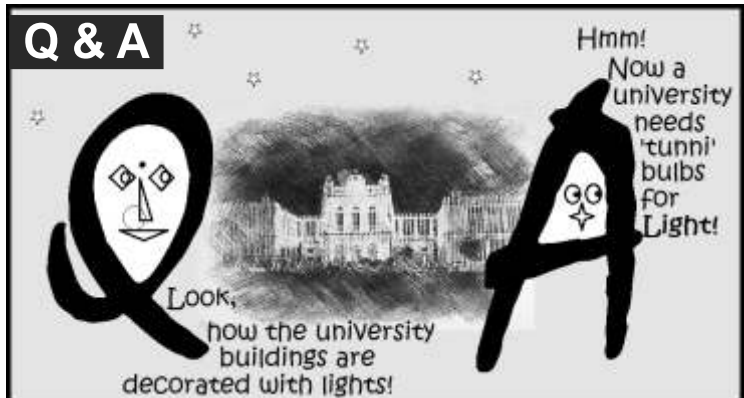
The problems before the bengalees are the same as those before all other communities or castes in the province. The Bengalees do not want any solution for themselves alone, or on their own interests only. There can be fuller, better and happier life for Bengalees only if all the people of the province have a better and more prosperous life.

It is true that the Bengalee community being largely middle class, as the term is commonly used, service alone is its main source of subsistence. It has very little land and does not own any other means of production. It lives by selling its labour (might be clerical or intellectual) for wages. In a prosperous society wages are high, there is more employment and so the objective needs of the Bengali-speaking residents of the province are the same as those of others speaking Hindi or Urdu. Probably the former is more acutely sensitive to a change in employment or wages. Hence it is in fact the group that can lead the entire population of the province. In the realization of this role of Bengalees, both by themselves or by other people of the province, lies the surest chance of replacing acrimony, wherever it might be, by amity and goodwill. It is in this respect that the Bengalee Association has a future and a perspective entirely different from the futile communal politics of the Muslim League with which it is uncharitably compared by some unkind critics. The future of the Association corresponds with the future not only of a community but with that of the entire population of the province. Proper activity of the Association would be in the interests of all.

The war saw an increase in employment in the province. The result was Biharees forgot that they were kept away from opportunities by Bengalees; the latter found their sense of being persecuted disappear. Now once again unemployment and low wages threaten everybody. It is possible to avert this, and on the other hand to increase employment and improve wages. Then there would be neither frustration, nor discrimination, nor persecution and we should see the end of an old controversy.

It is in this context that we suggest that the Association should demand and agitate for employment for all willing to work for adequate wages which would ensure a fair standard of living. And also reiterate its old demand that careers be open to talents, without favour or prejudice. The Bengalee Association has to take up this programme in the interests of the members of the Bengalee community, and as the organisation of the most advanced community of the province, to quote Dr. Sinha**, in the interests of the entire population of Bihar. We trust the Association would receive the cooperation of all sections in its efforts and we invite its bitterest critics to say if this is communal politics.

* Message from Sri K. B. Sahay
**Dr. Sri Krishna Sinha



From page 5

Economic Crisis behind Global Right-Wing ...

has been on a strong recovery path since 2012.

If opinion polls are any indication, Emmanuel Macron of the radical centre is set to become the next French president, defeating his more extremist rival Marine Le Pen.

If that indeed is the eventual outcome, France, despite recent incidents of terrorist attacks, will stay the course and reject putative Islamophobia. This is likely to happen despite the French economy not doing as well as its other European peers. The French found a way out, however, by voting predominantly for three outsiders in the first round of elections, Macron being the most prominent one.

The message for all right wingers, including many in our backyard, is loud and clear: the fear of or threat from others (Islamophobia being just one form) can get you only thus far and no further. A more durable regime can be built only around solid economic fundamentals.

Published on : 2.5.2017

Courtesy: <https://www.thequint.com/world/2017/05/02/reasons-behind-rise-of-right-wing>

On the occasion of 5th Conference of AIBA at Patna

- Dr. (Capt.) Dilip Kumar Sinha

Resurgence of Bengali Sub-nationalism

With little deviation, Jug Suraiya can be quoted as¹, "it is often said that India is inhabited by citizens who first call themselves Bengali, or Punjabi, or Tamil, or Gujarati, or whatever, and add Indian only as secondary identity". Does not this attitude show a split in national identity or lesser commitment to Nation?

The issues of nationalism and sub-nationalism, emerging conflict between them, geographical sub-nationalism and cultural or linguistic sub-nationalism across state-boundaries within the country and beyond have been long debated. In India, due to socio-political and economic reasons, cultural and linguistic sub-nationalism is more relevant for integration and unity of different communities within the national identity.

The concept of a nation is fairly new. It slowly crystallised by 18th century in Europe, when small states and principalities came together, who had shared history, language, political rights, religion, traditions, or threat from larger powers or allegiance to similar political concepts². This new entity, with defined geographical boundaries, thus came into existence, was called a nation. Ernest Renan³ while defining what is a nation, in 1882 said, "Nation is a referendum of willing people who desires to live together." John Stuart Mill writing in 1861 said that "for people to have the desire to be under some government, which should be a government by themselves, or a portion of themselves, exclusively"⁴. Undoubtedly the concept of nation is intrinsically linked with the popular consciousness for a separate sovereign entity.

"Nationalism" is a complex multidimensional concept and oriented towards communal autonomy. During the 19th century nationalism became one of the most significant political and social forces in history, and important cause of World War I⁵. This form of nationalism was the main driving force behind the peaceful passive resistance movement led by Mahatma Gandhi for freedom of India.

Nationalism vis à vis Sub-nationalism in India

Indian nationalism is a diverse blend of nationalistic sentiments in terms of linguistics, social traditions and history across India. India has peoples of multiple races, ethnicities, cultures, religion and languages and they are different from other groups from other corner of the country⁶. Nearly all of them, at some part of history, were ruled by different ruling dynasties, with definite flags and identified as a nation. The groups of people, representing these nations, are expected to have a deep feeling of oneness or pride for their own historical background. This feeling for their geographic community can be defined as sub-nationalism. Similarly, when all these nations are identified within a sovereign country, the loyalty, devotion and commitment for this 'one country', is nationalism. The individual's membership of a specific geographic community does not debar him to be member of 'one country' but support his associated nationalism, or concomitant national identity. The sense of a nation is a cohesive whole, as represented by distinctive traditions, culture, language and politics, India is thus a country of many nations⁷.

