IAAPS Perspective

Volume 2 | | Issue 1 | | June 2018

Indian Association for Asian and Pacific Studies

Publisher
Indian Association for Asian and Pacific Studies,
4 B Merlin Temple Tower,
115/1, Hazra Road, Kolkata-26
INDIA
Email: iaaps.iaaps@gmail.com

Design & Developed @ samaresh

Contents

Essays

Book Review

Movie Review

The Politics of Perception: Exploring Memory in India-China Relations in Post-1962 Period

By

Mayuri Banerjee*

Abstract

'There is a strong presence of memory in Indian foreign policy, evident in the extant anxiety of Indian national psyche that China might attempt another 1962 style attack which India cannot afford to lose this time. Scholars term this expression of nervousness and uncertainty as the memory trap which sustains the suspicion and negative perception of China. Thismemory trap, understood as the legacy of 1962, is argued to have manufactured a permanent trust deficit between India and China, especially in India which has been unable to recover from the psychological trauma. The article looks into two events; commemoration of 50th anniversary of 1962 war in 2012 and Doklam crisis in 2017 with the objective of explaining the way memory trap functions and feeds into the existing trust deficit. The article argues that the memory trap continues to function and constrain India's perception of China largely due to due to reiteration of old narratives around different contexts to the extent that such suspicion of Chinese motives have become natural and desirable.

Introduction

An authoritative study by Steven Hoffman suggested that Indian foreign policy-making elites' perception of China is predominantly negative. He noted that even policy elites who did not consider China to be outright hostile to India, discounted possibilities of pre-war rapprochement largely due to the political and psychological residues of the war.[1]The negative perception that politico-strategic community

*Mayuri Banerjee is a Doctoral Research Scholar in the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. Email: mayuribanerjee93@gmail.com
IAAPS Perspective, Vol.2, 1, June 2018

harbours for China is usually reflected in the strategic or political distrust they evince for China. This 'trust-deficit' is argued to be a product of the 1962 war and constitutes an essential feature of the present India-China relations. The Indian academic scholarship frequently refer to the notion of trust deficit to explain the politico-military estrangement between the two countries but few take the trouble to analyse how the trust deficit has persisted in India-China relations and has affected India's perception of China. Ravi Bhoothalingam makes an interesting proposition by arguing that psychology can be the key to understanding India-China rivalry. He states that "early positive experiences followed by trauma create lasting memories, whose emotive load warps future perceptions. This creates the 'prism' effect that refracts and distorts meaning".[2] Boothalingam righty points to the memory-trap which sustain Indian elites' suspicion of China and infuence their interpretation of present experiences. However, his explanation gives rise to further questions about ways a traumatic memory retains its emotive value and role of policy elites in preserving its life within the national consciousness. In this context Shivshankar Menon once commented that how we remember the 1962 war impacts our strategic attitude towards China and to effect a fundamental re-set in India-China relations it is necessary that Indian academic community re-visits the issue of political uses and abuses of the 1962 memory.[3]

There are primarily two discourses that the Indian political-strategic community employs to remember the war of 1962; first the war as a great betrayal and second the war as an event of national humiliation. In this light the paper intends to first explore the process of remembrance of 1962 war, i.e, how memory- trap of 1962 functions within the national consciousness and second highlight the ways memory- trap feeds into the trust-deficit and affect India's perception of China. The study primarily takes into consideration the elite perception; it will accordingly look into the practice of memory by the elites. An analysis of the ways the elites apply the 1962 memory to various contextual setting will provide an idea about the deep rootedness of mistrust in Indian society. . For the purpose of analysis the article looks into two events; first, the official commemoration of the 1962 war in 2012 and second the 2017 Doklam crisis. The first event, an official act of remembrance, is important for when memory is reinforced by the state contains a powerful mobilizational element which does not leave any opportunity to challenge the old narrative. The second event of Doklam crisis is important for evoking direct comparison with the 1962 situation upon imagined similarities between the two time periods.

The paper is advanced in three sections; the first section provides a theoretical basis from which the paper has drawn its concepts. The second section investigates the above stated events; the aspects emphasized in both the case studies are; the basis of comparison, use of language and part of the memory that dominates the process of remembrance. Analysis of these two events will highlight the re-inscription of trauma- central to the idea of memory trap.

The third section is the conclusion highlighting the memory trap persisting largely due to reiteration of old narratives around different contexts to the extent that suspicion of Chinese motives become natural and desirable.

Memory in International Relations

Memory as a field of study is relatively a recent addition to International Relations and functions within an interdisciplinary research framework encompassing various fields like psychology, history, sociology, politics, legal studies, culture and literature. There are no select set of theories or formulations which can be applied to the study of memory and international relations. The field is so open - ended that concepts differ according to contexts. Alon Confino once commented in one his essays, *Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method*, that one of the most pressing issues in memory studies lies in the openended-ness of the field, which makes it impossible to theorize upon memory .[4]

Within the broader field of international studies, memory is closely related to issues of identity, perception, experience and violence. Scholarly research includes studies in collective memory of post war societies, vulnerable communities, refugees, survivors of ethnic violence or genocide campaigns like Jews. In post war Europe studies in memory of Holocaust survivors have produced a rich body of literature on collective trauma and trends of remembrance.[5] Scholars and experts have been particularly interested in studying the process of 'memorialization' through school history textbooks, construction of memorials, museums, or civil society groups.[6] National and institutional memories are also gaining rapid academic attention as national governments are seen employing war time memories to forge new identities or create supranational organizations. Like in case of European Union, the collective memory of devastation is considered an integrating factor in building the institution.[7] On the other hand, the Commission on Truth and Reconciliation in post-apartheid Africa which represents institutional memory is argued to have been engaged in erasing memory of Apartheid violence.[8]

Contrary to popular arguments that perception is sustained by interpretation of reality, theorists of mnemonic studies suggest that perceptions can also be sustained by practising memory. Memory is practiced by voicing present uncertainties with relation to the past, referring to the act of drawing analogy with the past incidents to decode ongoing political behaviour which involves practice of memory. The practice is carried out by scripting of memory and reinforcing the same narratives to conclude that nothing has changed in political relations. Duncan Bell writes that historical memory can be used in various ways and one of its usages includes "use of historical analogical reasoning and rhetorical employment of historical images and tropes in structuring arguments and motivating action".[9] The practice of memory becomes complete and successful if only the deployed images are recognised and finds resonance in the target groups.

Remembering 1962 in 2012 and 2017

Jenny Edkins pointed out in her seminal work that memory is not straightforward and often acts in relation to the public context. [10]The public context is provided by the event in relation to which analogies are drawn or narratives are re-inscribed. Here, demarcation of 2012 as the 50th anniversary of 1962 war and comparison of Doklam crisis to the tense situation of 1962 are the public contexts in relation to which the memory of the war was applied. Both events can be considered as successful practices of memory because of the huge public interest, debates and discussion they evoked regarding 1962 war. For instance, an Indian Express editorial published in 2012 remarked that the official commemoration signified an end to the practice of denial in the subcontinent as "the defence minister will memorialize those it had chosen to simply forget".[11] An opinion piece published in the same newspaper stated that "In the darkness of defeat on the east, let's recall a bright shining moment of courage on the western front".[12] Similarly during the Doklam crisis the Indian elites vehemently responded to China's 1962 reminder to India. While an editorial in The Times of India called the government to be extra vigilant of Chinese designs[13], Ashok Sajjanhar mentioned in an IDSA commentary that if the eventuality of war arises, India should not only be prepared to protect its interest but also avenge its defeat of 1962.[14] It is important to note that the direct comparison of 2012 and 2017 with 1962 forms the basis of interaction between memory and the public context. On both occasions the Indian political establishment transcended linear time spaces by asserting India's changed politico-military capability in the face of persisting Chinese aggression. Speaking in a press conference at 50th commemoration the then Defence Minister A. K. Anthony had

confidently asserted that "India of 2012 is not the India of 1962".[15] Surprisingly, five years later the present Finance Minister Arun Jaitley made the exact statement while responding to Chinese diatribes that "India of 2017 is not the India of 1962".[16]

- **Difference in Remembrance**

The only point of difference that emerged between these two events was the nature of comparison sought with 1962. During 2017 Doklam crisis the comparisons were mostly in the form of direct analogy. Indian experts and analysts underscored that issuance of repeated threats, Chinese nibbling at Bhutanese territory and Chinese resentment of India's opposition of BRI bore uncanny resemblance to the situation in 1962 when China was similarly aggrieved at India granting asylum to Dalai Lama and by 1959 had resumed pushing into Indian territory.[17] On the contrary in 2012, the discourse of '*lessons from 1962 war*' gained prominence which termed the future of India-China relations problematic on presumed belligerence of the latter. One of the foremost lessons that practitioners of foreign policy suggested was military and diplomatic caution in engaging with China. Both Chellaney and Saran argued for military modernization to deny the Chinese any tactical advantage of surprise attack in the future. Especially Saran argued that an important lesson of the 1962 war was that "India should never lower its guard".[18] Likewise, a compilation of statements of political analysts, former diplomats and retired military officers published by the Tribune Chandigarh, emphatically argued for the need of diplomatic caution in engaging with China.[19]

However, the point of note is that Indian political and strategic thinking has hardly been able to break out of the strict 'victim' 'aggressor' binary and often use this binary to project that any political or military 'weakness' might invite another 1962 style Chinese surprise attack.[20] Such assertions not only give further credence to the official version which sees the unresolved border as a source of conflict and insecurity between two countries but also negates any possibility of viewing the border as a space of opportunity. Therefore, instead of misperceptions being contested our tradition of remembrance perpetrates an image of India-China rivalry unaffected by changing geopolitical realities.

- **Use of language**

At its 50h anniversary the1962 war was reconstructed in public eye through usage of highly subjective language like; 'invasion', 'aggression', 'trauma and psychological scar', 'military debacle' and

'political blunder'.[21] In its introduction to the special edition on 1962 war, *The Tribune* Chandigarh, projecting its decisiveness in national memory stated that "the scars of 1962 resulting from a humiliating defeat still remain in India even 50 years after the war".[22] A retired army general V.P. Malik termed the war to be "India's most traumatic and worst-ever security failure", one that has left an "indelible impression on our history and psyche and impacts India-China bilateral relations".[23] Accordingly, language was moulded to convey the sense of threat as Bharat Verma argued that the border dispute is likely to persist until China consolidated its hold over Tibet.[24] Further, repeated Chinese incursions were seen as 'China being desperate to teach India another lesson".[25] The instances of stronger assertions stated that "the possibility of today's tentative claims becoming tomorrow's definitive demands cannot be ruled out".[26] The statements were based upon the past narrative of China becoming assertive in territorial claims after signing of the Tibetan treaty. Some statements calling for greater military preparedness in the event of war emphasized the unpredictable nature of international reaction by citing international community's silence in the aftermath of the 1962 war.

Similarly, the Doklam crisis was also first constructed in the light of 1962 by using phrases like "Bhutan being the new victim of Chinese aggression", "Chinese violation of tri-junction agreement" and "China's psychological bullying". Pant argued that "Nothing much has changed on ground. Beijing continues to harangue and wage its psychological warfare, sometimes by reminding India of 1962."[27] Ashok Sajjanhar reminded how China's present actions were similar to 1962 when China had unilaterally changed the status of Aksai Chin and attacked India in violation of the Panchsheel agreement.[28] One commentator sought to position the Doklam crisis as an expression of "Chinese wrath" over Indian opposition of BRI, similar to China's anger over hosting of Dalai Lama.[29] Samir Saran, the vice-president of Observer Research Foundation, stated that India by refusing to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative had invited the wrath of middle kingdom.[30] Speculation about another India-China war ran high, and its possibility was strongly asserted by arguing that it is a traditional practice in Chinese foreign policy to seize physical control of disputed territories.[31] Some commentators argued that China continues to be an expansionist power and might act to undermine India's status in the neighbourhood.[32] Analysing the similarity in domestic and international political situations, Sriparna Pathak argued that an attack by China cannot be ruled out for China was facing similar economic and geopolitical insecurities it had experienced back in 1962.[33] Also, one argument similar to 2012 was identified as one commentator

suggested that in event of war India should be prepared to fight alone since Russia cannot be trusted for support.[34]

To summarize above arguments; it can be seen that application of memory is hardly straightforward and is often altered according to the need of the context. For instance, in 2012, the memory of the war was adapted to meet the emotional needs of the national psyche which simultaneously sought glorification in victimhood and status parity by military means. However, in 2017 as the context of application changed, the same memory was employed to structure arguments in favour of firm response (political or military), which in a way would erase the memory of the 1962 itself.

This brings us to the third aspect of the process of remembrance, i.e., the part of the memory that dominated our remembrance of 1962 war.

The Memory of Humiliation Dominates

The way the knowledge of 1962 armed clash was re-produced in collective memory draws attention to the part of memory dominating our remembrance of the war. It was interesting to note that at 50th year of nationwide commemoration, re-account of the 1962 war followed two particular trends; first, most discussions focused primarily on India and China's military performance and second they the psychological and political shock India experienced from the defeat were mostly highlighted. For instance, one commentator observed "that 1962 war saw Indian troops displaying tremendous courage even going beyond the call of duty. Rezang La in the west and Tawang in the east are two prominent places where military history is etched with blood".[35] The Chinese strategy on the other hand was denounced as a mixture of diplomatic guile and military deception as China had launched a calculated invasion to expose India's military inferiority.[36] Elucidating upon India's humiliating experience, Brahma Chellaney argued in an article that by attacking India, China had ultimately failed in its objective of securing peace. The psychological and political shock which the "invasion" inflicted continues to weigh down ties between the two countries.[37] Similar concern was voiced by Shruti Pandalai who argued that "India carries the scar of 1962 psychologically and China has done little to assuage India's concerns".[38] Therefore, in case of 2012, the memory of humiliation due to military defeat appeared dominant; as overwhelming number of scholars and experts, discussed primarily India's memory of "lingering humiliation", "China teaching India a lesson", "loss of face", and "military defeat.[39] Particularly important were statements of the defence minister and army chief, both of whom sought to emphasize India's enhanced

military capability in contrast to the military vulnerability of 1962. Interestingly, commentators prescribing lessons from 1962 called for greater military mobilization and proposed dealing with China from a position of military strength and an extra caution of limited political engagement.. Lastly, most discussions on 1962 war, analysing its causes and consequences projected a military understanding of the war. India's faulty strategy as opposed to high level Chinese planning was pinned as one of the foremost causes of India's military debacle. In comparison, the betrayal narrative was subtle as few articles discussed China betraying Nehru's friendship or the idea of Asian solidarity. And some scholars and experts who discussed India's psychological and political trauma, held it as a political impact of Chinese blitzkrieg.

It is important to state here that the Doklam crisis was interpreted by the Indian elites largely as a political contention between two countries. The policy elites repeatedly emphasized upon ideas like battle of nerves and brinkmanship arguing that ultimate war was not a high possibility. Accordingly, the policy elites focused primarily on the psycho-political aspects of the war. Sanjeev Nayar, writing in Daily O argued that the war had a demoralising impact upon India, analyzing that the Chinese are adept at psychological warfare to demoralise other countries.[40] Calling for stringent response from India the war was argued to have moulded Indian national psyche into defeatist mentality. Bharat Kanrad, an eminent Indian geo-strategist wrote that Chinese reminder of 1962 is almost like a challenge and the government's deafening silence might indicate a fearful government who has lost its wits".[41] Therefore, peaceful resolution of Doklam crisis was held as diplomatic victory of India as one commentator observed "that we stared down a nation much stronger than ourselves adds confidence…that we did it against China even more so".[42] Similar sentiment was voiced by Chandrashekhar Rajeev, a Member of Parliament, who asserted that "Doklam heralds the arrival of confident and assertive India which is sure of its position".[43] Contrary to the above case study, there were only few scholars who projected the military aspect of the 1962 war and argued that Doklam might be an opportunity to avenge the military humiliation of 1962.[44]

As can be noted from the above discussion, memory of humiliation and fear of its repetition was prominent amongst the political and strategic community. One can argue that the memory of humiliation was prominent because China repeatedly reminded the Indians of the same. However, the humiliation understood by Indians was more political in character than military. The idea of India's loss of status as the security provider to Bhutan featured repeatedly in the discussions.[45]The Doklam crisis, assessed in the light of 1962 war was

seen as another attempt by China to humiliate India by pressurizing her to withdraw from Doklam region. Chellany cautioned that if India gives in it will have to endure strategic subordination and ignominy forever.[46] Some strategists argued that peaceful resolution of Doklam with India maintaining a firm stance might able India to finally "exorcise the ghost of 1962".[47]

Conclusion

The article has attempted to explain how memory is practised within the national space with regard to the 1962 war. The understanding of the practice of memory that evolved from the study reveals that the practice essentially reinforces memory on national conscience according to particular contexts and the socio-political elites play an important role in the process. It was evident in 2012 when military victimization was made the basis for better defence preparedness and in 2017 tough stance towards China was advocated to prevent another politico military humiliation.