Dr. Shaibal Gupta⁸ in his article, 'Bihar: Identity and Development', writes that there have always been two levels of nationalism in many parts of India. One is regional nationalism (also referred as sub-nationalism) and other is all India nationalism. Both these nationalisms are not in contradiction. In fact during the freedom struggle, both these movements were complementary. One could afford to be Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali etc. as well as a very nationalist Indian. It is no accident that two songs of Rabindranath Tagore, one meant for Indian nationalism (Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka Jayahe) and the other for Bengali subnationalism (Amar Sonar Bangla, Ami Tomay Bhalobasi), indicated the concurrent commitment to separate (but not incompatible) identities. This two levels of nationalism, regional nationalism (or sub-nationalism) and Indian nationalism are not in contradiction. Republic of India qualifies as a sovereign country (Nation) assimilating multiple nations with their own sub-nationalism, so often, nicely identified as 'unity in diversity'. These nations living within India are centuries old, some even older, whereas the country called Republic of India is only some 70 years old.

Does Sub-nationalism erode the abstractness of nationalism or works within the ambit of nationalism?

Dr. Binod Kumar Jha⁹ feels that Sub-nationalism in Indian politics has generally been regarded as something that is anti-system, and against the basic of a well-integrated and well developed polity. For our political leaders it is an anathema to national integration. But Prerna Singh¹⁰ in her book 'How Solidarity Works for Welfare: Sub-nationalism and Social Development in India', looks at this question from an entirely new and refreshing perspective. Should we define sub-nationalism as Ultra Vires? She looked at social indices of different states since the late 19th century and the corresponding improvement in their respective social development and suggested that sub-nationalism may be the cause for achieving greater development. She feels that when solidarity within the sub national political community is strong, as in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, citizens put the collective good over individual welfare and support

progressive social policies that generate marked improvements in health and education. But where sub-national solidarity is weak, as in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan until the 1990s, and Bihar until the mid-2000s, such common purpose is absent and public policies are significantly less developmentally oriented. Singh demonstrates that when shaped around a shared 'sub-national' identity or sub-nationalism, even in fractured societies social outcomes can improve. Prerna Singh's book was adjudged Best Book on Government, Politics, or International Affairs in 2015 and was awarded Woodrow Wilson Award.

She finds Kerala as a fascinating study model. In the late 19th century it had one of the worst records in social development. The Aikya Kerala movement, which began as a demand for representation by the native population in jobs, changed into a strong movement that created a sense of Malayali identity. For the first time, the people of Travancore, Cochin and northern Kerala imagined themselves as a part of single state; a state for the Malayali people. Administratively weak and backward state in Nehru's time, Kerala is now a leader in almost every parameter of social development indices. Tamil Nadu's non-Brahmin movement have an analogous story to the Aikya Kerala movement. Their fighting against the Brahmin representation percolated into the masses, very swiftly. This strategic policy leap from 'anti-Brahminism' to 'sub-nationalism' triggered economic and industrial development in these state. In most of the southern and the western states in India, the ultimate home of any social movement was sub-nationalism. The reverberation of economic consolidation of these states could soon be felt at the national level. The political and economic centre of gravity shifted to the south and western India. Centre had to



bow before their strong sub-nationalism. While commenting on the article of Dr. Shaibal Gupta, Anant Sahay of Bihar Times writes that half a century of post-independence India saw the growth of powerful sub-national entity of Tamil, Telegu, Marathi, Kannadi and Punjabi. Left to themselves, they are economically much better off than many of the developing countries in the third world. He feels that India as a whole is going to nowhere with sub-nationalism. It will have to eventually shed it. Globalisation, Internet and the Free Trade zones will simply ignore or even by-pass the sub-nationalities.

The contrast with Uttar Pradesh in terms of the absolute absence of feeling of 'my state' is striking. The linguistic struggle in Uttar Pradesh did not to create any communication across the state as was the case in Tamil Nadu or Kerala. Instead, it was a struggle between Hindi and Urdu. The absolute absence of an identity at the state level, Singh argues, has resulted in most government programs being seen as preferential treatments to some groups. This continues to the present day when governments of Mayawati was seen to provide Dalits with special assistance while SP governments was seen to provide Yadavs with advantages. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, by contrast, most government services are universal in nature and are seen as such.

Rajasthan and Bihar are the two other states which fall somewhere between the two extremes discussed. Rajasthan had an Rajput elite against whom there has been some consolidation in the late 20th century. However, the deep feudal background and the place of Rajputs have not been fully overcome. Similarly, Bihar under Nitish Kumar, has made some strides towards sub-nationalism. States with greater degrees of sub-nationalism have a greater portion of their expenditure directed towards health and education.

If the sense of sub-nationalism can improve social achievement of a state why is West Bengal still lagging behind?

Before Independence 'Bengali nationalism' rooted in the expression of pride in the cultural, intellectual and

revolutionary heritage of Bengal, not only represented the aspiration of Bengali community but gave birth to the Indian nationalism and was in forefront of independence struggle of India. But was it mere a British effect? Should we believe that though the earliest exposure to Western culture, science and education led to a major transformation and development of Bengali society Bengal did lack the required fabric required to sustain the concept of sub-nationalism normally precipitated by rich heritage of History?

Do the historical records of Bengal has enough evidence that Bengal did survive as one nation, on its own identity and had enough experience, to nurture regional nationalism?

Bengal has 4,000 year old recorded civilization that thrived between the banks of Ganges to Brahmaputra. The Mahabharata mentions Kings Chitrasena and Samudrasena, who were defeated by Pandava king Bhima¹¹. Greek traveller and chronicler Megasthenes referred to Bengal area as Gangaridai in his book Indica (300 BC). and the king Xandrammes, was supposed to have an army of 20,000 horses, 200,000 infantry, 2,000 chariots and 4,000 elephants trained and equipped for war¹². In a significant development of events, a third century civilisation has been recently discovered beneath the surface of Gobardhanpur in Pathar Pratima Block, Sundarbans¹³. From the oldest records available, identifiable Bengal area lied roughly between latitude 27° 9' and 20° 50' North and longitudes 86° 35' and 92° 30' East, thus it was bounded by Himalayas in the North, the Bay of Bengal in the south, the Brahmaputra river and full ranges of Meghalaya and Mizoram and Chitagong Hills in the East and Santhal Parganas and Districts of Darbhanga and Purnea in the West. This vast land is now conglomeration of politically earmarked different areas comprising of the Bengali speaking areas of Bangladesh, West Bengal, Tripura, Cachar, Karimganj, Goalpara and Dhubri of Assam, Dhanbad, Singhbhum, Santhal Pargana of Jharkhand and Purnea, Darbhanga of Bihar and some pockets of Balasore District in of Orissa. Bengal has always been the gateway to the eastern parts of the Indian subcontinent. It is the shortest and easiest route from the Bay of Bengal to the Himalayas. Such a geographical advantage made Bengal a commercial hub that connected the sea to the famous Silk Route.

According to Mahavamsa, the chronicle of Sri Lanka, the Bengal prince Vijaya Simha conquered Lanka (modern day Sri Lanka) in 544 BC and coined the name 'Sinhala'.

Bengal has the unique opportunity of being ruled by Hindu rulers followed by Muslim rulers and then by British and French colonization, before Independence. During all these rules Bengal could command a separate identity, respect for its unique economic and cultural landscape.

Under the Mauryas (324 BC - 185 BC), much of Bengal was conquered except for the far eastern Bengali kingdoms which continued to exist as tributary states before succumbing to the Guptas (590 CE - 626 CE). With the fall of the Gupta Empire, Bengal was united under a single local ruler, Shashanka, for the first time. King Shashanka was a strong ruler who developed Bengal's architecture and calendar, built Karna Suvarna his capital (now Murshidabad). With the collapse of his kingdom, Bengal split up into petty kingdoms once more. Adi Malla (694 - 710 CE.), also known as Bagdi Raja, was the founder of Malla Dynasty sometime in the 7th century¹⁴. Pala dynasty (750 CE - 1200 CE), was ruling dynasty in Bihar and Bengal, from the 8th to the 12th century. Its founder, Gopala, was a local chieftain who rose to power in the mid-8th century during a period of anarchy. His successor, Dharmapala (770-810), greatly expanded the kingdom. Devapala (810-850) raised the standards of Bengal's culture and promoted classical Indian philosophy, literature, painting sculpture and Bengali language. After Pala Dynasty, Bengal was ruled by the Hindu Maharajas of kingdoms such as Chandradwip and Cooch Behar.

Islamic rule in Bengal

Islam made its first appearance in Bengal during the 12th century when Sufi missionaries arrived. Sufism not only helped in the spread of Islam in Bengal, but also contributed to the eventual creation of a Muslim society. Beginning in 1202, Bakhtiar Khilji, commander from the Delhi Sultanate, defeated Lakshman Sen, overran Bihar and Bengal as far east as Brahmaputra River. During the 14th century, Sultanate of Bengal was established¹⁵. Shamsuddin Ilyas's Shah dynasty lasted from 1342-1487. The dynasty successfully repulsed attempts by Delhi to conquer them. The Sultans of Bengal were patrons of Bengali literature and identity. The Ganesha dynasty began with Raja Ganesha in 1414. Raja Ganesha's son Jadu converted to Islam and ruled Bengal as Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah. The Hussain Shahi dynasty ruled in the period 1494-1538. Alauddin Hussain Shah, is considered as the greatest of all the sultans of Bengal for bringing cultural renaissance. The Afghans broke through and sacked the capital in 1538 where they remained for several decades until the arrival of the Mughals¹⁶. Emperor Humayun died in January 1556. Hema Chandra Vikramaditya, the then Hindu Prime Minister-cum-Chief of Army, of the Sur dynasty won Bengal in the 'battle at Chatterghatta'. Hema defeated Akbar's forces and established 'Hindu Raj' in North India on 6 Oct 1556, after 300 years of Muslim rule. Afterwards, Bengal became a Mughal subah and oversaw a period of prosperity (through trade and development) in Bengal during the regime of

Akbar. Under the Mughal Empire which had 25% of the world's GDP, Bengal Subah generated 50% of the empire's GDP and 12% of the world's GDP¹⁷. Bengal was called the "Paradise of the Nations. There were several independent Hindu states established in Bengal during the Mughal period like those of Maharaja Pratap Aditya of Jessore and Raja Sitaram Ray of Burdwan.

Maharaja Rudranarayan of Kingdom of Bhurshut The Burdwan Raj flourished during the period of 16th and the 17th centuries as well as weathered the Mughals and survived till the advent of the British. A centre of rice cultivation, fine cotton such as muslin, ship building, and the world's main source of jute fibre, Bengal was one of the world's principal centres of industry during this time¹⁸.

French and British in Bengal

The Nawabs granted permission to the French East India Company to establish a trading post at Chandernagore in 1673, and the British East India Company at Calcutta in 1690. When the British East India Company began strengthening the defences at Fort William (Calcutta), the Nawab, Siraj Ud Daulah, at the encouragement of the French, attacked British troops. Under Robert Clive, British troops defeated the Nawab on 23 June 1757 at the Battle of Plassey. The centre of Indian culture and trade shifted from Delhi to Calcutta when the Mughal Empire fell. After Indian Rebellion of 1857, the rule of the Company was replaced by British Crown. In 1877, when Victoria took the title of "Empress of India", the British declared Calcutta the capital of the British Raj. Bengal Presidency was the original pasture of British power in India. The resources of the eastern India provided the fodder for the imperial war machine to conquer the rest of India¹⁹.

India's most active province for independence activities, Bengal, in 1905 was divided by the British rulers for administrative purposes into an overwhelmingly Hindu west (including present-day Bihar and Odisha) and a predominantly Muslim east (including Assam). But owing to strong Hindu agitation, the British was forced to withdraw the Partition of Bengal. But in 1912, made Bihar and Orissa a separate province. In 1947 before declaring independence to India British Government divided Bengal again into West Bengal and East Pakistan and left India.

Did Bengal ever have a test of Nationalism before Independence?