The analysis of the two events revealed a different perspective, contrary to the majority opinion which argues that the war is embedded as an event of betrayal in national memory. In both cases, the memory of humiliation appeared stronger than the memory of betrayal. The 2012 commemoration demonstrated the strong presence of military humiliation on basis of which higher level of defence preparedness was advocated. Similarly, the 2017 Doklam crisis alluded to political humiliation, which was urged to not to be repeated.

From the above discussion it is evident that the memory trap functions through reinforcing memory and reiteration of security predicaments on the basis of that memory. It was seen that the memory of humiliation which adapted in both military and political context worked to create the effect of memory trap in sectors of both political engagement and strategic cooperation. For instance, during the 2012 official commemoration, the policy elites stressed upon *lessons* of caution, restraint and higher defence preparedness for engaging with China. Similarly, during the Doklam crisis the national leaders were urged to demonstrate India's military might and prepare for a prolonged period of containment of China. The widespread perception that China continues to seek opportunity to militarily and politically humiliate India promoted distrust and suspicion of China's motives as a pragmatic policy approach. The problem with this approach is that in moments of national crisis the boundaries between pragmatism and hyper-nationalism may become blurred resulting into triumph of the latter. Especially when issues become subject to national passion, this

avowed pragmatism can quickly spiral into insecurity leading to implementation of ill-conceived political decisions. Like we witnessed during the Doklam crisis, that mere mention of 1962 by the Chinese media had infuriated many nationalists who called for avenging the defeat of 1962.

In the process Indian perception is affected in two ways: first, China is perceived as a military threat particularly in the context of territorial disputes and the unresolved border issue. Indian elites perceive China's increasing military power (conventional and non-conventional) primarily as a bargaining tool which China might employ to settle the border dispute in its favour as it did in 1962. During the 2012 commemoration the security threats articulated were primarily territorial in nature and in context of the unresolved border dispute. Analysts and scholars emphasized the threat Chinese military power posed to India's territorial integrity by drawing attention to repeated Chinese incursion, assertive territorial claims and China's past tendency to use military might to settle border disputes. Similarly, during the Doklam crisis, India's intervention was rationalized on basis of the strategic threat to India's chicken's neck and the north east region. Also, China's reference to 1962 war was perceived as another form of Chinese military bullying. Secondly, China is perceived as a political threat in India's immediate neighbourhood. China's engagement with India's immediate neighbours is perceived by Indian elites as encroachment upon India's political sphere of influence. India's interference on behalf of Bhutan was not questioned in the national domain and some even urged that the Indian government must insure the security of the kingdom. Therefore, following the resolution of Doklam crisis one *Economic Times* editorial declared that "the peaceful resolution of the Dokalam standoff is a big diplomatic win for India… Beijing, however, has been silent on this in official statements. It is an indication of how severe a loss of face it would sustain".[48]

Notes

[1] Steven A. Hoffman, "Perception and China Policy in India" In *The India-China Relationship: Rivalry and Engagement*, Francine R. Frankel and Harry Harding (eds.), New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 39, 44-46.

[2] Ravi Bhoothalingam ,"India and China Are Stuck in Decades-Old Sibling Rivalry" *The Wire,* 31 August,2017 https://thewire.in/diplomacy/india-china-sibling-rivalry

[3] Shivshankar Menon, "The India-China War of 1962 and its Political After-Life" *The Wire,* 17 July, 2017https://thewire.in/books/review-remaking-national-memory-of-the-1962-sino-indian-war.

[4] Alon Confino, "Collective memory and cultural history : Problems of method" *The American Historical Review* , Vol. 102, Issue. 5, 1997, pp. 1886-1403.

[5] Goertz Karein,"Transgenerational Representations of the Holocaust: From Memory to "Post-Memory",*World Literature Today* (Boards of Regents of the University of Oklahoma), Vol. 72, Issue. 1, 1998, PP.33-38; also see Barbara Engelking and Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Holocaust and memor.* A&C Black, 2005.

[6] Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and Memory of Politics,* Cambridge University Press, 2003, Jenny Wüstenberg, *Civil Society and Memory in Postwar Germany*, Toronto, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

[7] Eric Langenbacher and Yossi Shain, *Power and the past: Collective memoey and International Relations* Georgetown University Press, 2010, p.5.

[8] Lynn Meskell, "Trauma Culture", in Duncan Bell(ed.), *Memory, Trauma and World Politics*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp.157-175.

[9] Duncan Bell, "Introduction." In *Memory, Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship Between Past and Present*, Duncan Bell (ed.), Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp. 1-29.
https://books.google.co.in/books?id=7BiFDAAAQBAJ&dq=Duncan+Bell+memory&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

[10] Jenny Edkins, Op.cit. , p.16.

[11] "Tales of War", *The Indian Express*, October 20, 2012.

[12]Shekhar Gupta, "National Interest in 1962 a different story." *The Indian Express*, 20 October, 2012.

[13] "Guard up: New Delhi must prepare for a long term Chinese strategy of containment." *The Times of India Blogs*17 August
https://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toi-editorials/guard-up-new-delhi-must-prepare-for-a-long-term-chinese-strategy-of-containment/

[14]Ashok Sajjanhar, *The Doklam Standoff: Should India Project its Stand more vigorously* 11 August 2017 https://idsa.in/idsacomments/the-doklam-standoff_asajjanhar_110817

[15] "Nation pays homage to martyrs of 1962 India-China war for first time." *The Times of India.*21 October, 2012
https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Nation-pays-homage-to-martyrs-of-1962-India-China-war-for-first-time/articleshow/16887988.cms

[16] Sourabh Sharma, *After 1962 reminder, now Chinese media wants India to learn international politics* 9 August 2017,
https://www.businesstoday.in/current/economy-politics/doklam-standoff-heres-a-list-of-chinese-medias-multiple-threats-to-india/story/257992.html

[17] Rajesh Kumar, "Will Doklam Standoff lead to a second India-China war", *The Diplomat*, 18 July 2017https://thediplomat.com/2017/07/will-the-doklam-standoff-lead-to-a-second-india-china-war/, accessed on 20 August 2017 ; Bhaskar Roy, "There is a method in China's Doklam Stand"*IndianDefenceReview,* 24July2017.
http://www.indiandefencereview.com/there-is-a-method-in-chinas-doklam-stand/

[18] Brahma Chellaney, "The Lessons of the China-India War",14 October 2012.
https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/why-china-india-tensions-are-growing-by-brahma-chellaney?barrier=accesspaylog ; Shyam Saran,

Lesson from 1962: India should never lower its guar. 11 October 2012https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Lesson-from-1962-India-must-never-lower-its-guard/articleshow/16760000.cms

[19] "Perspectives" *The Tribune Chandigarh,* 21 October 2012.http://www.tribuneindia.com/2012/20121021/pers.html

[20] Inder Malhotra "The past as prologue*". The Indian Express,* 20 October 2012. http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-past-as-prologue/

[21]Brahma Chellaney, "A war China won only to lose" *Livemint,* 17 October 2012. https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/fINQNMSls85qPWbI0WjSDL/A-war-China-won-only-to-lose.html ; Shruti Pandalai,"Enduring Legacy of 1962: Cementing the Conflict of Perceptions in Sino-Indian Ties" *Journal of Defence Studies* (IDSA), Vol. 6, Issue. 4, 2012, pp.: 207-228, pp. 207-228; Inder Malhotra, "1962 War: Leaders Failed India". *Mainstream Weekly,* 31 October 2012. http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article3774.html

[22] "Tribune Special." *The Tribune Chandigarh.*15 October 2012. http://www.tribuneindia.com/2012/20121015/edit.htm#6

[23] General V P Malik, "No foresight, no planning saw defeat, . *The Tribune*, 7 Ocotber 2012 http://www.tribuneindia.com/2012/20121017/edit.htm#6

[24] Bharat Verma, "1962: The Nehruvian Blunder", *Indian Defese Review*, Oct-Dec 2012 http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/1962-the-nehruvian-blunder

[25]P. Stobdan, "Is China Desperate to Teach India Another Lesson?" *Strategic Analysis,* Vol. 34, Issue. 1,: pp.14-17, 2012.

[26]Deepak Kapoor,"India's China Concern, " *Strategic Analysis,* Vol. 36, Issue. 4, 2012, pp.663-679.

[27]Harsh Pant, "The Logic of India's response to China", *Livemint,* 15 August 2017https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/s3flLlHyq3ALIWdkNJUWoK/The-logic-of-Indias-response-to-China.html.

[28]Ashok Sajjanhar, Op.cit,

[29] Sushil Aron, "Is China punishing India for its Belt and Road stance while testing Modi and Trump?" *The Hindusthan Times*, 04 July 2017. https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/is-china-punishing-india-for-its-belt-and-road-kumstance-while-testing-modi-and-trump/story 1NIB0lcGtgMy4UVO5pDO1M.html

[30] Samir Saran, "In Armed Conflict With India, Why China Would Be Bigger Loser." *NDTV.* 06 July 2017 https://www.ndtv.com/opinion/3-messages-from-china-in-provocation-of-india-1721214.

[31] Sreemoy Talukdar, "Beyond Doka La: India finally breaks free of China's 1962 prison", *The Firstpost* ,31 August 2017 https://www.firstpost.com/india/beyond-doka-la-india-finally-breaks-free-of-chinas-1962-prison-this-may-change-asias-power-matrix-3991425.html

[32] Kanwal Sibal, "View: Dokalam crisis is a reflection of China's expansionist tendencies " *The Economic Times.* 11 August 2017 https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/doklam-crisis-is-a-reflection-of-chinas-expansionist-tendencies/articleshow/60009880.cms.; Sandeep Bhardwaj, "Why India needs to abe aggressive against China in Doklam Standoff", *Livemint* 28 July

https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/osChX68DikQsfrUSnxXQKL/Why-India-needs-to-be-aggressive-against-China-in-Doklam-sta.html

[33] Sriparna Pathak,"Doklam Stabd-Off in Juxtapose to 1962: An assessment" *SSOAR,*
https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/52423/ssoar-indrastraglobal-2017-7-pathak-Doklam_Stand-off_in_Juxtapose_to.pdf?sequence=1

[34] Manish Tiwari, "Doklam: Lessons learnt from 1962".*The Deccan Chronicle,* 19 August
2017https://www.deccanchronicle.com/opinion/columnists/190817/doklam-lessons-from-1962.html

[35]Shekhar Gupta, Op.cit. ; Vijay Mohan,"In Ladakh it was last round last man", *Tribune Chandigarh,* 12 October 2012 ttp://www.Tribune Chandigarhindia.com/2012/20121019/edit.html

[36]R.S.Kalha, "Who Started the Fighting: The Sequel", *IDSA*, 28 October 2012. https://idsa.in/idsacomments/WhoStartedtheFightingTheSequel_rskalha_281012

[37] Brahma Chellanay, Op.cit.

[38] Brahma Chellanay, Op.cit.

[39] G.Parthasarthy,"Lessons from the 1962 debacle." *The Hindu Business Line.* 24 October
2012.https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/g-parthasarathy/lessons-from-the-1962-debacle/article22995479.ece. accessed on12 November 2017;
MGSG Vombatkere, "Lessons from 1962: Is 50 years not enough? ." *Indian Defence Review.* 13 November 2012,
http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/lessons-from-1962-is-50-years-not-enough/.

[40] Sanjeev Nayar, "Doklam Standoff :Why Chins is trying to teach India Lesson"*Daily O,* 7 July 2017 https://www.dailyo.in/voices/india-china-border-row-sikkim-standoff-doka-la-1962-obor-pakistan-rawat/story/1/18234.html

[41]Bharat Kanrad, "*Eyeballing in Doklam or Free Pass to China"*5 July 2017. https://bharatkarnad.com/2017/07/05/free-pass-to-china/

[42] Sreemoy Talukdar, Op.cit.

[43] Rajeev Chandrashekhar, "Doklam heralds the arrival of a confident and assertive India", *The Diplomat,* 30 August 2017
https://thediplomat.com/2017/08/doklam-heralds-the-arrival-of-a-confident-and-assertive-india

[44] S.N.M. Abdi, "Time for India to avenge 1962 humiliation".*The New Indian Express,* 24 July 2017.
http://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2017/jul/24/time-for-india-to-avenge-1962-humiliation-1632602--1.html

[45] Prabhash K. Dutta, "Doklam faceoff: Why China wants to grab Bhutan's land and blame India" *The Indian Today,* 9 July 2017.
https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/doklam-faceoff-why-china-wants-to-grab-bhutans-land-and-blame-india-1023310-2017-07-09

[46] Brahma Chellaney, "Doklam Standoff: India must be ready to give China a real bloody nose", *The Hindusthan Times, 22* July 2017 https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/doklam-standoff-india-must-be-ready-to-give-china-a-real-bloody-nose/story-APFZAV2LoQH2QErI5AykDL.html

[47] Ajay Singh, "With Doklam, Modi has exorcised the ghost of 1962" *Governance now*, 29 August 2017 https://www.governancenow.com/news/regular-story/with-doklam-modi-has-exorcised-the-ghost-of-1962

[48] "Doklam: The status quo spells victory" *The Economic Times Blogs*, 28 August 2017. https://blogs.economictimes.indiatimes.com/et-editorials/doklam-the-status-quo-spells-victory/.

The Secret of Japan's Rise: Studies by 'Eastern Minds' in the Early 20th Century

By

Sarvani Gooptu*

Abstract

From the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth, Japan has cast a spell on the intellectuals of both the East and the West. By its meteoric rise to power and position as the first among the Asian nations to compete with Western countries on equal terms it not only evoked a reaction of amazement from them, it destroyed the myth of the lethargic and mystic East for them as well. This rise also had a tremendous impact on the other Asiatic nations inspiring confidence and hope in the shared Eastern values. In the eyes of many Indian intellectuals, scholars and writers Japan's rise was a clarion call for other Asian nations to re-examine their past and present assets and resources to bring about the revolutionary changes in the economy and society which would herald a modern age. In India's case, these ideas were always associated with a reassessment of the colonial situation when it was discussed that perhaps if 'tiny' Japan could rise above its apparently insurmountable past problems of lack of resources and openness in all spheres, India too could 'improve' herself despite her colonial subordination through adopting Japan's secret formula of success. Analysts in the western and eastern countries were engrossed in probing and analyzing this 'secret' which helped Japan's rise. It is relevant even today to bring these discussions which occurred in the popular literary journals of the time to the forefront of academic discourses since the main point that was established in them, that, Japan's success was due to their commitment to certain values, still remains relevant and applicable to all national endeavours.

*Sarvani Gooptu is Professor in Asian Literary and Cultural Studies, Netaji Institute for Asian Studies, Kolkata. Email: sarvanigooptu@gmail.com
IAAPS Perspective, Vol.2, 1, June 2018

Introduction

Japan's rise to power from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth, impacted both the East and the West. It destroyed the myth of the lethargic and mystic East for the western countries when Japan competed on equal terms with them, while at the same time, this had a tremendous impact on the other Asiatic nations inspiring confidence and hope in the shared Eastern values. In the eyes of many Indian intellectuals, scholars and writers, Japan's rise was a clarion call for other Asian nations to reexamine their past and present assets and resources to bring about the revolutionary changes in the economy and society which would herald a modern age. In India's case, these ideas were always associated with a reassessment of the colonial situation when it was discussed that perhaps if 'tiny' Japan could rise above its apparently insurmountable past problems of lack of resources and openness in all spheres, India too could 'improve' herself despite her colonial subordination through adopting Japan's secret formula of success. Analysts in the western and eastern countries were engrossed in probing and analyzing this 'secret' which helped Japan's rise. There is, even today, validity in reiterating these academic and semi-academic researches, which were published in the vernacular journals of twentieth century Bengal, since the main point that was established in them, that, Japan's success was due to their commitment to certain values, still remains relevant and applicable to other endeavours.

In a previous work,[1]I have assessed how Japan was visualized in non-academic writings of those travelling to Japan as well as those who were impressed with her rise to a position of superpower. There I also highlighted the gradual change in the tone of writing when Japan used her power as an aggressor against the east rather than a facilitator of a pan Asian solidarity. In this paper I try to focus on what aspects were considered important formulae for Japan's success in some of these writings. Could this formula also be applied in India's case in their opinion as a means to change India's destiny as a colonized nation? Finally I would like to see how these same intellectuals tried to fathom the cause of Japan's aggression against the very nations of the East who had hoped to be led by it. As is quite well known, Rabindranath Tagore's initial euphoria faced a setback soon afterwards and his indictment of Japanese aggression marked an important standpoint for other journalistic writings in the literary journals which still wavered between admiration for Japan and sorrowful commiseration for Korea and China, the victims of Japan's aggression in the second and third decades of the twentieth century.

Analysis of Japan's success was initiated by the western scholars, horrified and amazed at its meteoric rise and was probably read by Indians. What is interesting is that only a few are translated for their readers and Jyotirindranath Tagore's translation of the writing of the French writer Felicien Challaye[2] and Lafcadio Hearn's ideas via Challaye's writings[3] which were published in *Bharati* in 1908, within three years of the publication of the book *Le Japan Moderne*, was an interesting deviation from the other translations. I juxtapose these writings with that of Rabindranath Tagore in his *Japan Jatri* or *A Traveller to Japan*,[4] first published in *Sabuj Patra* in 1925-6 and later compiled in a book, where he traces Japan's success to certain inalienable values and tries to resolve the dichotomy between his early admiration and later disappointment.

'Western' Perspective through Eastern Eyes: Translations by Jyotirindranath Tagore

The initial writings on Japan were studies by western scholars and writers which were translated for the Bengali reader. Not all of them were directly acknowledged nor were they from a single source, unlike the series of articles by Jyotirindranath Tagore mentioned above. As early as 1881, one notices in *Bharati* an article written without a byline (and may well have been the work of Swarnakumai Debi, who was the editor then), on the historical analysis of Japan's rise to a modern nation, with Meiji Restoration as the catalyst of change for modernity. Changes in administrative system, army, innovations in the legal system, etc. were discussed to show how they ushered in a new ability and a new desire to 'deal' with the west.[5] This article is different from that of Jyotirindranath in the sense that it contains far more independent input as an Indian and a Bengali. There are small asides in the narrative that bring in the eastern solidarity. For example while discussing the army the writer says, 'few among the Japanese can equal the English sailors in physical strength. They are smaller in build and get tired easily when handling the cannons. That is why they need to be replaced more frequently than the English sailors. Despite all that, their courage and enthusiasm for war is in no way inferior to that of the Europeans.'[6]

The choice of the writings in French by Challaye for translation by Jyotirindra Tagore is intriguing since the travelogue and essay is written by a westerner but through 'eastern eyes'. As Challaye points out in the introduction, 'There is a view prevalent in Europe that the Japanese adopted western ways because they realized that European civilization was superior to theirs. A conviction has arisen out of our own national pride, that adoption of our civilizational mode by other

less developed ones would benefit all nations of the world. Some Japanese intellectuals believed in this idea of western superiority, so they embarked on a process of adoption of western ideas. Modern Japan is still a combination of traditional practices and modern western adaptations. This creates an inadvertent incongruence which is laughed at by Europeans who call modern Japan as 'Europe's copy but not a good one'. The writer however has a different point of view. He realized that Japanese were self conscious about their difference with westerners so they only reveal their outward changes 'in case they are considered to be primitive…To understand the real Japan one must adopt a different approach strategy which was to study Japan through the Japanese way i.e. in a simple manner'. [7] Application of this strategy to write about Japan meant that it was not only a descriptive format but choosing to describe everything he finds strange to western eyes, as 'belonging to Japanese culture, way of life and eastern values'. For example when he describes the Japanese houses made of wood and paper, he points out that they are uniform and differences in status and wealth are much less evident here than in the west. 'Every individual has the duty to not distinguish themselves from others but to maintain uniformity. All Japanese respect this ideal which is inspired by Buddhism. Besides, for them, aesthetics of simplicity are of greater importance than any display of ostentatious and conspicuous living…When we return to the west after absorbing the beauty of the Japanese home, we then realize how much we have imbibed their ideas and ideals. Our large houses seem like ugly barracks or jails'. [8] This aesthetics of simplicity is also variously discussed by Indian writers in the journals as well, as being unique even by Asian standards. Challaye says that the Japanese values which are passed on to the younger generation at home and in school are 'the religion of nationalism, homage to the Mikado, worship of ancestors , respect for parents or grandparents, selflessness, and loyalty, maintaining a smiling and poised countenance, courage and dedication and love for nature'. [9] He also waxed lyrical over their virtues of 'cleanliness, decency and good nature, which are very ancient national virtues, expressed through their customs and behaviour'.[10] He writes of the presence of a 'large number of public baths as well as hot water baths at every Japanese home. Obviously, this cleanliness is not adopted from the Europeans and is in fact worth emulating by them. [11]The writer also distinguishes 'eastern' politeness as far more egalitarian despite Japan being a hierarchical society compared to that of a western democracy. It was the genuineness rather than formality in politeness that the writer refers to- the warmth shown at the end of every business transaction, exchange of small gifts even after a lunch in a restaurant or a purchase in a shop or in the deep respect and affection they show to their elders. 'Japanese politeness sometimes takes the form of a spiritual self

discipline and self control when they avert giving pain to others by revealing their injury or pain openly. There is great courage in this self discipline, that is expressed when they smile through their pain and grief… even when talking of death of their loved ones.'[12] The reason for this spiritual equanimity is their belief in certain human emotions like patriotism, love for nature, and sensitivity to humour, charity and tolerance.[13]

Eastern Perspective with Stress on Universal Values

In 1916, a special correspondent of *Manchester Guardian* rote that Rabindranath Tagore was in Tokyo where he was very cordially received which 'has a significance more than literary and more than personal, for it is one of the may indications of the growing intimacy between Japan and India and of the evolution of a new Asia awakening to a consciousness of unity'. [14] Rabindranath felt the need to apply an 'eastern outlook' to analyse the qualities of the Japanese though he does not believe that these values are only applicable to Asians. He talks about universal human ideals which must be perfected by maintaining the distinctiveness of each country but accepting the truth that there are great qualities in all. [15] But the 'eastern outlook' is distinct because 'in the East, we are conscious through all individual things of the infinity which embraces them'.[16]*Japan Jatri* is written by Rabindranath in the form of a diary when he travels to Japan in 1916. Even before his arrival at Kobe, on board the *Tosamaru*, Rabindranath started his analysis of reasons of Japanese success. He writes that 'the eastern mind of the Japanese has received training for active work from the westerners but has retained the executive control. This gives me hope that Japan will be able to combine western action with eastern feeling.'[17] He expresses this binary through describing Japanese men and women. Japanese men have become transformed into office goers in western clothes. They no longer have their own identity but have joined the office of the world which is same everywhere. 'One notices Japanese women on the streets of Japan. I then realise that they alone comprise the Japanese home, the Japanese nation. They do not belong to the office. I have heard from some that Japanese women do not get respect from men here. I do not know if it is true but there is a respect that is inalienable, it comes from within. The women here in Japanese dress have undertaken to preserve Japan's self respect.'[18]

One way of asserting Japan's easternness is through comparative analysis of both positive and negative values with other Asian nations. In the 1881 article in Bharati, the writer satirically says that both Bengalis and Japanese are rice and fish eaters. 'It is obvious that

national greatness does not really depend on food habits. This will definitely arouse hope in the rice and fish-eating Bengali.'[19] Rabindranath also compares the Bengalis with Japanese when he says that in India it is only the Bengalis who have the malleability of mind to embrace the new. One reason for that is because there is a mixed racial blood in the Bengali veins and because the geographical position of Bengal has separated her from the Indian mainland. That is why the Bengali mind is more open to new education.'[20]

Values which Brought Success

The anonymous writer of Bharati article on Japan in 1881 sums up the real clue to Japanese development as the 'deep and selfless desire of every Japanese, from the King to the commoner, for the country's welfare.'[21] Japanese have been able to maintain their distinctive identity by upholding those values which are typically Japanese. As Challaye says, in their love for nature, love for walking and love for culture, the Japanese have not allowed European influence to bring in transformation, '..they have preferred to retain their ancient tastes. On the other hand they are quite oblivious to western literature, music or art'. Challaye's conclusion has been translated by Jyotirindranath as follows, 'It is evident that the Japanese have retained in modern Japan, those aspects of their ancient civilization that they consider important, significant and close to their heart. The daily habits, home, furniture, food, clothing, emotions, values ,conventions, amusements, art and culture and religion- all that which is connected to the personal life of the modern Japanese has been retained according to their past practices. The heart of our European civilization does not attract them in the least. In their eyes our culture is far inferior to theirs- it is unsophisticated and non-spiritual and not worthy of emulation.'[22] Challaye makes his point about the secret of Japan's success being Japan's own values rather than western comes from his narrative on the life and thoughts of Lafcardio Hearn, who 'brought about the unity of the highest values of European civilization with those of the Japanese to create a blending of the two for an ideal world civilization.'[23] Hearn also identifies certain distinctive qualities in Japanese life and belief which has led them to success. There is an ever-changing quality in the Japanese way of life which Hearn finds from Japanese nature- the seasons, flowers and fruits change and even mountains and rivers seem to change due to their volcanic nature. 'The Buddhist saying that the world is restless and changing seems to be a part of the Japanese belief as well… They consider this life as only a temporary resting place in the eternal journey… The simple way of life they prefer is connected to their love of freedom…This simplicity is the cornerstone of their success story'. In Hearn's view, the Easterners are

more controlled than us, more tolerant and more productive. They will possibly upstage us in the battle of life.'[24]

Rabindranath considers the quality of quietness that he finds typical of the Japanese their source of strength. 'There are crowds on the streets but no noise. It is as if the people here do not know how to shout, people say that Japanese children do not cry. It is true in my stay I never saw a Japanese child cry. When a motorist is stopped on the road by a slow moving cart, he does not shout or get impatient, he waits patiently…even when accidents happen between bicycles or a car and a bicycle, there may even be bloodshed but there are no fights or recriminations, they dust themselves off and proceed on their way. I think, this is the real source of strength of the Japanese. They do not fritter away their life-strength in useless and loud fracas. This peacefulness and tolerance of mind and body is a part of their national endeavour. They are self controlled in sadness and grief, pain and excitement. Most foreigners find the Japanese inscrutable. The reason for this is the Japanese expose themselves at all times through a seeping hole.'[25] Rabindranath also sees this restraint in their literature and culture. The ability to convey ideas and emotions through minimum expression indicates an immense capability of imagination, ability to understand through a series of pictures expressed in a few words, eliminating the need for superlative emotional expression which characterizes Indian poetry and songs. 'The Japanese poetry show pictures, they do not sing…The restraint and tranquility in expression and emotion is not unbalanced by the heart's boisterous unrest. I think that Japan has a deep identity which is thrift or austerity.'[26] Even in the tea ceremony Rabindranath noticed the same tranquility in absorbing beauty within one's nature. 'It is evident that the aesthetic sense of the Japanese is a source of great strength and worship. Ostentatious luxury only expends resource and weakens but pure aesthetics preserves a mind from the material demands. That is why within the Japanese mind one can see a unity of vigour and sense of beauty. [27]

Disturbance in Asian Balance

The note of admiration that had become associated in any discussion on Japan began to change in the second decade with Japan's territorial ambitions on Korea. Even before that Japan's aggression on China as a result of ambitions in Korea, has been referred to in *Japan Jatri* by Rabindranath as ,'creating an painful incongruence in the Japanese spirit of selflessness by a display of pride and power'.[28] Occupation of Korea in 1910 and the first world war worried Tagore so much that in his lecture tours he faced the ire of the Japanese students while

campaigning against the ideology of aggressive nationalism in which he saw the roots of the world war. *Nationalism*[29] was published in 1917 which was an open indictment against 'the political civilization which has sprung up from the soil of Europe and is overrunning the whole world' since it is 'scientific, and not human'. As Rabindranath said in the speech to the Indian community in Japan in April 1925, 'it was here that I first saw the Nation, in all its naked ugliness, whose spirit we Orientals have borrowed from the West…I heartily deplored the fact that she (Japan), with her code of honour, her ideal of perfection and her belief in the need for grace in everyday life, could yet become infected with this epidemic of selfishness and with the boastfulness of egotism.'[30]

There emerged a clash between the ideas of nationalism which was emerging with the discovery of Indian colonization in countries of the south and south-east Asia and the fear of aggressive nationalism that Tagore so strongly expressed. Associations with Japan now had to be more aggressively cultural. Internationalism rather than nationalism was stressed. Tagore's missionary travels abroad were partly aided by the climate of internationalism prevailing after the end of the First world war and formation of League of nations and partly due to the positive developments in Asia like the establishment of the republic of Turkey by Kamal Ataturk (1923) whom Tagore admired and the anti imperialist struggle in Indonesia (1926).[31] Again in 1938, there is a note by the Editor of Bharatbarsha, Jaladhar Sen, where he writes that a famous Japanese poet Noguchi has written to Rabindranath Tagore justifying the Japanese attack on China but Tagore replied that Japan does not yet understand the inner strength of China. At the present moment China has much greater moral strength than Japan and they should in the near future erase the painful memories and recreate a pure Asia. [32]

Enduring Values for the Future

Despite the unacceptable aggression of Japan, one could hope to find redemption in highlighting the sources of strength which would help to create this pure Asian race. It was not western values which had been identified by the western scholars to be the real cause of Japan's strength but its own indigenous values which helped to keep their strength intact. That is what is worth emulating. Rabindranath in all his writing on Japan highlighted this inner source of strength. 'When I visited Europe I was struck by their factories, their industriousness, their wealth and their power and I was overwhelmed by it. But in Japan it was different. What one sees through the disguise of modernity is the creative human strength. It is not pride, or

ostentation, it is worship. Power desires to flaunt itself so tries to create imposing structures which will make all cower before it but worship respects the greatness beyond self, so its creation is beautiful and pure, not merely large and numerous…'[33] He considers himself fortunate that he was able to identify 'certain characteristic truths in the Japanese race, which I believe will work through their subconscious mind and one day produce great results in a luminous revelation of their soul.'[34] It would help Asiatics to gain their 'rights of sovereignty in a higher world than theirs, - in the spiritual world,' he had added in *The Soul of the East* when he addressed students in Japan in 1916.[35]

Rabindranath Tagore's lecture at the University Institute in Calcutta after he returned from what was considered his 'disappointing trip' from East Asia in 1924, sums up India's intellectual journey with Japan. Tagore tried to assuage the feeling of outrage that tended to predominate the minds of his fellow Indians at what was considered an insult by the Japanese students to the Poet, by his declaration that it was only the 'communists' who did not want to hear his lectures because he didn't believe in God, he was not respectful of Materialism and he revered ancient civilizations. They did not in any way compromise their famed hospitality nor insult him. 'The happiness I felt in Japan was because I found a ray of hope and a way forward...the sole aim of India should be to proclaim the faith of Asia in the language of Asia... This is superior to the power of the state or economy...I was thrilled to see that in Japan they are repeatedly acknowledging that they have made a mistake at having disregarded Truth, if India does not come repeatedly to remind them of the truth, then they will be bemused by western science...Can we not say that we will distribute the treasures that our Mother has stored in her grainery, come, come all to partake of it.'[36] In Tagore's view the whole of Eastern Asia 'from Burma to Japan was united with India in the closest tie of friendship, the only natural tie which can exist between nations. There was a living communication of hearts...' Japan had succeeded in fulfilling Asian destiny by 'coming out first in the East'. Now she must provide Asia with the 'hidden fire which is needed for all works of creation' which will ultimately 'illumine the whole world'. [37]

Notes

[1] Sarvani Gooptu, "Japan and Asian Destiny: India's Intellectual journey through contemporary periodicals", 1880s-1930s in Ishita Banerjee-Dube and Sarvani Gooptu (ed.), *On Modern Indian Sensibilities: Culture, Politics, History,* London: Routledge, pp. 198-216, 2018.