The Bengal Renaissance saw the rise of extraordinary personalities and visionaries from the Bengal province in the 19th and 20th century, ushered in a greater revolution in thoughts and ideas, in religion and society. Nowhere in India so many and so bright names found crowded together in the limited space of one century as those of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Bipin Chandra Pal, M. N. Roy, Satyendra Nath Bose, Desbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Meghnad Saha, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Dina Bandhu Mitra, Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and others²⁰. They made Bengal the face of progress and culture in India. Bengal played a pivotal role in the Indian freedom movement. The conscious awareness about the changing modern world was more developed and ahead of the rest of India. Revolutionary units such as Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar gathered the youths of Bengal and trained them to fight against the foreign rulers. Majority proponents of the Indian freedom struggle hailed from Bengal, including Chittaranjan Das, Surendranath Banerjee, Prafulla Chaki, Jatindranath Mukherjee, Khudiram Bose, Surya Sen, Binoy Basu, Badal Gupta, Dinesh Gupta, Matangini Hajra, Sarojini Naidu, Aurobindo Ghosh, Rashbehari Bose, Shyamaprasad Mukherjee and many more. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the face of Indian armed freedom struggle, was fostered in Bengal like many other Indian freedom fighters. The walls of the Cellular Jail in Andaman stand witness to the sacrifice of Bengali youths, as the highest number of jailed revolutionaries came from Bengal. Nineteenth-century Bengal was a unique blend of religious and social reformers, scholars, literary giants, journalists, patriotic orators and scientists, all merging to form the concept of Bengali Nationalism which did not remain confined within the limits of Bengal but spread by acceptance throughout the whole India and transformed into Indian Nationalism. The role played by Bengal in the modern awakening of India is thus comparable to the position occupied by Italy in the European renaissance^{21 & 22}.

How is that Bengal (now West Bengal) failed to sustain the strong Bengali sub-nationalism after Independence?

After Independence Bengalis had high hopes about West Bengal. During the tenure of Dr B.C. Roy Bengal started to flourish nicely due to his towering personality but gradually after independence the onus of Indian politics became more and more north western oriented with least undertone for the eastern part of the country. A possible eraser effect to what Mahamana Gokhle had said about Bengal. After Bidhan Chandra Roy the Govt in West Bengal was always of opposition as such. Even the justified demands of the state were never fulfilled. In post independence formative years the Bengal could not grow in such a way that it could remain the most coveted place or Mecca or Prima Dona for Bengali community. Bengali renaissance, initiated due to British education policy, made

a substantial change in the life style of people of Bengal but it did not spread over to other states homogeneously, thereby geographical leadership (hegemony) of Bengal could not be maintained in post independence India Bengal since its golden days remained victim of fragmentation (partition) by the ruling powers, disturbing the whole economy, social fabric and development. The decision to effect the first Partition of Bengal was announced in 7 July 1905 by the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon. The partition took place on 16 October 1905. After successful reversal of the partition of Bengal in 1911 due to mass movement, came the second partition in 1912 when the Bihar and Orissa was separated from Bengal and then during independence in 1947, remaining Bengal was partitioned into larger East Pakistan and truncated West Bengal. This unequal partition was immediately followed by massive migration of refugee population from East Pakistan, which proved back breaking financial burden. Unfortunately this state at the eastern border did not receive sufficient support from the Central government. If the Central support received for migration at western border is compared with support received for migration in eastern border, it was pea-nut. It was an example of apathy and neglect. Again After 24 years West Bengal faced another mass migration during Bangladesh war. Even this time also West Bengal did not attract adequate administrative attention from Delhi.

The causes of loss of cohesiveness or feeling of 'my state' in West Bengal were many more, other than this Economical and administrative crisis. Though the Bengalis living to other states of country are basically migrated people from Bengal itself but post independence Bengal had complete apathy to their sufferings. Bengalis suffered at Assam, Bihar, Andaman, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Delhi but unfortunately West Bengal not only remained mute spectator but also preferred to look the other side. Bengalis living out of Bengal though preferred to call themselves Prabashi Bengalis (Non Resident Bengalis) with much of humility and affection but now these two words are fast losing their charm. In 1970-71, the state witnessed the largest youth revolution in the form of the Naxalite movement. Calcutta became the centre of urban Maoist activities and guerrilla warfare. Hundreds of students joined the CPI(ML) under the leadership of Charu Majumdar, who inspired the youth to follow the example of China's Red Guards. According to the Naxal ideology India is ruled by petty-feudal landlords supported by a bourgeois leadership. Young, mostly male cadres in Calcutta were recruited directly from schools and colleges, where campaigns to boycott examinations, ransack educational institutions and attacks on teachers and professors were underway. But soon these comparatively common forms of protest were dominated by the 'annihilation line', which proclaimed that through the killing of 'class enemies' including teachers, professors, policemen and politicians, the revolution would progress²³. As hundreds of CPI (ML) cadres lost their lives, and thousands were put behind bars, the movement witnessed confusion, splits and disintegration. During that period thousands of immaculate brains went wayward and thousands lost lives. Every family have some sad story to share. It is during that period, post-independence West Bengal witnessed massive destruction of Bengali intellectuals and talent. Charu Majumdar's larger-than-life image also had its negative impact, for after his death in 1972, the central leadership of CPI (ML) virtually collapsed²⁴. Central government led by Indira Gandhi dissolved the elected state parliament, and 'President's rule' was imposed, which persisted until the Left Front came into power in 1977. This seven years of social disarray, spoiled coming 70 years of development of the state.

The other important cause of loss of cohesiveness of the people of Bengal is the total division of the Bengali population along the party lines. They see the victory or defeat of the party as their own loss or gain but cannot feel gradual deterioration of human values in Bengal. In literature, Art, science, technology, in which once the Bengal taught the whole country, today Bengal is unable to give the basic impetus to young generation. Social unrest, educational unrest, political unrest, industrial unrest are the common words. Millions of small mutinies are still taking place in Bengal but unlike in other states these mutinies could not be fused into one sub-national movement to create a sub-national loyalty among people of Bengal.

Can there be resurgence of Bengali Nationalism once again if not by Bengalees living in Bengal then by Bengalees living away from Bengal?

It is going to be 71 years of our independence. After the preliminary jubilation of Independence died down, every one tried to find his root in a big nation now called India. In a fear that, he may be lost in the social and cultural milieu of 'one identity of one country', inhabitants of those states who had strong past history and could establish strong identity with the land of his root, developed a feeling of oneness or sub-nationalism, which was not denying the national identity but a protection against the fear of losing identity. The Bengalis were no different. As Bengalis moved along with British Government as the support system, they were present in every state. They called themselves as Prabasi Bengalis or Non Resident Bengalis.. They expected that with every passing day the condition of Bengal will improve, and the day they will return to Bengal they will get their share and will be assimilated in their own mother state.