[2] Jyotirindranath Tagore, "Adhunik Japan: Felician Shaal er Phorashi Hoite" (Modern Japan from the French writing of Felician Shaal, *Bharati,* Vol. 32, Issues 1, 2. 3, 4, 5. 6, 1908.
[3] Jyotirindranath Tagore, "Lafcadio Hearn er Japan Chitra: Felicia Shaal er Phorashi hoite" (Portrait of Japan by Lafcadio Hearn: from the French writing of Felicia Shaal), *Bharati,* 32 Issues, 7, 8, 9, 10, 1908.
[4] Rabindranath Tagore, *"Japan Jatri",* (Travels to Japan), Kolkata: Viswa Bharati,, reprint, 2015.
[5] Anonymous (possibly by the Editor, Swarnakumari Debi), "Japaner Bartoman Unnatir mool pattan",(The roots of contemporary development of Japan), *Bharati*, 5(2), , pp. 70-77, 1881 ; Japaner Bartoman Unnati (Development of contemporary Japan) *Bharati,* Vol., Issue. 6, pp. 122-133.
[6] Ibid., p. 126.
[7] Jyotirindranath Tagore, Op cit., Vol. 32, Issue.1, pp. 20-21, 1908.
[8] Ibid., pp. 24-25.
[9] Ibid., p. 87.
[10] Jyotirindranath Tagore, Op cit., Vol. 32, Issue 3, p.133, 1908.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., p. 135.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Rabindranath Tagore, *Japan Jatri,* Opcit., appendix. p.174
[15] Rabindranath Tagore, To the Indian community in Japan, *Japan Jatri,* (Travels to Japan), Op. cit. p. 117.
[16] Rabindranath Tagore, *Japan Jatri*, Opcit Appendix., p. 175.
[17] Rabindranath Tagore, *Japan Jatri,* (Travels to Japan), Op. Cit. p. 44.
[18] Ibid. 72.
[19]Anonymous, "Japaner Bartoman Unnati",(The present development of Japan), *Bharati,* Vol. 5, Issue. 6, 1881, p.132 .
[20] Rabindranath Tagore, *Japan Jatri,* (Travels to Japan), Op.cit. p.103.
[21]Anonymous, Japaner Bartoman Unnati, Op cit., p.132.
[22] Jyotirindranath Tagore, Op cit., Vol. 32, Issue. 6, p.267.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., p. 307.
[25]Rabindranath Tagore, Op.cit. pp.73-74.
[26] Ibid., p. 76.
[27] Ibid., p. 80.
[28] Ibid. p. 91.
[29] Tagore, *Nationalism*, Op. cit. p. 24.
[30] Rabindranath Tagore, Op cit., p. 118.
[31] Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *Rabindranath Tagore, an interpretation*, New Delhi: Penguin/Viking, p. 133, 2011.
[32] Japan O Rabindranath, Samayiki, Bharatbarsha, 26th year, Vol I. Issue. 1345, pp. 790-1, 1938.
[33] Rabindranath Tagore, Op. cit. p.90.
[34] Rabindranath Tagore, Op cit, p. 120.
[35] Rabindranath Tagore, The soul of the East, first published in Vishwabharati Quarterly, April 1925, and reprinted in *Japan Jatri*, Op. cit. p. 132.

[36] Rabindranath Tagore, Chin o Japaner Bhraman Bibaran, Prabashi, Vol 24, Part II, 1st samkhya, Kartick, 1331 (!924) pp. 100-101.
[37] Tagore, *Nationalism,* Op. cit. p. 46.

Bangladesh: The Inability of 'Demand' to Prevent Authoritarian Backslide

By

Nirjhar Mukherjee *

Abstract

In Political Science, a number of scholars consider democracy to be a normatively desired outcome- as a good system of government. Thus, the process of democratisation is welcomed by most. However, an unfortunate reality is that in a number of cases, democracies backslide into authoritarianism after the establishment of democracy. This paper explores the travails of democracy in Bangladesh. It seeks to explore why the transition to democracy is not so easy for these regimes. The case of Bangladesh is contrasted with that of Pakistan. The paper draws upon the 'demand and supply' model of democracy as established by Inglehart and Welzel. It also tests the suitability of their theory using the research of Wilkinson. The paper remarks that, while the demand supply model holds ground to the extent that 'emancipatory values' and a greater 'demand' is conducive for democracy, greater nuance is needed to understand democratisation. With the case of Bangladesh, this paper argues that a backslide into authoritarianism is possible in a country with a history of military rule. However, the usual suspects (army) may not always be the culprits. It is well possible to have an authoritarian tendencies demonstrated by a civilian government.

Introduction

The concept of democratisation is one of the most important ones in contemporary social sciences. It is of utmost importance to the disciplines of political science and international relations. Many

*Nirjhar Mukherjee is a Guest Lecturer of Political Science at New Alipore College and Vivekananda College for Women, Kolkata, India. Email: nirjhar503@gmail.com
IAAPS Perspective, Vol.2, 1, June 2018

theories have sought to explain what the drivers of democratisation are in states which used to be ruled by authoritarian rulers. These theories seek to explain why the process of democratisation is more successful in some countries as compared to others. Democracy, as it has been seen, is not always permanent after the overthrow of an authoritarian rule. This paper seeks to engage some theories to explore the phenomenon of democratisation in the South Asian state of Bangladesh. The paper attempts to explain the process of democratisation in Bangladesh and compare it with that of Pakistan, another post colonial South Asian state with a history of military rule. The paper argues that democratisation has been relatively more successful in Bangladesh as compared to Pakistan due to a number of reasons. However, it also discusses the possibilities of Bangladesh backsliding into an authoritarian rule. However, it is highly unlikely that the military might take over power in Bangladesh anytime soon. The paper tries to argue that in a post military ruled country, failed democratic consolidation may not necessarily lead to a military comeback. It can degenerate into an authoritarian rule where civilians are in power.

The paper builds on the work of scholars like Wilkinson[1] who had explained why Bangladesh was relatively more successful in democratising as compared with Pakistan. This paper tries to use Wilkinson's findings to evaluate the so called 'demand and supply' theory of democratisation as designed by Inglehart and Welzel (2005)[2]. The paper supports Inglehart and Welzel to the extent that it agrees to the demand for democracy and presence of emancipatory values[3] which do play a major role in democratisation. However, the supply of democracy does not come exactly at a rate proportional to the demand and external factors also play a role in survival/demise of autocratic regimes. Moreover, the paper argues that while the presence of emancipatory values is important in the establishment of a democracy, it does not ensure that a post authoritarian polity will establish itself as an embedded democracy[4]. The Case of Bangladesh is a great example of this.

Why Bangladesh?

Bangladesh is poor, south Asian developing country with a large population and number of problems. It became independent in 1971 after an extremely bloody separatist struggle with Pakistan. After independence, it was established as a democracy. However, within a few years of independence it descended into authoritarianism. There were a number of coups and counter coups followed by a period of stable military rule under Hussain Mohammad Ershad in the 80s.

Massive protests compelled the autocrat to step down in 1990. There have been periodic elections in Bangladesh ever since. However, the political history has been marred by corruption, political violence, religious extremism and a host of other undemocratic practices. Bangladeshi democracy has witnessed a major problem in the form of boycotts by the opposition party.[5]In recent years, there has been a growing concentration of political power in the hands of the ruling party-Awami League.[6] The government with little opposition is increasingly showing one party tendencies.[7] This makes Bangladesh an significant case which has a history of authoritarianism, political and economic problems and issues with democratisation.

Comparing Bangladesh's Democratisation with Pakistan- A Theoretical Framework

Inglehart and Welzel[8] modelled a 'demand and supply' theory of democratisation. They claim that a greater demand for democracy begets a greater supply of the same. The theory says that certain 'emancipatory values' such as a focus on universal freedoms drive the process of democratisation and is essential for the survival of a democracy. It argues that the presence of such values in a country like a strong civil society, powerful movements etc would make it more likely to democratise as compared to its other military ruled counterparts whose societies lack these 'emancipatory values.'[9] The comparison between Bangladesh and Pakistan can be used to understand how far this theory is effective in explaining democratisation. The process of democratisation in Bangladesh compared with that of Pakistan provides a great example of how the military and elite composition were/are in these two countries which are similar in many respects. The paper argues that, like Inglehart and Welzel had laid out, emancipatory values do play a very important role in the process of democratisation. The paper agrees with Inglehart and Welzel to an extent- as far as the demand and supply theory of democratisation is concerned. However, the paper also argues that there is more than simple demand and supply at play when it comes to democratisation. Supply is affected by a demand- or in other words protests and protest culture does have an effect in democratisation, but this supply does not come directly in proportion to demand. In this regard, the paper is closer to Inglehart, Welzel and Kruse's (2017)[10] theory. The paper also maintains that factors such as international politics/geopolitical situations, religious fundamentalism, nature of armed forces also play a role in the process of democratisation.

Pakistan and Bangladesh are both third world South Asian countries. They are roughly same in terms of population. Both are poor and have

a colonial legacy. Both countries have suffered from military coups and breakdown of democracies. The road back to democracy has been difficult for both these countries. Islamic fundamentalism has plagued both these countries. However, this paper argues that the protest culture in Bangladesh created an immense demand for democracy which was able to persuade the military to hand over power. Moreover, factors like an active civil society and lacking adequate geopolitical importance (in the eyes of a Superpower- USA) in great power politics have helped Bangladesh democratise to a greater extent as compared to Pakistan. The latter's process of democratisation has suffered due to a less vocal and active civil society, involvement of Pakistan in geopolitics and great power politics and other factors. The legacy of protests and active civil society corresponds to the emancipatory values as laid out by Inglehart and Welzel (2005). The legacy of movements, agitations and protests has been instrumental in democratisation of Bangladesh.

However, as the paper argues, it is important to note that demand for democracy through the presence of emancipatory values and movements alone do not ensure democratisation. Nor is it that the supply of democracy comes proportionally with the demand. To demonstrate these pertinent observations, the model of democratisation espoused by Wilkinson[11] is of great significance. Wilkinson has made a comparative study of the process of democratisation in Pakistan and Bangladesh. He has argued that the process of democratisation has been relatively more successful in Bangladesh because of a number of factors. Wilkinson (2000) mentions four important factors in which Bangladesh and Pakistan differed, which in his opinion, enabled a better transition to democracy for Bangladesh.

These four points are:

1. A strong civil society: Wilkinson remarks that Bangladesh had a strong civil society, but Pakistan did not. The civil society of Bangladesh has long history of struggle[12] right from the inception of the state of united Pakistan. The intellectual political culture and culture of protest has been, according to Wilkinson, a major factor in Bangladeshi politics. The civil society of Bangladesh has constantly led many movements against authoritarian rule.
2. The civil society of Pakistan underwent a long period of repression. The Bangladeshi civil society was relatively less affected by the military regimes.[13] They were able to mobilise and periodically launch massive protests. The democratic culture of Bangladeshi civil society was sustained unabated even during the

military rule. The regime was unable to stem the demand for democracy.

3. The military as an institution: Wilkinson uses the theory of Alfred Stepan (1988)[14] to argue that a military which is internally divided and ridden in faction fights is more likely to give up power than an army which is cohesive with a strong line of command. Stepan (1988) says that the military would be willing to give up power in a situation when military rule posed a threat to the military as an institution. Wilkinson writes that the Bangladeshi military was ridden with a number of internal factions, which originated in the varied origins of the different officers in the army. The 70s had witnessed a number of coups and counter coups within the armed forces. Continued rule of Ershad (military ruler of Bangladesh 1982-1990) would have increased chances of renewal of these faction fights. More fratricidal bloodshed would have adversely affected the integrity of the armed forces. This was according to Stepan's theory not a conducive thing for the army. Hence it, or so Wilkinson has remarked, enabled a transition to democracy. On the other hand, the Pakistani military's integrity as an institution has not been affected by its repeated interventions in the nation's politics. Wilkinson says that the Pakistani military remained strong and cohesive and also gained financially from the military rule. Hence it has severely hampered democratic transition.
4. The fourth point that Wilkinson highlights is the impact of ethnic and regional cleavages in the civil society. Wilkinson's argument is that the Bangladeshi civil society was able to unite keeping aside internal rivalries and differences. In the 80s, various social fronts came up which consisted of rival parties and factions burying the hatchet in order to make ouster of the military regime their primary goal.[15]. When rival factions and parties united to agitate against the military rule, the military found it increasingly difficult to hold on to power. However, he also remarks that the Pakistani civil society was divided along ethnic lines. There were few organisations which could talk on behalf of a large section of the society cutting across ethnic lines.[16] The military was able to play one community against another. A divided civil society was hardly in a position to tackle military rule. He has also mentioned the role of Islam and its usage in politics by the army. According to Wilkinson, in the case of Pakistan, the military regime used Islam as an institution to strengthen its rule. Institutions like the Federal Shariat Court were established which could override laws made by elected representatives. However, in Bangladesh, this kind of institutionalisation of Islam never happened.[17] Even though critics have attacked Zia for rehabilitating Islamists into the political system[18], Islam was never used by the Bangladeshi army to

perpetuate its rule. Neither was it used to politicise the society based in religious lines, at least not to the scale of Pakistan. Brutal as it might have been, Ershad was not an Islamist. The rank and file of the Bangladeshi Army was also not Islamised the way it happened under Zia-ul Haq in Pakistan.

If the four-point model as elaborated by Wilkinson (2000) is to be studied through the lens of Inglehart and Welzel (2005), it would be clear that the idea of emancipatory values being necessary for democratisation holds ground. The same can be said about the concept of demand for democracy resulting in a supply of democracy. This idea is also reinforced by Lee[19] (2002) who attributed democratisation in third world countries to massive protests. Rashiduzzaman also lays emphasis on the role of 'hartals' or massive strikes which have played a role in transition to democracy.[20]

However, this is not adequate enough to explain the scenario. While point no 1 and point no 4 of Wilkinson's model (which indicate emancipatory values and demand for democracy) are important, it is also important to understand that there are other factors involved in the democratisation. This is where point no 3 and Stepan's (1988) theory becomes relevant. Stepan's (1988) theory shows that simple demand will not result in supply. Other factors such as the nature of the military are also important. Scholars like Evans[21] (2011) and Dutta[22] (1998) have also emphasised the role of geopolitics (involving vested interests of great powers) which keeps the Pakistani military in firm control of the domestic politics of the state. On the other hand, Bangladesh is not involved in any such geopolitical games where big international powers are involved. This also indicates why the military has been able to maintain its stranglehold over Pakistani politics.

Inglehart, Welzel and Kruse's (2017)'s model[23], which is a modified version of the Inglehart and Welzel (2005) model seems to be more appropriate in connecting the Pakistan and Bangladesh comparison to a more general theory of democratisation. Emancipatory values such as desire for universal freedoms, protests and other forms of demand for democracy are a key to democratisation but there are also other factors which are important along with these values and demands. Moreover, democratisation is a long and arduous process where systematic movements reap dividend after a sustained period instead of supply coming proportional to demand. To assume that the mere presence of demand for democracy will automatically result in a supply of democracy is an overestimation and oversimplification. Involvement of both internal (such as the difference in the characters of the two militaries) and external (geopolitical interests, involvement

of foreign powers etc) also play a role in the process of democratisation. However, despite these factors which create a disparity and delay in democratisation, the 'demand' through active civil society pushing for 'emancipatory values' play a significant role in creating supply of democracy.

Democracy Post Military Rule

The post Ershad period in Bangladesh (after 1990) has been marked by (mostly) regular elections. However, it has been marked by massive amounts of electoral violence, allegations of electoral fraud and boycott of elections by opposition parties. The Bangladeshi polity of the post 1990 era is a two-party dominated multi-party democracy. There are two alliances led by the two major parties- the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Smaller parties like Jatiyo Party (led by former military ruler Ershad), Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JaSoD), Workers Party, Liberal Democratic Party usually join the big parties and their alliances. Since 1990, in a number of elections, the party in opposition has boycotted the elections. This has been due to the prevalence of an atmosphere of extreme distrust in the election commission and the authorities which run the election.[24] Lorch (2014) has also written about how the credibility of the state (which is supposed to be neutral/non-partisan in an election) has not been satisfactory. There have been massive allegations of corruption and the ruling party filling important positions in the government with its yes-men.[25] The distrust in the democratic process and the consequent violence (Ahsan, 2015) is a major cause of concern for the democratic credentials of the country. The recent political history of Bangladesh where the BNP boycotted the elections in 2013 leading to the Awami League led Grand Alliance coming to power almost unopposed have created an authoritarian trend in Bangladesh. This kind of a scenario has been very perturbing.

However, one thing needs to be noted. The Bangladeshi military has not been a force keen on seizing power as a whole in the recent past. While there have been two attempted coups since 1991 (one in 1996 and another in 2007), none of them have been supported by a significant section of the army.[26] In fact, the Bangladeshi military has successfully played the role of a neutral watchman in many elections. In 2006, a caretaker government backed by the military took over in order to hold elections. A caretaker government used to be in charge of elections in Bangladesh for quite a few election cycles. After the term of a democratically elected government was over, an interim, caretaker government would take over for a few months in order to ensure free and fair elections. This process was stopped in 2013 prompting the

BNP to boycott elections. The BNP said that unless a caretaker government would oversee the elections, it would be impossible to believe that the elections would be free and fair.

However, it must be noted that this system of having an interim government backed by the military to oversee elections is not a healthy democratic practice. Overseeing elections is the task of independent democratic institutions like an election commission. This has been a step in the correct direction since 2013. However, it must be noted that the boycott of elections in 2013 has been followed by massive violence and concentration of power in the hands of the government. There have also been a number of protests but the government seems to be in total control over all aspects of public life in Bangladesh.

The post 2013 situation in Bangladesh is at best uncertain and has not been too conducive for democracy. On one hand, the parliament is dominated by the Awami League with no opposition presence. On the other hand, the government has come down heavily on the politics of disruption which has been adopted by the BNP to try and overthrow the Hasina regime. While the violent violent tactics of the BNP did not succeed due to massive repression and government action, there seems to be no significant, credible opposition in Bangladesh. The ruling party has demonstrated a number of authoritarian tendencies.[27] This experience of Bangladesh proves that it is possible for a post autocratic polity to backslide into authoritarianism without the necessity of a military intervention. Even a civilian regime can turn autocratic. Moreover, while a strong civil society is a great asset in many ways, it cannot necessarily prevent a regime backsliding into authoritarianism. It is not that the civil society has not protested. However, it is being unable to prevent the authoritarian tendencies of the current government.

The trajectory of democratisation is different in each country contingent on its history. However, the conclusion of this paper suggests that the role of the civil society, its capacity to unite and organise play a significant role in ushering democracy. The demand for democracy is an essential factor to ensure a 'supply'. More contemporary history of both Pakistan and Bangladesh (after the publication of the papers by Wilkinson, Inglehart and Welzel and others) also stand testimony to this fact. The Lawyers movement which was able to unify the disparate civil society in Pakistan was successful in forcing Gen. Pervez Musharraf to step down from power. Similarly, the civil society in Bangladesh has been instrumental in protesting against undemocratic actions and intolerance. The Shahbag movement of 2013 is one such great example. Traditional theories of

democratisation and literature in comparative politics lay great emphasis on the role of institutions as important factors for democratisation. However, it must be understood that while these factors do affect the survival of autocratic regimes, the democratisation of a society is largely shaped by its citizen's quest for the same.

The case of Bangladesh shows that due to the presence of certain factors such as a strong civil society has helped in coming out of military rule- better than many other countries in a similar situation. It is also expected to provide resistance to authoritarian tendencies. However, this paper shows that it cannot guarantee any protection from backsliding into authoritarianism. As of today, the current civil society movements are protesting against the regime but who are they going to replace the regime with? When the enemy is the military, there is always the prospect of replacing the army with an elected leadership. During the days of Ershad, there was no dearth of such political leaders. However, as things stand today, with the weakening of the BNP, there seems to be little alternative to the regime that the civil society can bolster.

Notes

[1]S. I. Wilkinson, *Democratic consolidation and failure: Lessons from Bangladesh and Pakistan.*Democratization, Vol *7,* Issue*.* 3, 2000, pp. 203-226.
[2]R. Inglehart, &C. Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
[3]Ibid.
[4]Wolfgang Merkel *Embedded and Defective Democracies,* Democratization, Vol. 11, Issue. 5, 2004, pp. 33-58.
[5] Salahuddin, Ahmed, *Bangladesh: Past and Present,* APH Publishing, Dhaka, 2004, p. 3.
[6]*https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/sheikh-hasina-turning-bangladesh-party-state-180404082024893.html,*
[7]*https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/bangladeshs-descent-authoritarianism*
[8]R. Inglehart, & C. Welzel, Op. cit.
[9]Ibid.
[10]C. Welzel, R. Inglehart, &S. Kruse, "Pitfalls in the Study of Democratization: Testing the Emancipatory Theory of Democracy"*, British Journal of Political Science*, Vol 47, Issue. 2, 2017, pp. 463-472.
[11]S. I. Wilkinson, Op. cit.
[12]M. Rashiduzzaman, "Political Unrest and Democracy in Bangladesh*", Asian Survey*,Vol. *37, Issue.* 3, pp. 254-268, 1997.
[13]S. I. Wilkinson, Op. cit.
[14]A. C. Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone*. NJ: Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988.
[15]S. I. Wilkinson, Op. cit.
[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid.
[18]Subir Bhaumik, 2009, "Jihad or Joi Bangla: Bangladesh in Peril", in J. Saikia & E. Stepanova (eds), *Terrorism: patterns of internationalization*, New Delhi: SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, pp. 71-92.
[19]J. Lee, "Primay Causes of Asian Democratization: Dispelling Conventional Myths",.Asian Survey, Vol.4 Issue. 6, 2002, pp. 821-837.
[20]M. Rashiduzzaman, Op. cit.
[21] M.Evans, "Power and paradox: Asian geopolitics and Sino-American relations in the 21st century", *Orbis,* Vol.*55,* Issue. 1, 2011, pp. 85-113.
[22] Sujit Dutta, "China's Emerging Power and Military Role: Implications for South Asia*",*
https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF137/CF137.chap5.pdf
[23]C. Welzel, R. Inglehart, &S. Kruse, Op. cit.
[24]A. Kochanek, "Bangladesh in 1996: The 25th year of Independence", *Asian Survey*, Vol. *37* Issue. 2, 1997, pp. 136-142.
[25]J. Lorch, *Elections in Bangladesh: Political Conflict and the Problem of Credibility,* 2014, https://www.e-ir.info/2014/02/02/elections-in-bangladesh-political-conflict-and-the-problem-of-credibility/
[26]Salahuddin, Ahmed, *Bangladesh: Past and Present,* APH Publishing, Dhaka, 2004.
http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/possibility-of-military-coup-in-bangladesh/,
https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/236783-why-military-coup-unlikely-in-bangladesh,
[27]https://thediplomat.com/2016/07/the-downfall-of-democracy-in-bangladesh/

General Ne Win's Uniformed Non-Uniformity
A National or Royal Case?

By

Al Lim *

Abstract

This paper seeks to eulogies how the politics of dress in pre-modern Southeast Asia provides a framework to understand politics. In that regard it attempts to demonstrate the way in which the sartorial elements of General Ne Win's uniform differentiated his political regime from the mid-twentieth century iconographic forms of General Aung San. In this effort the paper adopts an iconographic and biographic approach and enumerates the following five objectives. (1) To establish a theoretical grounding in terms of a fashion-based approach. (2) To apply the Anderson's nationalist framework to the necessary Burmese context. (3) To identify iconographic or morphological similarities with other military uniforms. (4) To offers anecdotal support from General Ne Win's political biography and (5) to study the sartorial dynamics between the elites and locals.

Introduction

"If the disturbances were intended to challenge us, we will fight sword with sword and spear with spear"[1] General Ne Win declared at a 1962 speech after anti-government riots at Rangoon University.[2]This follows the bloodless coup d'etat that year, where General Ne Win had wrested control from U Nu and established himself as the Prime Minister. The constitution was abolished and a military government was set up. This was the start of what has become known as the 'bamboo curtain.'[3] This era of the Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) saw General Ne

*Al Lim is pursuing his study with Urban Studies Major in Yale-NUS College, Singapore.
Email: al.lim@u.yale-nus.edu.sg

Win as the leader of an isolationist Burma in the arena of international relations while maintaining domestic autarky.

My paper investigates this period of Burmese history through the lens of General Ne Win's military attire. What does his uniform convey in light of his politics? By focusing on General Ne Win's appropriation of sartorial elements in his military uniform, and the shift from earlier iconographic forms embodied by General Aung San, I adopt iconographic and biographic approaches to demonstrate how clothing legitimizes his political regimefrom the mid-twentieth century. My paper proceeds in five sections: (1) my theoretical grounding in terms of a fashion-based approach, (2) Anderson's nationalist framework applied to the Burmese context, (3) iconographic or morphological similaritiesto other military uniforms, (4) anecdotal support from General Ne Win's political biography and (5) the sartorial dynamics between the elites and locals. In so doing, I highlight how the politics of dress in pre-modern Southeast Asia is a framework to understand politics, as well as a site of contestation itself. It shifts according to its mode of instrumentalization, in line with General Ne Win's politics, intertwined with his nationalist and royalist projects.

Theoretical Grounding on the Importance of Dress

Traditionally, academics tend to devaluate fashion, thinking that it is not satisfactory object of study.[4] However, my project seeks to push back against notions of their normalization and devaluation to investigate these very trends, as fashion is a crucial mode to identify different modes of expressions. Specifically, I argue that dress is "unspeakably meaningful" in the sense that it plays symbolic, communicative and aesthetic roles.[5]It is an extension of an embodied individual, or in other words, a second skin.[6] Its production can be regarded as a cultured body, and in saying this, the fashioned body is also a meaningful body.[7] Thus, it reveals a whole set of dynamic semiotics and meanings. For instance, a politician's fashion, accentuated by its reach through media representation, exposes a whole set of meanings in accordance with their agenda (or dissonant with it under exceptional circumstances).

Further, I ground my exploration in Roces' stance of investigating the attire of the elites. She claims that elites are astute interpreters of the semiotics of dress in their programs of self-representation and their efforts to legitimize access to political power.[8]Their position and need to cement their political legitimacy places them at a crucial juncture, where they would appropriate dress for their ends. Examples in

historic and contemporary politics, especially in the Burmese context, are abundant.

These include sculptures and murals in religious Burmese Buddhist art like the revered Mahamuni sculpture. The four-meter tall image is concealed by an estimated 12 tons of gold leaf with thousands of jewelry items attached to the faceted crowns and chest bands of the statue.[9] The statue is believed to be living and is bathed daily by monks in a complex ritual.[10] This case finds itself as the nexus of historic significance and modern practices, highlighting the importance of dress for the Burmese—weaving together with strands of religiosity, practice, and veneration.

Contemporary dress choices also feature strongly in conversations on the importance on fashion. Daw Aang San Suu Kyi's, also known as "The Lady," famously uses the *luntaya acheik* and flowers in her hair as symbols, set against the backdrop of sartorial choices and mobilities for Burmese women.[11]In this manner, she embodies many of the anxieties surrounding women's socio-cultural and political roles, which find themselves tangibly manifest in fashion. Hence, as a starting point for my paper, dress matters. My argument builds on this analytical lens to illuminate Burmese politics, especially during the tumultuous mid-twentieth century.

Anderson's Nationalism Aapplied to Burma

The idea of nation-building can be viewed through Benedict Anderson's nationalist framework, as General Ne Win was a key political figure in the mid-twentieth century involved in Burma's nation-building. In this section, I briefly highlight Anderson's main theoretical propositions, in tandem with the significance of print capitalism and language. This is then applied to the Burmese context in terms of General Ne Win's policies, which reinforce these nationalist notions.

Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) provides a theoretical framework to unpack nation-states and nationalisms. His main proposal is that nationalism is both cultural artefact and social construct; his definition of a nation-state is an "imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."[12] This means that they are socially produced with finite borders, built on the dissolution of divinely-ordained dynastic realms.[13]The nation's citizens might never see each other, but they might imagine some abstract entity linking them. A contemporary example of this would be when a Thai citizen travels to a Portuguese

tourist destination and hears someone else speaking Thai. At that point, they are linked by the abstract entity of the nation-state, implied through the use of a 'national tongue.' Accordingly, this imagining forms community, fraternity and a comradeship that extends horizontally across citizens, that ultimately comprise a nation.

Anderson's work also describes three historic preconditions that enable the nationalist phenomenon to rise: (1) the reduction of script language's dominance, (2) society's movement away from the centrally-oriented dynastic realm, and (3) disintegration of notions of temporality that previously combined cosmology and history.[14] These factors created a gap or a void that nationalism was able to effectively fill. The rest of this section details these historic preconditions and subsequently applies it to the Burmese context in the mid-twentieth century.

First, Anderson elaborates on the importance of script language and its ability to centralize the great sacral cultures.[15] Anderson describes how communities were created out of signs, not sounds, and acted as a form of cosmic centrality.[16]This is depicted when Chinese Mandarin people would look approvingly on barbarians who learned their Middle Kingdom ideograms; the process of civilizing or absorbing 'outsiders' was based on linguistic capabilities.[17]Anderson calls them 'truth-languages' as they are imbued with centripetal importance and those who possess them be converted and integrated into religious communities.[18]However, their sacredness waned steadily after the late Middle Ages because exposure to the non-European world widened the cultural and geographical horizon of Euro-centric conceptions of human life, and the languages themselves reduced in popularity.[19]

Second, Anderson elaborates how societies were previously organized *around* and *under* high centers. He describes how monarchs were previously under some divine dispensation and human loyalties were hierarchical and centripetal by abiding by this structure.[20]The decline of these central kingships is evidenced by King Charles Stuart's 1649 revolutionary beheading during the English Civil War; King Chulalongkorn's acknowledgement of the world system's importance (in lieu of previous ethnocentrism) can be shown by the King sending his sons and nephews to St Petersburg, London and Berlin to learn about other kingdoms.[21]Anderson's main point here is that the decline of centripetal organization, in light of a more internationally integrated world order, provides another motivating factor for the proliferation of nation-states and their nationalistic movements.