Because of strong desire to return back to golden Bengal and becoming a part of Bengal, in whichever state they were living, they kept themselves neutral, aloof from the local politics of the state and concentrated in different cultural and educational activities only. Whenever they had opportunity they travelled to Bengal for few days, and felt rejuvenated. They did not celebrate Dassera and Diwali but Durga Puja and Kali Puja with lot of sanctity and fanfare which remained a centre of attraction and an identity of Bengalis in every state. But they had their problems, social rifts and exploitation by local people. The local government never went out of the way to solve their problems. These NRBs were more interested to know the change of political masters in West Bengal rather than political activities of the state they were living. But unfortunately the people of Bengal or the political masters were never very sympathetic to NRBs as they were themselves submerged in unending problems of Bengalis living in Bengal. Politically sensitive people of West Bengal were more concerned towards the exploitation of people of Chile or Uganda or Vietnam but insensitive to exploitation of NRBs in different states. It seemed that there was a feeling that those managed to migrate outside Bengal (NRBs) had in fact betrayed the ones that continued to stay in the West Bengal.

Nearly 50 post-Independence years were passed in the stage of this confusion and apathy. The Bengali Nationalism of Pre Independent India never surfaced in Post independent West Bengal.

But now the table is slowly turning. The perception of Bengali nationalism is slowly coming back in the Bengalis settled in states other than Bengal. They have not forgotten the Bengali culture. Around the Puja sentiments they are creating a world of Bengali culture, Bangla language and wearing Bangla clothes. The third generation NRBs living in different states are more interested in the local politics, local culture. Rather than remaining neutral they are becoming members of local political parties. They are more interested now, to support a government who will be more sensitive to their problems.

In Assam, even Govt. being nearly against them, they are surviving with their own identity. At Andaman though they are in disadvantageous position but they are maintaining their struggle. In Bihar the Bengali Association, Bihar dared to call for vote boycott and could bring the government at the negotiating table. Appointment of Bengali teachers in Govt schools has started. They have also won a battle in the court for appointment of Bengali teacher in universities of Bihar. Bengalis living in Mumbai, Poona, Ahmadabad, Baroda, Rajasthan, Hyderabad, Secendrabad, Chennai, Lucknow, Kanpur, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Odisha, Kerala are now making a world of themselves imbibed in Bengali nationalism, communicating among Bengali Associations, Bengali cultural or social groups of neighboring States. To make a National communicating Centre All India Bengali Association (AIBA) has been formed, registered at Delhi and now holding 5th Annual conference at Patna.

In 1911 at Delhi Durbar, the capital of India was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi giving a severe jolt to spreading Bengali Nationalism and now the onus of re-expression of Bengali nationalism has gone back to Delhi again.

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Indian media's Anglo-Hindi inclination is leading to politico-cultural alienation of the poor, rooted India - Garga Chatterjee

On 2 June, a journalist working with Times Now news channel accosted Vishwanath Mahadeshwar, the mayor of Mumbai. Mahadeshwar leads an elected body, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, and represents the popular will of the people of Mumbai. He is a former principal of Raje Sambhaji Vidyalyaya and Junior College, Mumbai. Recently, he had voiced his opinion that, "entire Maharashtra should know Marathi".

The journalist was ostensibly following up on this particular statement. Mahadeshwar responded to his aggressive and demeaning statements in crisp Marathi. This exchange then, inadvertently, became the "news". An analysis of the exchange would show the poor and unfortunate standard of English language TV journalism in the India.

After Mahadeshwar made clear his views and why he chose to spoke Marathi, the journalist asked, "You are the mayor of Mumbai, you are the mayor of all the citizens irrespective of their language, irrespective of their religion, irrespective of their caste. Do you think you are the mayor of just the Marathi population of Mumbai?"

Mahadeshwar answered in Marathi that he and his party has nothing against any specific group. Then the journalist continued: "Why is it that you are always speaking in Marathi and enforce it that you have to speak in Marathi despite the fact that you know English." The mayor responded, in Marathi, that his party stands for learning Marathi.

The journalist then paused for a moment before breaking into Marathi and then quickly corrected herself, saying, "learning the language that you are talking about is different and speaking it, even as you know English and despite intentionally doing it... what is the reason behind it?"

Ignoring the journalist, Mahadeshwar reiterated his stance. The journalist then asked, "Is that the stand of the party... that you are supposed to speak only in Marathi and not in Hindi or English?" The mayor replied that the party had no role in it, which is quite a bold and commendable non-partisan statement to make.

The journalist then repeated her earlier aren't-you-mayor-of everyone question. To this, the mayor again responded that there is no animosity against any group and that Marathi is the official language of the whole state of Maharashtra. Mumbai happens to be in Maharashtra, whether some people like that or not, he said.

At this point, the journalist pointed out that the leader of the mayor's party, Uddhav Thackrey of Shiv Sena, spoke languages other than Marathi as well. To this, the mayor replied that there is no bar against speaking other languages but for addressing a general audience, he (the mayor) speaks Marathi.

The journalist appeared to be stuck in some kind of question loop, as she then said, "So, despite knowing the fact that... knowing English as a language... why is it that you are still speaking in Marathi?" That is an extraordinary statement to make, especially to the mayor of a city in Maharashtra, a state whose official language is Marathi. The mayor looked visibly insulted at such a question, as anyone with any dignity should be.

The journalist continued, "Why are you still speaking in Marathi when you are a professor, you are a principal of a college, you are well educated, you can speak English fluently... on camera... why is it that the mayor of Mumbai is actually speaking in Marathi?" Braving this direct insult at his own language, the mayor replied that his mother tongue is Marathi; that Mumbai is the capital of Maharashtra; the official language of the state is Marathi; and that people largely know it.

The harangue of the journalist again looped back into questions she had already posed earlier. Mahadeshwar said that it was not compulsory that everyone should speak in Marathi, responding to the journalist's question that does the mayor think that everyone in Mumbai should speak only in Marathi, which is a demand the mayor never made.

Finally, the mayor asked the journalist whether she was asking questions or looking for an argument. Then he asked the million dollar question: Does the journalist have any objection to him speaking in Marathi?

Incredibly, the journalist replied, "You should also speak the language that everybody also understands... for the channel that requires it... you own boss does that". At this point, the mayor, who has had enough of, started to walk off. But not before the insistent journalist asked one final question: "So, you mean to say that every citizen must speak in Marathi?"