While I agree with the importance in the changing governance structures that preceded contemporary organizations of nation-states, they are not organized *around* centers inasmuch as *from* centers, in part. My rejoinder stems from ideas of centrality, especially in Mandala-centered societies in pre-modern Southeast Asia. Governance or kingship does not simply reverberate around centers like ripples in a pond or concentric circles as the word "around" implies. It is directly and intimately linked with central governing figure. In addition, it is *partially* influenced by centralities, because the central figure does not govern unidirectionally, though power might be skewed in one direction. Power is negotiated with multiple directions and temporalities and cannot be reduced to one single act or direction. Kings do not govern themselves, they govern kingdoms and are affected by their populace. Hence, I adapt Anderson's second premise to include multiple directions of power that are affected by central governing capabilities, even and especially for previous kingships. Basically, their organizational power derived *from*, around and under divinely-ordained centers, which Anderson argues have dissolved to makespace for nationalistic practices.

Third, changes in the notions of temporality and apprehensions of time enabled the conceptualizing of the nation. Anderson claims that previous notions of time included"simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present."[22]This idea has transformed into notions of time that the secular sciences espouse.[23]A contemporary analog of the nation would be "a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time."[24]This idea of time dissolved ideas of cosmological and historical conflation, which created a void for a mode of linking fraternity, power and time in a meaningful way.[25]This void would then be filled by nationalism, and in this case General Ne Win's Burmese form of nationalism.

For Anderson, the emergence of nationalism stems from the decline of these three interconnected certainties. During the 1960s, these three preconditions for nationalism were realized in Burma. The idea of Pali-Sanskrit languages had been left to the monastic practice, not used in vernacular conversations. The idea of science and calendrical time had been instituted through the integration of British colonial ideas of science into the country. Regarding the idea of centripetal power, I demonstrate that General Ne Win problematizes this shift, blurring the lines between royalism and nationalism. He centralizes power on himself and in that way, espouses a particular form of (royal) nationalism that is encoded in his dress.

So far, I have explained Anderson's ideas on the historic preconditions that have left space for nationalism to thrive, but what actually drove it? Anderson claims that print-capitalism is a key aspect of this narrative, unlocking new ideas of simultaneity to generate ideas of national consciousness.[26] Again, Anderson lays our three distinct ways that print-capitalism laid the foundations for national consciousness: (1) the creation of unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above spoken vernaculars, (2) provision of fixity to language to build the image of antiquity that would be central the subjectivities of nationhood, and (3) the enabling of languages-of-power different from older administrative vernaculars.[27] These three factors illustrate how the convergence of capitalism and print technology has facilitated the nation-state as an imagined community, setting the stage for the modern nation.[28]

To expound on this idea of nationalist consciousness, I apply it to the context of General Ne Win's politics in Burma. He displaced English as the official language and in its place, emphasized the importance of Burmese.[29] This shows a unified field of communication that was not a sacral language, which would be Pali-Sanskrit for Buddhist-dominated Burma, but an institutionalized vernacular. It catered to the majority Buddhist Bamar population, leaving out the spoken vernaculars of the many ethnic minorities throughout the country like the Karen or Shan people.

In addition, it builds on the fixity of antiquity, where the Burmese language was used as a cultural tool to show the importance of Burma as a nation. One way of depicting this concept is tracing the etymological developments of the word for "foreigner" or "kala." In the Pali-originated Burmese language, the word "ku-la" referred to an individual who had come from a place across some maritime space.[30] Burmese scribes and kings referred to Arab merchants, Armenian traders and Portuguese mercenaries under this signifier.[31] Following that, the word "kula" was also used to describe Muslim, Christian or Hindu.[32] However, during British colonial rule, the word "kala" became degrading when referring to Indian communities. Through coincidence linguistically, the word "kala" also means "black" from Sanskrit roots.[33] As a result, Burmese state propaganda used the word "kala" to denigratingly refer to Indians and reinforce the Bamar Buddhist majority.[34] This shows how the Burmese language is used as a tool to show the "purity" of Burmese, in contrast with other races like the Indians, evoking an ideal Burma before colonialism. In this way, nationalism is yet again promoted in the Burmese state.

General Ne Win cemented his nationalistic policies by capturing the generators of print journalism in Burma. Through the *Printers and Publishers Registration Act* in 1962, every printer or publisher was required to register at the *Central Registration Board.*[35]The Revolutionary Council that General Ne Win was in charge of controlled most of the country's journalism, even limiting visits by foreign journalists.[36] The nationalization of journalism and restrictions on free press gave General Ne Win free reign to determine what kinds of publication could or could not circulate. Simultaneously, this promotes Burmese as the national language, reinforcing Anderson's three premises on the historic preconditions for nationalism's rise and print capitalism are linked. In this manner, General Ne Win's (royal) nationalist project was reinforced through the conceptual lens of Anderson's nationalist framework.

The Iconography of General Ne Win's Uniform

The third section of my paper brings together the two threads that I have established so far: applying fashion as a conceptual lens to General Ne Win's nationalist politics. Based on existing scholarly discussions, much work has been done on General Ne Win's policies, the Burmese state's development, and Daw Aang San Suu Kyi's fashion politics. However, there is still an existing gap on General Ne Win's own dress and its semiotics. This is where my project intervenes, adopting an iconographic approach through archival photographs which thenlinks to his political biographyFigure 2: General Ne Win's Official Portrait in the LuntayaAcheik with a GaungBaung (headwear) (Public Domain)

Due to General Ne Win's long tenure in politics, it is hard to reduce any form of his sartorial analysis to one instance. His dress style changed depending on his audience, the occasion and the time period. For instance, General Ne Win would wear a western suit on some of his overseas meetings with others Heads of State, or the *luntaya acheik* in some photographs, as well as his famed military uniform. Figures 1-3 illustrate this. As a mode of entering this conversation, instead of trying to explain every single instance of his attire (which in itself is not super abundant because of Burmese isolationism), I have chosen one point of comparison.

Figure 1: General and Madame Ne Win on a State Visit to India, February 1965 (Indian Information Services)

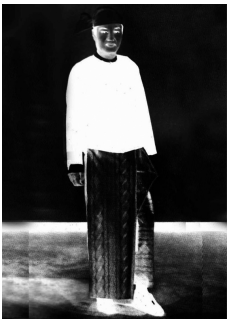


Figure 2: General Ne Win's Official Portrait in the LuntayaAcheik with a GaungBaung (headwear) (Public Domain)

Figure 3: General Ne Win in his Military Uniform (Cover of Robert Taylor's General Ne Win)

Figure 4: General than Shwe, General Aung San and General Ne Win (Naypidaw's new army museum taken by Simon Roughneen)

In Figure 4 lies the central *problematique* for my paper—the transition between General Aung San and General Ne Win's uniforms. This photo is featured in the new capital Naypyidaw's army museum and shows the significance of these three leaders in crafting Burmese history, as well as their connections. For the purpose of my paper, I unpack the transition the 1940s military uniform of General Aung San to General Ne Win's. To do so, I explain the iconography of each of their uniforms.

General Aung San's uniform is illustrated in Figures 4-6, showing versions of it that include the cap and overcoat. Based on Figure 5, the outfit contains four pockets on the front of the uniform, with two on each side. The uniform also features a tunic collar that would usually contain gorget patches. His cap is a flat-topped peaked cap with a red

band. His dark green uniform possesses remarkable iconographic similarities to Japanese military uniforms during that similar time period.

Figure 5: General Aung Sang arriving in London with a Burmese Ministerial mission for talks with the British Government in 1947 (Getty Images)

Figure 6: General Aung San arriving at 10 Downing Street in 1947 (Getty Images)

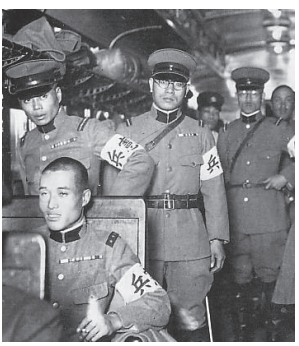


Figure 7: Kenpetai (Japanese Military Police) onboard a train in 1935, Showa Type 5 Uniform (Public Domain)

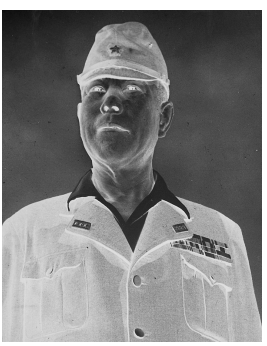


Figure 8: Japanese General Tomoyuki Yamashita in tropical uniform during the 1940s(Public Domain)

Specifically, the red-banded peaked cap in Figure 7 and uniform (collar and pockets) in Figure 8 bear striking resemblance to General Aung San's uniform. Though there are many other countries' uniforms that also share many similarities to General Aung San's uniform, the Japanese invasion of Burma during this period provides a direct relationship between these two countries. In fact, there are also iconographic similarities to British, German, American, and Soviet uniforms. However, the Japanese uniform provided the closest comparison because of the size and placement of the red band in the peaked cap, as well as the tunic collar, pockets and uniform color.

To directly contrast this, General Ne Win's peaked cap became a lot more ostentatious and his uniform also underwent morphological changes. In Figure 9, his uniform seems to resemble General Aung San. The tunic collar, presumably green uniform and the location of the gorget patch match the morphology of the Japanese and General Aung San's uniform. Even the cloth cap is similar to General Yamashita's. However, this was during 1943. Twenty years later, his uniform has changed significantly. Both Figures 3 and 10 portray this shift.

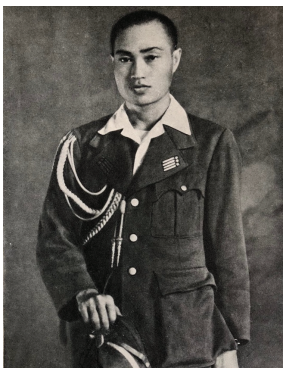


Figure 9: General Ne Win in the Burma National Army 1943(Maung's Burma and General Ne Win, 1969)

Figure 10: General Ne Win and his Peaked Cap, 1965 (List Verse)

In the twenty-year period, General Ne Win's cap reverted back to the peaked cap version, albeit a more ostentatious version. The location of the gorget rank has changed, as well as the uniform's color. This might have been due to General Ne Win's ascendance in rank. However, changes like the morphology and color of the uniform seem to be too great to simply attribute to a rise in rank. This shift shows General Ne

Win's refashioning of his identity and political position, especially after assuming power in 1962.

General Ne Win's changed uniform in the 1960s also resembles the Mao suit (Figure 11), originally the Sun Yat-sen suit.This suit was derived from its titular wearer, having a neat, turned-down collar, inset sleeves and four expandable, buttoned pockets.[37] The original political ideology that drove the design of this shirt was to identify with the masses, as well as showing self-reliance.[38]This is conveyed by the simplicity of the suit, devoid of frippery; in addition the suit has prominent pockets, suggesting the wearer can carry their personal effects,

Figure 11: Chairman Mao addressing a crowd atop Suit rostrum at Tienanmen Gate in 1966 (Getty Images)

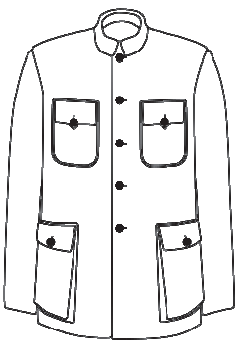


Figure 12: Schematic View of the Mao (Wikipedi Commons)

which then implies autonomous action.[39] The leader was supposed to be *of* the people, not *above* the people.[40]This then morphed into the Mao suit, that became representative of communist China.[41]

Further, to extend the hybridity of these outfits, the suit's antecedents were a mix of Japanese student uniforms and Russian military attire, showing that it is a hybridized uniform.[42] General Ne Win's uniform also bears some resemblance to Egyptian (Nasser) and Yugoslavian (Tito) attires, supported by their military agreements. Yugoslavia refurbished the Burmese army supplies, and there were military deals with Israel, the UK, US, Canada, Japan and many other countries.[43]This depicts a political economy that went behind the manufacture and circulation of army supplies, which affected the types of uniforms produced.

Linking international dyadic relations to General Ne Win's outfit, there was some alignment with Mao's suit and its ideological origins. General Ne Win's socialist path advocated for some aspects of Mao's communism.Specifically, General Ne Win's leftist strategy was opposed to the capitalist-imperialist doctrine.[44] However, a common leftist political orientation was not enough and both countries pursued different, clashing political paths. One instance of this deviation would be theviolent clashes between followers of Mao's Cultural Revolution and the Burmese population under General Ne Win's Burmese Way to Socialism.[45] This conflict involved hundreds of Chinese-owned shops, houses, restaurants and temples burned down.[46] The morphological similarities of the uniform itself shows some ideological similarities in terms of the avoidance of frippery and pockets. However, the deviation is pronounced in General Ne Win's ostentatious peaked cap, which is significantly different from Mao's cloth cap. Accordingly, General Ne Win's adaptation of military uniform simultaneously shows both alignments and deviations from communist politics, picking and choosing various sartorial elements to integrate into his own attire.

The military uniform is thus a contested arena of embodied space. It is a dynamic construct that pulls together seemingly disparate elements. Its hybrid nature showcases a series of iconographic details that bear similarity across many countries' uniforms. This comes from a mix of colonialism, nationalism and subsequent adaptations based on Burmese political orientations. Hence, it is difficult to pin down stable interpretations of one military uniform versus another, as many uniforms during this period bear similarities. Nonetheless, there is a clear shift form General Aung San's Japanese-resembling military outfit in the 1940s to General Ne Win's 1960s uniform, as seen in the way they have been memorialized in Figure 4.Moreover, its similarities lend themselves to political alignment or deviation with other countries' policies and immigrants, adding another layer of complexity to dress' semiotics.

General Ne Win and the Thirty Comrades

In light of this, General Ne Win's political biographic anecdote of his involvement in the Thirty Comrades in the 1940s supports the interpretation of changes in the uniform's morphology. The Japanese occupation of Burma happened in 1941-43 and resulted in rapid institutional and political changes. The colonial administrative machinery completely collapsed, which meant that the Japanese had to empower a new group of Burmese elites to facilitate regime.[47] Around this period,the Japanese Imperial Army provided training to a group of

young Burmese activist soldiers.[48] This group became known as the Thirty Comrades and included both futures generals Aung San and Ne Win (then known as Shu Maung).[49]

They were initially posted to the *Sanya Peasants Training Center*, where Colonel Suzuki staffed instructors from Tokyo.[50]The soldiers were split into three groups: *Dai-ippan* to train officers to command units of company level and below, *Dai-nihan* to train officers for clandestine activities and guerilla warfare, and *Dai San-pan* to train officers to handle divisional units and below, while anticipating military operational demands.[51] General Ne Win was part of the third group and excelled in both practical skills and theoretical subjects.[52] In addition, the learning curve was particularly high for the Burmese soldiers because they were excluded from all military fields by the British. The training started from the elementary stage and was extremely severe, where there were consistent dropouts from exhaustion and fatigue.[53]

Importantly, this brought together General Aung San and General Ne Win, which was unlikely because of their differing political parties. General Ne Win was from the right-wing "Ba Sein Tun Oke" faction and Aung San from the left-wing "Kodaw Hmaing-Thein Maung" faction.[54] As a result of this training exercise, Ne Win proved his exceptional military capabilities and some argue that this is how he became Aung San's right hand in the independence movement.[55]

Thee biographic anecdote explains the iconographic similarities behind General Aung San and the Japanese uniform morphologies. Their training in Japan, as well as the Japanese occupation would have resulted in similarities between their uniforms. The steep learning curve because of the dearth of Burmese military knowledge, as a result of British exclusion, could have also created significant impressions on both General Aung San and General Ne Win.

Hence, I argue that the memorialization of General Aung San in the dark green attire emphasizes his instrumental role in Burmese independence, depicted by that era's uniform and its similarities to the Japanese uniform. General Ne Win's shift away from this shows how he refashioned himself away from the Japanese 1940s period to a hybridized version that helped him promote his Socialist way. In so doing, General Ne win distinguished himself from previous rulers and further added to the legitimacy of his political power, in spite of having first adopted that same attire and training by the Japanese.