The mayor had never claimed or demanded this. To this, Mahadeshwar said, this time in English, "No". I do hope that the journalist understood the meaning of the English word "no". The journalist claimed, "You just said that". The mayor, replies thrice, in English, "No, no, no". The interview then ended.

This episode shows the kind of rot that underlies the standards of journalism and the context in which this rot is only natural. Let us go into the evident fallacies that came through in the journalist's stance. The journalist wanted the mayor to speak other languages (English in this case) because the mayor represents people from all linguistic backgrounds.

This is interesting because the prime minister always speaks in Hindi to non-Hindi populations and also in international forums, like the United Nations, where almost no one understands the language.

I have never seen anyone protest that. If anything, some Indian Union citizens feel very proud that their prime minister goes abroad and speaks to foreigners in a native language that they do not understand. I am yet to see Times Now call out Narendra Modi on why he speaks in Hindi to non-Hindi people. And what is okay for the prime minister should be okay for the mayor of Mumbai.

If anything, the mayor of Mumbai has a far better reason to speak in Marathi. Because he is the mayor of a city in a state that was formed explicitly on the basis of a single language, Marathi. The Samyukta Maharashtra Andolan also foiled plans of the non-Marathi elites of Mumbai (then Bombay) to keep Mumbai out of Maharashtra. We live in times when a journalist in Maharashtra seems to be unaware of all this.

All large non-Hindi states were formed explicitly on the basis of language – Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat, Punjab, West Bengal, etc. The Indian Union, on the other hand, was not formed on the basis of any single language. The Indian Union does not even have any national language irrespective of the long-standing false propaganda of Hindi chauvinists and Delhi-headquartered ruling parties.

The journalist's questions show how ill-conceived, if not outright false, her allegations are. The fact that the mayor knows English shows that he does not always speak in Marathi but does so in a certain official capacity. In fact, he does briefly speak in English even during the interview. And, in fact, the journalist stands doubly exposed when she tells the mayor as part of another question, "you can speak English fluently".

So, in fact, the journalist does know that he speaks English. Two other questions are actually the most alarming - "So, despite knowing the fact that... knowing English as a language, why is it that you are still speaking in Marathi?" and "Why are you still speaking in Marathi when you are a professor, a principal of a college.. you are well educated, you can speak English fluently... on camera, why is it that the mayor of Mumbai is actually speaking in Marathi?"

Let us all understand the hubris and contempt for the Marathi speaker or for that matter any mother tongue speaker that is contained in these questions. The operative word is "still" which means English, in their ideology, is some higher language than Marathi.

The references to the mayor's education also reinforce the same point – that it is somehow unbecoming of an educated person, a highly educated one at that, to speak his/her mother tongue. This is the class that uses English as a status and education marker and thinks so low of Marathi that it finds being educated and speaking in Marathi incompatible. In another world, in another time, this would be plainly called racism, except that in Mumbai it is perpetrated by people who share the skin colour of the Marathi Manooos.

Mumbai is special. It is special in the way the Marathi speaker is sidelined in its economy, culture and all avenues of upward mobility. Would anyone be able to make this journalist's argument in a Hindi state? In the Constituent Assembly debates discussing the making of the Constitution of India, English-knowing-Hindi-speaking leaders refused to speak in English, in spite of requests and protests from non-Hindi speaking leaders, who mostly did not know Hindi.

This special status of Hindi has continued and those who upheld this double standard then became major champions of Indian nationalism while their subsequent generations have helped create this power architecture, where only Anglo-Hindi rules and is a pre-condition to first class Indian citizenship.

That makes it a class promoting politico-cultural alienation of the poor, the rooted by dint of its grip on key sources of power. Systemic discrimination of this scale is pathological – it is needed by the imperial ideology of a certain class. A very powerful class that has aims to put the plaster of Anglo-Hindi on other mother tongues, aims to induce a kind of inferiority complex among non-Anglo-Hindi speakers and making them second class citizens in their own linguistic homeland.

All this goes under the banner of "cosmopolitanism" while the German identity of Berlin, the English identity of London, the French identity of Paris are not making those cities any less cosmopolitan. This faux cosmopolitanism of the Anglo-Hindi class stands exposed when Times Now and other English TV channels' anchors break into Hindi. Interviews are conducted in Hindi, talk show guests often speak in Hindi and no translation into English is provided, in spite of data that a majority of the non-Hindi population of the Indian Union do not understand Hindi.

It's about time that Mumbai rises up and casts Bombay to where it belongs, the dustbin of history. Vladimir Putin speak Russian, M Karunanidhi speaks Tamil, Mahadeshwar speaks Marathi. In this world of homogenisation as part of politico-economic domination, contempt towards mother tongues is often linked with contempt towards the poor and the rooted.

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Economic Crisis behind Global Right-Wing Rise, Not Identity Issues - Mayank Mishra

They believe in hyper-nationalism, prefer protectionism to free trade, are not very well disposed towards immigrants and take pride in deriding the erstwhile ruling elite. They are the strong leaders the world is faced with, right wing when it comes to cultural ideas but left-of-centre, according to conventional classification, in their economic views. From Vladimir Putin of Russia and Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to Donald Trump of the United States, they are called the new democratically elected sultans.

Have they gained traction and continue to do so because of growing Islamophobia? Careful analyses of the makings of these strong leaders, however, suggest otherwise. Erdogan has been one of the first of such strong leaders to have entered the world stage and the so-called Islamophobia did not play any role in his rise.

Erdogan's Rise Followed Years of Political Instability Turkey had an average inflation of 75 percent in the 1980s and 50 percent in the 1990s. Years of political uncertainty – the country had had a new government every nine months since World War II – slowed down the economy considerably. Turkey's 1982 constitution had "established the military and the courts as protectors of the secular state", writes Ruchir Sharma in his book Breakout Nations.

This was the background to the rise of Erdogan, a leader considered culturally right in an otherwise deeply secular Turkey. Just a year after its formation, his AK party swept the parliamentary polls in the country in 2002 and Erdogan became the prime minister a year later. He has won all elections since then.

Armed with the majority that voted for him in the recently concluded referendum in Turkey, Erdogan can potentially rule the Eurasian nation for another 12 years. This will make him the country's longest-serving head of state, taking him past Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder and hitherto the foremost leader of modern Turkey.