General Ne Win and the Burmese People

General Ne Win's legitimation of political power also stemmed from differentiating himself from the masses.The *tatmadaw's* (Burmese military) adaptation of military suits contrasted the common people's forced use of traditional Burmese dress.[56] The disjunction shows a power differential between the elites in the xenophobic, authoritarian regime and the common people.[57] In 1962, General Ne Win inaugurated a new hierarchy of dress by making civilians wear "national" dress.[58] A Burmese citizen would be constituted by wearing a *longyi*, not trousers.[59] Additionally, Burmese men who used to have long hair was outlawed.[60]This left the Burmese collectively antiquarianized as a nation, where only the military could wear trousers.[61] As a result, this showed General Ne Win and the *tatmadaw* as legitimate men of action, associated with concepts of domestic masculinity and power.

The differentiation of bodily comportment lends itself to how General Ne Win can be construed as a royalist. Hagen states that the basic structure of society during Burmese kings are dual- or triple-layered: composed of villages on one hand, and larger towns plus a central city on the other hand.[62] In this case, the correlative political feature is centralizing power in the hands of the powerful elites in the center, while isolating the periphery of subservient ordinary people.[63] General Ne Win centralized his power in Rangoon with a well-protected villa of his own, as well as his own subordinates.[64] The architectural manifestation of his centralization of power is complemented by the sartorial distinctions that he instituted.

To substantiate the claim of General Ne Win's royalist inclinations, I introduce the Burmese concept of the *minlaung*. The Burmese king has traditionally held a key material and spiritual role, being seen as the *dhammaraja*, ensuring the harmony and order for Burmese society.[65] The figure is identifiable with the *cakkavatti* (i.e. universal ruler) and *bodhisattava* (i.e. future Buddha) at the same time.[66] A ruling dynasty's weakness would be attributed to the realm's decline of morality and ruler's lack or righteousness, which then results in the *minlaung's* rebellion.[67] These *minlaung* claim to be legitimate future rulers and usurp the throne with loyal supporters and military strength.[68]The socio-political wounds inflicted upon Burma as a result of its colonial legacy left it in need of a *minlaung's* intervention.

Another crucial attribute of the *minlaung* involves the source of their power. They are usually not a member of the royal family, but representative of the people.[69] They possess*pon* (i.e. inner strength),

let youn (military power) and *ana* (authority over other people) given by *karma* or Buddhist merit.[70] This was reinforced by nat practices. Nats are animistic beliefs prevalent in Burma, dating back to the Buddhist Burmanization process by King Anawrahta/Aniruddha in the 11th century. The nat domain of the wild and uncivilized, usually thought of as the forest, is thought to possess regenerative power to recreate social order.[71] This is how *minlaungs* generally come from places outside the center during rebellious moments, especially with their (assumed) mandate to represent the people.

Wessendorf applies this to General Ne Win by presenting three phases of a modern *minlaung*and matching that to General Ne Win's biographical achievements. The first is the formative phase, which is when karmic signs representing authority and power are conveyed through ascetic and divergent behavior from social norms.[72] Second, the phase of command would display command-related leadership abilities like martial prowess.[73]The third phase of consolidation is when the leader presents himself (or herself) as a peace-making and unifying figure.[74] General Ne Win underwent these three phases on his path to leadership in Burma, thus embodying the figure of the *minlaung,* which is supposedly representative of the people, but yet distinct.

Ne Win's years of study and his initial entry into the army depicted his formative phase. He worked efficiently in classes, became friends with Burmese poets and scholars, and was active in politics.[75]As mentioned previously, he excelled in his training phase when he was part of the thirty comrades in Japan. Following this, his second command phase was materialized in his participation in the ritual of *thwetauk* (i.e. blood drinking usually performed at the ceremony of a new king) and his active participation in many fights against the colonial British.[76]

His second phase was accentuated by his self-alleged connections to royalty. General Ne Win was convicted that his ancestors were among the Konbaung dynasty and he implied he was descended from King Bodawpaya.[77] Further, he appeared at state functions in full royal regalia.[78] While I have not found supporting photographic evidence, it nonetheless shows the importance of dress. For General Ne Win, royal regalia was a tangible way of showing his connection to previous monarchs. In addition, his military-led political apparatus extended for a few decades, centralizing his authority and *let youn* as a *minlaung*.

The third phase of showing unity was as much a unifying as exclusionary and hierarchical force. Much of this ties into my second section that detailed General Ne Win's nationalistic practices. Further,

he built the *Maha Wizaya* pagoda near to the Shwedagon as a means of accruing merit,like previous Burmese kings.[79] He even married June Rose Bellamy, his fourth wife, who was the daughter of a Burmese princes for five months.[80] Therefore, General Ne Win's display of his power as a *minlaung* was an attempt to use a traditional Burmese trope to cement his own political position, further differentiating himself and the military from the rest of the Burmese population who were made to wear the *longyi.*

Conclusion

Bringing it back to the titular provocative of General Ne Win's uniformed non-uniformity, my paper adopts a sartorial lens to unpack the complexities and the power dynamics encoded in General Ne Win's adaptations to his military uniform. To narrow the analysis of his uniform, I took the memorialization of General Ne Win and General Aung San as a point of comparison. In so doing, there was a shift after the Japanese occupation of Burma and from their initial training by the Japanese. As a result, General Ne Win made a point to refashion his own identity. He capitalized on this through economic reform, as well as capturing key socio-cultural channels of print capitalism and language.

The bulk of my paper thus builds on the contextual dynamic to understand the morphology and implications of his military uniform. I juxtapose the various military uniforms, as a site of contestation and hybridity, demonstrating how they are unspeakably meaningful. One key argument is the adaptation of the previous Japanese-aligned uniform augmented General Ne Win's own socialist agenda. With fluctuating Sino-Burmese relations, General Ne Win did not fully appropriate the Mao suit, but appropriated part of the uniform's morphology, He wore apeaked, ostentatious cap to demonstrate his own separate political agenda. This lends to royalist interpretations of General Ne Win's politics, as a *minlaung*. His obsessions with being royalty shaped much of his politics and the legitimation of power that he undertook for himself.

Put together, I argue that General Ne Win instumentalizes dress for his own nationalist and royalist ends. The iconographic and biographic approach that I adopt explains the "Uniformed" aspect of the title. To contrast, his "non-uniformity" is depicted by changing uniforms from General Aung San's period, imposing sartorial restrictions on the rest of Burma by making them wear the *longyi,* and his own assumed role of the *minlaung*, even dressing in royal regalia in court.

Importantly, my paper bridges the literature gap between fashion and politics, gesturing towards further studies. While briefly hinted in my paper, more work can be done to understand the political economy that drives the production and circulation of military uniforms. Who were the primary producers of these uniforms and how were they made? Where did the raw materials come from and how did this affect international relations or domestic politics? Additionally, a comparison between the various kinds of Burmese military uniforms can be systematically unpacked to get a more comprehensive grasp of the *tatmadaw's* sartorial decisions.

Lastly, what were the main forms of communication in Burma during General Ne Win's period. The country recently opened in 2011, which begs questions that explore the modes of communications and perceptions of elites in Burma since independence. This affects contemporary politics with the rise of Daw Aang San Suu Kyi's fame (even comparisons to her being a minlaung) and criticisms levelled against her handling of the Rohingya crisis. With the *tatmadaw's* relative retreat from high positions of power (though it still controls key Departments of Home Affairs, Border Affairs and Defence), how is the military's role changing? Why do they still hold on to the General's legacythrough their continue use of his uniform?

In 2002, General Ne Win was cremated according to traditional Buddhist rites in Ye Way cemetery.[81] His death was not mourned and unremarked by state media, and there was only a brief obituary submitted by his family in two newspapers.[82]His mishandling of Burmese politics and dictatorship had arguably ruined the country. Even in death, dress matters. He was denied the military honors befitting of a general, fallen from the calling of the *minlaung* into an ignored dictator. Yet his uniformed non-uniformity memory persists, hung on the wall of the Burmese army museum in the new capital, embedded in contemporary tatmadaw uniforms built on his sartorial traditions.

Notes

[1] The Burmese phrase is *dah go dah gyin, hlan go hlan gyin*, with its English translations being on the front pages of the 9 July 1962 *Rangoon Nation* and *Rangoon Guardian*.
[2] Kyaw Min, "Ne Win." Myanmarpedia.
http://myanmarpedia.blogspot.sg/2007/10/ne-win-general-ne-win-in-1962-in-office.html.

[3] Renaud Egreteau and Larry Jagan, *Soldiers and Diplomacy in Burma: Understanding the Foreign Relatoins of the Burmese Praetorian State*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2013, p.72.
[4] Stefan Marino, "Philosophical Accounts of Fashion in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century: A Historical Reconstruction." In Philosophical
Perspectives on Fashion, edited by Giovanni Matteucci and Stefano Marino. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2017, pp.15-16..
5 Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*. London and New York: Tauris & Co, 1985, p.3.
6 Stefan Marino, Op cit., p. 35.
7 Ibid., p. 35.
8 Mina Roces and Louise Edward, "Transnational Flows and the Politics of Dress in Asia and the Americas." In *The Politics of Dress in Asia and the Americas*, 1–18. Brighton and Portland: Sussex: Academic Press, 2008, p.281.

[10] Donald Stadtner, *Sacred Sites of Burma*. Bangkok, Thailand: River Books,, p.262.
[11] Chie Ikeya, "The Modern Burmese Woman and the Politics of Fashion in Colonial Burma." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67 (4): 1277–1308, 2008, p.1303..
[12] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso, 2006, pp. 4-6..
[13] Ibid., p. 7.
[14] Ibid., p. 36.
[15] Ibid., p. 12.
[16] Ibid, 13.
[17] Ibid., p. 13.
[18] Ibid., pp.14-15.
[19] Ibid., pp.16-18.
[20] Ibid., p. 36.
[21] Ibid., p. 21.
[22] Ibid., p. 24.
[23] Ibid., p. 24.
[24] Ibid., p. 26.
[25] Ibid., p. 36.
[26] Ibid., p. 37.
[27] Ibid.,pp. 43-45.
[28] Ibid., p. 46.
[29] Larah Wessendorf, *The Era of General Ne Win: A Biographical Approach of His Military and Political Career Considering Burmese Traditions of Political Succession*. Berlin: regiospectra, 2012, p. 66
[29] Ibid., p.50.
[30] Renaud Egreteau and Larry Jagan, Op cit., p. 60.
[31] Ibid., p. 60.
[32] Ibid., p. 61.
[33] Ibid., p. 61.
[34] Ibid., p. 61.
[35] Larah Wessendorf, Op cit., p. 66.

[36] Ibid., pp. 66-67.
[37] Penny Edwards, "Dressed in a Little Brief Authority: Clothing the Body Politic in Burma." In *The Politics of Dress in Asia and the Americas*, edited by Mina Roces and Louise Edwards, 121–38. Brighton and Portland: Sussex: Academic Press. 2008, p.57.
[38]Ibid., p. 57.
[39]Ibid., p. 57.
[40]Ibid., p. 57.
[41]Ibid. , p. 59.
[42]Ibid., p. 58.
[43] Renaud Egreteau and Larry Jagan, Op cit, p. 108.
[44]Aung Myoe Maung, *In the Name of Pauk-Phaw : Myanmar's China Policy since 1948*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), 2011, p.14.
[45] Renaud Egreteau and Larry Jagan, Op cit., p.126.
[46] Ibid., *p.* 126.
[47] Mary Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004, p. 45.
[48] Ibid., p.48.
[49] Larah Wessendorf, *Op cit.,* p. 30.
[50] Ibid., p. 30.
[51] Ibid., p. 31.
[52] Ibid., p. 32.
[53] Ibid., p. 31.
[54] Ibid., p. 33..
[55] Ibid., p. 33.
[56] Penny Edwards, Op cit., p. 10.
[57] Ibid., p. 10.
[58] Ibid., p. 133.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Larah Wessendorf, Op cit., p. 106.
[63] Ibid., p. 106.
[64] Ibid., p. 106.
[65] Ibid., p. 101.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., p. 102.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., p.103.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., p.105.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., p. 20.
[82] Ibid.

Ecofeminism: An Alternative Path towards Equality

By

Sarbani Guha Ghosal *

Abstract

Environment and women are undoubtedly the two important categories which are facing threats since the inception of modern civilization. Any kind of contemporary development discourse is absolutely incomplete without proper appraisal of the problems faced by the women and nature. An important forum of fruitful dialogue for liberating the both is the area of ecofeminism. Its ultimate aim is to develop a feminism that is ecological and ecology that is feminist. In the present article thus attempt has been made to analyze the issue from both western and eastern perspectives as well as to highlight the internal debates within these two broad approaches. The article also illustrates some important international understanding in the domain of women, environment and development and side by side some examples are dealt at length where people get involved with an objective to change the gender relations and environmental politics together.

Introduction

> *"Women – particularly those in poor countries …are among the most vulnerable to climate change,... Women manage households and care for family members, which often limit their mobility and increase their vulnerability to sudden weather-related natural disasters…*
> *…the close connection between gender, farming, climate change deserves far more analysis than it currently receives. Because of greater poverty, lesser power over their own lives, less recognition of their economic productivity and their disproportionate burden in reproduction and child- raising, women face additional challenges as climate changes."*
>
> … State of the World's Population, 2009

*Sarbani Guha Ghoshal is Associate Professor, Political Science, Bijoy Krishna Girls' College, Howrah. Email: ghosalsarbani@rediffmail.com
IAAPS Perspective, Vol.2, 1, June 2018

:-Facing a Changing World: women, population & climate
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Since the last quarter of the twentieth century the term "*ecofeminism*" has developed as an important theoretical and action oriented concept. Influence of feminist and ecological movements started keeping their imprint on sociopolitical agenda of different countries challenging the dominant power-and-technology based world views, acknowledging several noticeable aspects which have been excluded, ignored or denied for long. The main forum for fruitful dialogue between feminism and environmentalism is the area of ecofeminism, which aims at developing a feminism that is ecological and ecology that is feminist.[1] Feminism and environmentalism have a liberating orientation, liberation of both women and nature. Modern political ideologies are marked by profound impact of feminism and environmentalism. Ecology and feminism both needs one another. The close relationship between women and nature conjoins the ecological ethics attempting to explain environmental degradation and sexist oppression.

Origin

In the west ecofeminism, as an action-oriented philosophy and part of the resistance politics has emerged as a product of the peace, feminist and ecological movements since 1970s, gaining momentum in 1980s. In 1974 the French writer Francoise d' Eaubonne has coined the term *ecofeminism* and has called upon women to lead an ecological revolution to save the planet by conjoining the radical ecological and feminist thinking to eliminate gender inequalities and hierarchies in a way that valued the environment and articulated parallels between women's and environmental exploitation.[2] Women's movements must unite their demands with those of ecological movement "to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socio-economic relations and the underlying values of this society" [3] as there can be no liberation for women and no solution to the ecological crisis in a society based on domination.

In August 1979, after the accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear plant in Pennsylvania twelve women, active in anti-nuclear, alternative energy, peace and women's organizations decided to work together under the name "Women and Life on Earth" and agreed on a Unity Statement. It organized a conference in the 1980s at Amherst, Massachusetts – the first ever ecofeminist conference. It explored the connections between feminism, militarism, health and ecology followed by the formation of Women's Pentagon Action Group. In

November 1980 about 2000 members of this group encircled Pentagon demanding "no more amazing inventions for death". Series of literature on ecofeminism was published in west immediately after this. Important among these are the works of Yenestra King, Carolyn Merchant, Ariel Kay Salleh, Karen Warren, Val Plumwood, Greta Gaard, and Judith Plant.