Ironically, Erdogan stands for everything that Ataturk used to debunk. Erdogan was once reportedly jailed for four months for publicly reading out a poem that said, among other things, "the mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers."

A Turkey modelled on Ataturk's principles imposed secularism from the top. Secularism, therefore, was elevated to the position of a new religion "dedicated to protecting Turks from Islam".

Erdogan Initially Resisted Embracing Radical Islam Erdogan, however, was shrewd enough to opt for the middle path, at least in his early days. He neither supported freethinking secularism nor did he endorse radical Islam.

He adopted moderate Islam as his political philosophy and had a passionate desire to pull the nation out of the quagmire of a potential economic breakdown. He did not promise more or less Islam (he was not required to raise the bogey of Islamophobia as Turkey is a Muslim-majority country).

He promised an economically powerful Turkey and delivered. Now that the country's economy has begun to falter, he is increasingly turning towards radical Islam – an outcome that is evident in other parts of the world, including South Asia. Incidentally, a victory in the recently held referendum notwithstanding, Erdogan does not enjoy the kind of support he used to a few years ago.

Putin Credited With Changing the Course of Russian Economy

Vladimir Putin assumed office in Russia around the same time as Erdogan, in 2000 to be precise. The kind of changes he brought in his early days – consolidation of banks, cutting red tape and bringing income tax rates to 13 percent – led to a consumer boom never seen before. The per capita income, as a result, shot up from \$1,500 in the 1990s to \$13,000 around 2010, as Breakout Nations points out. In this case too, fixing the basics of the economy added to Putin's popularity; everything else was incidental.

A conclusive analysis of the rise of Donald Trump will have to wait for a while.

Suffice it is to say that Trump benefited substantially from the devastating impact of the severe economic crisis the US faced after the collapse of Lehman Brothers.

While the Obama years saw a partial economic recovery, fuelled largely by extremely high dosage of liquidity injection by the Federal Reserve, growth remained mostly jobless for years. For a generation of jobless Americans, Trump perhaps managed to sell his idea of "making America great, again" (whatever that means is immaterial).

Right-Wing Leaders Failed in Austria, Netherlands Much more than the rise of strong leaders, the fall of would-be strong right-wing leaders in Austria, Netherlands and seemingly in France is more revealing.

In the Dutch elections, Geert Wilders, also called the Dutch Trump, promised in a one-page manifesto, according to The Guardian, "the closing of all mosques and Islamic schools and a ban on the Quran".

The fact that he lost out to his moderate rivals suggests that Islamophobia is more imagined than real.

Netherlands stayed the course and rejected extremism because the sixth-largest economy of the European Union

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Their music inspired Tagore, Bob Dylan Bengal boys of 'the good war'

This book tells you all about Bauls of Bengal

In Along Deep Lonely Alleys: Baul-Fakir-Dervish of Bengal, scholar Sudhir Chakravarti provides a hands-on and incisive look into the disappearing world of the Bauls of Bengal, and offers some answers.

Long-entrenched and still pervasive in Indian society, the oppressive caste system has even moved from its Hindu moorings to infect other faiths entering or originating in the subcontinent and defied centuries of effort at reform. But what if those wishing to escape its iniquities collectively turned their backs on society itself?

This was the route taken by an eclectic group in the then British-ruled Bengal in the final decades of the 18th century. Tired of being discriminated against, they discarded caste and everything that mentioned it -- the scriptures, places of worship, rituals, et al -- to fashion a new syncretic identity for themselves. We know them as the Bauls.

But while we know of their influence on Rabindranath Tagore or on the music of Bengal elsewhere -- among others inspiring that wistful plaint "Aaj Sajan Mohe Ang Lagalo" from Guru Dutt's iconic Pyaasa and the music of Bob Dylan -- what was their specific trajectory? And what makes Bauls a glittering but distinct feature in India's vibrant cultural landscape, given such efforts to eschew fixed places of residences or belongings and shun restrictive religious norms had been on since the Bhakti movement?

Sudhir Chakravarti -- who in his Gobheer Nirjon Pothey (now translated into English) provides a hands-on and incisive look into the Bauls' disappearing world -- has some answers. And they lie chiefly in their simplicity, their doctrine of live and let live and their self-contained lives.

A uniquely Bengali phenomenon as regards their "emergence, expansion and movements", they are unlike any other tradition of wandering mendicants in India like the "jogis" or "qalandars", Chakravarti told IANS in an email interview.

Bauls are totally uninterested "in the concepts of class, lineage, idolatry, doctrine of rebirth and self-publicity", added Chakravarti, who spent 10 years researching them by travelling to different villages across West Bengal's Nadia, Murshidabad, Birbhum and Bardhaman, mostly on foot, and sharing food, shelter and songs with them.

"Their demeanour essentially exudes a solemn depth and silence as they follow what their preceptors preach. They solely grasp 'iho' (the present) and 'deho' (the physique), and everything else is immaterial and should be abandoned. The earthly life can't allure them. They don't even engage themselves in the act of cultivation.

"They take a meagre meal. They want very little," he said.

It would, however, not be correct to term them merely a curiosity, for "their innate simplicity and the delight of simple ways of life are really impressive. They do not feel envy of others. Nor do they hate any other sect".

Bauls live within their own secretive circle and exchange ideas through their enigmatic songs like "Your meditations matter/Here'n'there, do not scatter!/Take care of you and yourself/Both former and latter", Chakravarti revealed, adding "they alone happen to know the password of a song which they learn from their preceptor".

Elaborating on their primary mode of self-expression, Chakravarti said: "What the Bauls convey in their songs is quite adequately pragmatic in ushering in harmony among Hindus and Muslims".

But, on the other hand, he is not too hopeful about their future, lamenting that the "real Bauls, so to speak, are on the wane".

The popularity of Baul music has attracted many to the cities where their songs have become a mode of recreation, he said, adding that Bauls are now mostly being used as a "showpiece".

It took him three years to pen down the outcome of his decade-long research, with Chakravarti ruing that the educated middle-class knows little about folk religion and the book thus is aimed at this section of society.

Chakravarti, who was conferred the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2004 for his Baul Fakir Katha, a precursor to this book, says he is happy that through it, his hard work of 35 years was finally acknowledged by the elite and the academicians. He, however, felt "aggrieved that the Akademi has not as yet translated" it into Hindi, which might have helped it attain an all-India readership.

However, Along Deep Lonely Alleys will fill this gap about the peaceful and innovative caste revolution Bengal saw more than a century before BR Ambedkar.

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Courtesy : http://www.hindustantimes.com/books/their-music-inspired-tagore-bob-dylan-this-book-tells-you-all-about-bauls-of-bengal/story-OVqPMelD6Ei59BblbbEKYM.html?google_editors_picks=true

(Our volunteers in World War II are mostly forgotten, says Diya Gupta)

"The best moments... are when you come across something - a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things - that you'd thought special, particular to you. And here it is, set down by someone else, a person you've never met, maybe even someone long dead. And it's as if a hand has come out and taken yours."

It was on my second visit to the Imperial War Museum in London, where archives on British and Commonwealth conflicts are stored, that I uncovered Biren's story. I wasn't in the best frame of mind for research. The electricity company had sent me an exorbitant bill, I couldn't get the broadband service to work in my new flat, and I had just been squashed from all sides by London's peak-hour commuter crush. Rather out of sorts, I looked at my notes.

Captain Birendranath Mazumdar. A doctor from Calcutta. Imprisoned by the Germans in World War II, but escaped. I put the headphones on.

A voice crackled in my ears. "I joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in September 1939, and was posted as a general medical officer at the 17th Base Hospital at Etaples in France." Though the voice was hoarse and quavering with age, the intonations were unmistakably - and endearingly - Bengali.

Biren was escorting patients in a convoy of ambulances to Boulogne for better medical care when German tanks started shooting at them. He was commanded to turn back by a German lieutenant, who informed him that he would not be reaching Boulogne.

"I had nothing to eat, nothing to drink, and had to walk. I had to ask for permission to go to the toilet."

A non-combatant, Biren had been transformed into a prisoner of war when France capitulated to German forces. I was listening intently by now; the small irritations of my day having vanished.

There is something peculiarly evocative about the human voice. Wearing headphones and listening to Biren speak not only shut out the sights and sounds of the Imperial War Museum, it made Biren inhabit my mind for the next three hours. The textbook story of 'The Good War', where Allied forces defeat the evil Nazis and in which non-European volunteers are almost entirely ignored, crumbled in the face of the complex and grim realities of his lived experience.

School to battlefield

A few months earlier, I had discovered the story of another Bengali volunteer, Ajit, entirely by chance, while chatting with a friend over a drink in a Calcutta bar, with football rowdily being played on a giant TV screen behind us.

Aniket Mitra remembers his days as a young boy listening to stories of his grandfather's adventures in strange lands. After performing badly in his IA examinations and unsure of his prospects (and, more likely, fearing the wrath of his family), the 17-year-old Ajit Kumar Mitra ran away from his home in Dhaka and travelled to Mumbai, where he signed up as a volunteer reserve in the British Indian Army. He was sent to Iraq and North Africa with the Punjab Regiment, where he served in the famous Battle of El Alamein under Lieutenant-General Bernard Montgomery. The first major offensive against the Axis forces where the Allies achieved a decisive victory, this battle was a psychological and strategic turning point in the war.

"It's strange now to think that he was really there - my Dadu whom I knew and loved," reminisced Aniket. "When I was a child, Dadu's stories were just like fairy tales. I was entranced. I was familiar with these names and places long before I read them in history books."

Aniket remembers one incident in particular about Ajit's time at El Alamein. The soldiers were watching Gone with

the Wind in the middle of the desert - a son et lumiere show. All of a sudden, the Axis forces attacked. The British troops, including the Indian Army, ran for cover in the midst of fierce bombing. Ajit was lucky enough to find a truck under which he hid. But shrapnel pierced his right eye, leaving it permanently damaged. He was to wear the scars of El Alamein for the rest of his life.

"The right lens of Dadu's spectacles was the thickest that I have ever seen," said Aniket. "It protected the damaged eye."

Ajit was also sent to fight in the Burma campaign, where he opposed the Japanese forces, and along with them, Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army.

"I wish I knew what he thought about fighting the INA," said Aniket. It was a turbulent political time, and impossible to second-guess Ajit's own affiliations. He certainly did not defect. Was he simply performing his role as a soldier in the British Indian Army, combating the Japanese, and the INA happened to be on the other side?

Soup, bread, loneliness

Biren too encountered the INA, although he never visited East Asia. The Germans consistently tried to recruit him, tempting him to "join his countrymen" in Germany, but he refused each time. He also openly disagreed with the German officers, telling them he did not have enough supplies to treat patients with, particularly at the camp in Marienberg (a German town), where Russian prisoners with gunshot wounds and amputated legs kept asking him for help.

His insubordination led him to be shuttled between 17 prisoner-of-war camps, where Biren was shocked not so much at his living conditions but at the behaviour of fellow prisoners. The Red Cross had distributed food parcels to the prisoners, but no one would share his food with newcomers: "I had read so many books of the First World War and the camaraderie there, which was of first-class importance... it was absolutely missing here."

He lived instead on paltry German rations - soup, black coffee and bread. "It was funny for me. I was the only easterner there, and they were all Englishmen, Dutch and others... they had the food but they wouldn't share it... I couldn't believe my eyes."

Biren was finally transferred to the high-security officers' prisoner-of-war camp at Colditz in the heart of Hitler's Third Reich. "I didn't know where I was. All I heard was the click of the key as the door shut. I was, to say the least, miserable and lost."

Biren recounted vividly how the British officers refused to acknowledge that he was one of them, and word got around about him being a German spy, which made his life unbearable at the camp.

Eventually, Biren was sent off to Berlin, travelling first class, to meet "someone". He did not know whom. This turned out to be Subhas Chandra Bose. "I was one of those who disliked British rule in India because I had seen in my country the oppression of the British," explained Biren. But he too did not defect.

"Mr Bose, I cannot, and I would not... You had the opportunity to resign and then you escaped from India. I haven't had the opportunity to resign. And anyway, I was taught since I was a child by my father that a promise once made, verbal or written, you have got to abide by, no matter what happens."

Doing a Gandhi

The next morning, Biren was taken back to Colditz, this time travelling third class. But "there was no doubt in my mind that I had done the right thing."

Biren staged a five-week-long hunger strike at Colditz (the British officers called it "doing a Gandhi") that resulted in his transfer to an Indian prisoner-of-war camp. From here, with

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