Nature and Feature

Ecofeminism needs to be understood with cooperation from cultural history, natural science and socioeconomic perspectives, all with a shared concern for interconnection with the issue of domination. Union of ecology and feminism is its main focus. However, ecofeminism as a separate area of study has both commonality and contradiction with the both. Ecology examines the process of natural communities functioning to sustain a healthy web of life and how death of the plant and animal life occurs due to human intervention. Ecofeminism analyses the cause and nature of pollution of soil, air and water and life systems of the plants and animals threatening the survival of the earth, its impact on women. Deep ecology insists that earth is continuously being devastated not for human social and technological use alone. The symbolic, cultural and psychological patterns through which humans have gradually distanced themselves from nature with a desire to control it require serious attention. Ecological healing demands a psycho-cultural conversion from the anthropocentric understanding of separation and domination. Feminism, on the other hand, is a complex movement with multiple dimensions. In liberal democratic framework it refers to attempt for full inclusion of the women in political rights and access to equal economic rights. The socialist and liberationist feminism is defined as a radical transformation of the patriarchal socioeconomic system where male domination over the women is considered as the foundation of all social hierarchies. Culturalist framework regards feminism as a consciousness, charting the symbolic, psychological and cultural connections between the definition of women as inferior in moral, mental and physical sense and men as custodian of reasoning, knowledge and power. Ecofeminism actually belongs to this third domain and thus parts of feminism are covered in ecofeminism, but not the whole.[4]

Ecofeminism is revolutionary promoting the idea of eliminating the domination over nature and over women. These two oppressions are inextricably connected and "they must be addressed together, rather than in isolation and to that end we must radically revise our understanding of gender and nature".[5] The domination of women and

nature has to be reconstructed and re-conceptualized challenging the ideology of patriarchal values and structural relations. It is essential to promote equality, non-violence and non-hierarchical forms of organization and to realize the interconnectedness of all life processes. Humans should not try to control nature and should work along with it moving beyond power-based relationships. Ecofeminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice.[6] It sees the devastation of the earth by the corporate warriors and the threat of nuclear annihilation by the military warriors as feminist concerns as opposed to masculinist mentality that denies women's right to their own sexuality and promotes display of force in different forms.

Aristotle and Bacon are considered as two major targets of ecofeminism. Aristotlean view considers that culture must dominate the nature. His identification of the female principle with passivity and its association with object and natural world has furnished the basic philosophical framework of west. Feminism opposes this very linkage. Some ecofeminists agree with Aristotle that women are closer to nature but they critique the principle of male activism. The ecofeminist holds the view that men tend to be destructive of life and nature. Women, as life-givers have a special connection with nature. But this association between women and nature cannot rationalize the oppression of both by the society. It believes that women are less severely alienated from nature than most men. [7]

Francis Bacon, the British philosopher of science of seventeenth century stated that the project of modern western science, technology and culture were directed toward the transgression of every cultural and natural limit. As a result nature has been devalued. Culture is regarded as some kind of device to enable humankind to live as long and as fully as possible. [8]From ideological point of view Bacon crudely justified the oppression of women and nature by identifying nature as female who must be "bound into service" and made a "slave", put "in constraint" and "molded" by the "new science of man." [9]Anthropological explanation regards that exploitation of nature started before scientific revolution with the emergence of hunting behavior among male and with the growth of agricultural practice using animal ploughs. Actually the environmental and social philosophy of the west, from Socrates to Sartre, has been all about "humans" alone, which exclude both "woman" and "non-human." The sustained emphasis on "man" for almost twenty-five century has made the western ideological tradition thoroughly anthropocentric and more precisely male-centric. Ecofeminism constitutes critiques of both anthropocentrism and male-centrism and tries to surpass and substitute both.

The frequently asked question about ecofeminism is regarding the reasons for assembling feminism and environmental movements. Explanation can begin with the semantic understanding of the term "ecology", deriving from the Greek word "*oikos*", meaning thereby house. Thus, ecology can be described as a science of household – the earth's household and the connection between earth and household undoubtedly has been mediated by women.(Merchant 1999:139) The feminist and ecological movements found a parallel between the devaluation of both women and nature. This link was considered by ecofeminists "not as any false construction of weakness, but as a strong unifying force that clarified the violation of women and the earth as the part of the same drama of male control."[10] Violence against nature and against women is deeply ingrained in contemporary development paradigm and surely a shift, in process and goals, from this is urgently needed. The separation of humanity and nature is "the lynchpin of patriarchal ideology, and both deep ecology and ecofeminism share a desire to dislodge that pin". Ecofeminism promises release from a complex set of exploitations based on patriarchal identification of femaleness with the order of nature. [11] We must remember that although ecofeminism does not originate from the development discourse per se, it has gained popularity in different development initiatives including the Gender, Environment and Development (GED) initiatives particularly in the developing world. Ecofeminism clearly reinterprets feminism providing a distinctive framework both for re-conceiving feminism and for developing an environmental ethic which takes seriously connections between domination of women and domination of nature. [12]

Patriarchal oppressive conceptual framework justifies subordination of nature and women with value-hierarchical arguments. It refers to the treatment of the disjuncts of the whole as oppositional and exclusive instead of complimentary and inclusive. For instance, mind and reason are considered as values belonging to male and body and emotion as female values. It is this logic of domination coupled with value-hierarchical thinking and value-dualism that justifies mainstream (male-stream) domination of both nature and women. It believes that humans have the capacity to consciously and radically change the community in which they live and rocks and plants do not have this capacity. Thus, humans are morally superior to plants and rocks and the subordination of plants and rocks by humans is justified. By extending this same patriarchal renaissance logic women are identified with "nature", in the realm of "physical" and "emotion"; while men stand for "human" in the realm of "mental" and "reason". So, "superior" men are justified in subordinating "inferior" women. This

"logic of domination" historically is instrumental in sustaining patriarchy. Contrarily, an ecofeminist perspective about both women and nature involves a shift in attitude; from this "arrogant perception" to a "loving perception" toward non-human world. Thus ecological feminism can be referred as a sensibility, an intimation that feminist concerns run parallel to. [13](Warren 2003:294)

Ecofeminist analysis explores the socioeconomic underpinning of how the domination of women's body and women's work interconnects with the exploitation of land, water and animals. Women's bodies and minds are colonized by the patriarchy through legal, economic, social and political systems with the same logic which justifies uncontrolled extraction of natural resources. Ecofeminists see the separation of men and women by patterns of cultural dualism of mind-body, dominant-subordinate, thinking-feeling falsify both men and women who demand treatment in terms of wholeness. But mainstream culture deliberately nurtures this dualism to consider both women and nature as property of men. Thus, ecofeminism is about deconstructing this dualism regarding nature and women. Another group of ecofeminists believe that patriarchal woman-nature connection justifies the abuse and domination of both and distorts a deeper truth. Women are the life-giver, the nurturers, the food-gatherers, initial inventors of agriculture and ones in whom life-seed grows. The first image of the worshipped was Goddess – the food-provider and child-bearer. The spirit of the scientific revolution in Europe led to the separation of culture from nature and domination of nature was no more considered as unethical, rather judicious use of resources. There are also some ecofeminists who trace the growth of patriarchal religion around 4500 B.C. "when the shift from goddess-worshipping cultures to male deities began" as the beginning point of the separation and consequent devaluation of both nature and women. [14] This approach may sound quite exciting but potentially it is too dangerous and misleading. Particularly, the oriental experience depicts simultaneous existence of female exploitation and worship of female goddess. This western essentialist matri-centric ecofeminism fails to make real connection between domination of women and classism, racism and poverty. [15] In short, ecofeminism is a theory uniquely standing at the crossroads of environmentalism and feminism attempting a holistic analysis of human being in their natural contexts. Ecofeminists claim that environmental issues are definitely feminist issues as women and children are the first to suffer the consequences of social injustice and environmental destruction.

Ecofeminism aims to provide an alternative ethic which is not male biased and satisfies the conditions of feminist ethic. As a theory

ecofeminism is basically anti-naturist, anti-sexist, anti-racist and anti-classist and rejects any kind of thought or action that justifies domination over either women or non-human nature. It represents a "contextualist ethic" involving a shift from the general conception of ethics as a matter of rights, rules or principles and emphasizes more on relationship. It is not homogeneous and structurally pluralistic and ecofeminist theory is based on community-based knowledge and values and its strength is dependent on the inclusivity, flexibility and reflexibility of the community concerned. It focuses on coalition building with any individual or groups struggling against exploitation and oppression. It includes multiple narratives and thus its approach is one of "*quilt-making*", which change over time as the "historical and material realities of women's lives change and more is known about women-nature connection and destruction of the non-human world. Ecofeminism is inclusivist in nature emerging from the innumerable voices of women loaded with experience of harmful domination over nature and women. The concept emerges from listening to the voices of the indigenous people of different parts. Ecofeminism provides a framework for recognizing and contextualizing the appropriate conduct toward both human and non-human environments. Thus, there is no single "objective" point of view and values of care, love, friendship, trust and reciprocity are its core area. Ecofeminism denies absolute individualism. It welcomes appropriate ecological science and technology, believing that environmental challenges demand scientific and technological responses for solutions. It emphasizes on taking into account the historical and interconnected exploitations of women and nature in solutions of environmental problems and insists upon the inclusion of appropriate insights and data of scientific ecology and opposes the practice of one without the other. [16]

Debates and Possibilities

Examination of environmental issues with a feminist lens to understand the intersection of gender, social-economy and the environment is known as ecofeminism. Multiple configurations of ecofeminism prevent its analysis in monolithic format. Carolyn Merchant like feminist scholars believe that ecofeminism has drawn influence from liberal, radical and socialist feminism and have impact upon all these three. [17](Merchant 2010:291) Liberal feminism is consistent with the objectives of reform environmentalism to alter human relations with nature by implementation of new laws and regulations. For liberal ecofeminism the environmental problems are results of rapid exploitation of natural resources and lack of regulation in the use of environmental pollutants. It calls for an environmentally sound social production with better science, conservation and laws.

Radical ecofeminism starts by critiquing patriarchy and offering alternatives that could liberate both women and nature. Finally, socialist ecofeminism is based on the analysis of capitalist patriarchy and calls for total restructuring through a socialist revolution holding the market economy responsible for the dual oppression of women and nature which considers both women and nature as resources to be used maximally.

Ecofeminism has gained maximum strength from the second wave of feminism or radical feminism by highlighting the parallel oppressions of women and nature and by encouraging an ethic of caring and politics of solidarity. This has been vehemently contradicted by the proponents of the third wave of feminism, like Donna Haraway. Her works attempt to breakdown the distinction between nature and culture and technology. She argues that many of the views embraced by ecofeminism are "completely compatible with continued male oppression".[18] She said that values embraced by ecofeminists can often serve to support the male power and different versions of ecofeminism have narrated the problem of dual exploitation of nature without questioning the underlying politics or power dynamic inherent in this duality.

Val Plumwood have criticized it from inside by pointing out that dominant androcentric forms of environmental theory have dealt poorly with human-non-human connection. It does not mean that feminism is automatically better foundation for an ecological world view. Ecofeminism just provides better philosophical foundations for an ecological consciousness and alternatives to the human-centeredness that distorts our connection with the non-human world. Critical ecological feminism argues that women are not "part of nature" or "closer to nature" more than men. Both sexes are equally part of nature and as dependent on it as other living creatures. A truly human life is actually embedded in both nature and culture, which are not "hyper-separated spheres". [19] It is also pointed out that ecofeminism is not a true movement and there are several visions, each differentiated from other without integrated collective view. Ecofeminism serves as a term of identity that may unite the groups of conferences, in books, and in popular press, but does not create uniform commitment to a uniform mission. Ecofeminism is an identity umbrella, without a mission statement which could create commitment and concerted, collective action. [20] Moreover, in the environmental domain women should neither be treated e as a separate and isolated category nor a homogeneous category ignoring their class, caste, culture, race, age and regional differences

Patriarchal values and actions are not alone responsible for the dangers; woman and man together are responsible for the waste of the earth. Women of the developed world and powerful women everywhere equally inflict damage upon the earth. The developed world views that the women of the developing societies of south, whose existence is dependent upon nature, particularly on forest land, are mostly responsible for degradation of the earth. Actually the north-south power disparity is a crucial factor in understanding the issue.

Non-western version of ecofeminism is incomplete without the analysis of Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies' position. Shiva, the most visible advocate of ecofeminism in India has noted that violence against women and nature are linked not just ideologically but very much materially. Her works are often categorized as radical but her critique of the capitalist development model places her more into socialist-ecofeminist bloc. She critiques the modern science and technology as western, patriarchal and colonial causing environmental degradation of India. Western model of development is inherently violent perpetuating violence against women and nature. Adoption of this model has shifted the traditional Indian philosophy, which sees *prakriti* (nature) as a living and creative process; the feminine principle from which all life arises. This model has exploited the nature mercilessly and the feminine principle is no longer associated with activity, creativity and sanctity of life, but is considered passive and a resource to be used. This ultimately has led to the marginalization, devaluation, displacement and dispensability of women. Mies and Shiva believe in changing this orientation with a subsistence perspective and promoting participatory democracy. Their perspective "resists all efforts to further privatize, and or commercialize the commons: water, air, waste, soil resources and fosters common responsibility for these gifts of nature and demands their preservation and regeneration". They have further stated, "if the dichotomy between life-producing and preserving and commodity producing activities is abolished, if acquire caring and nurturing qualities which have so far been considered women's domain, and if in an economy based on self-reliance, mutuality, self-provisioning not women alone but men too are involved in subsistence production they will have neither any time nor inclination to pursue their destructive war. A subsistence perspective can also effectively contribute in demilitarization of men and society – and can live in peace with nature". [21]

However Shiva's version of ecofeminism has been criticized by several scholars. Shiva's study is basically on the rural women of north and west India and tends to generalize for entire India and over entire Third World disregarding the demographic variables. According to

Gabriel Dietrich, Shiva presupposes a society that is democratically organized and where everyone is the owner of sufficient land to survive. Meera Nanda has made a scathing attack against Shiva and brands her as "neo-populist scholar", who has tried wrongly to prove anything western as inherently vicious and the Third World as fundamentally virtuous. Shiva has ignored the existing social inequalities based on caste, class, power, privilege and property relations. Actually environmental injustice is very closely related with power structure of the society. In the US also the low-income communities and the communities of colour bear the greatest burden of environmental injustice.

The western form of ecofeminist scholarship has also been strongly contested by scholars like Bina Agarwal, Cecile Jackson, Janet Biehl, Meera Nanda and others who have identified the existing form of ecofeminism as "ethnocentric, essentialist, blind to class, ethnicity and other differentiating cleavages, ahistorical and neglects the material sphere". [22](Jackson 1993:398)In the western discourse the relation between gender and environment is primarily ideological. Contrarily in the southern world it is more a struggle for survival. People's relationship with nature needs to be understood with reference to their material reality. There is gender and (/caste/race) based division of labour and distribution of property resulting in diversified effects and responses. It is in this background indeed Bina Agarwal has formulated her alternative concept of "*feminist environmentalism*". [23](Agarwal 1992:119-149) The poor women in rural households of India are victims of environmental degradation in quite gender specific ways. They have been active agents in the movements of environmental protection and regeneration and the increasing urbanization and modernization based development process also has pushed them against the wall. Particularly in the tribal belts, hilly and forest areas the food, fuel and fodder that they procure from nature for mere subsistence put a pressure on the environment. Population explosion is another contributing factor to this disarray. Thus, the repositories of the intergenerational knowledge about nature become victims of the destruction of nature. In a non-egalitarian and hierarchical society like India the plight of the poor women is multiple. Agarwal believes all these factors need to be addressed through feminist environmentalism; not merely through theoretical aspect of man-woman or man-nature relationships. Gender dimensions of south are beyond the comprehension of western ecofeminist perspective. The gender based environmental inequalities prevalent in global south have some unique characteristics as ownership of land and property inheritance strictly follows religio-patriarchal formulation here. The position of the women vis-à-vis environment is more vulnerable here.

Thus in southern environmental as well as gender development discourses emphasis is increasingly placed on meaningful participation of men and women in environmental policy making through civil society structures along with formal representative institutions. Government openness to the civil society scrutiny determines the effectiveness of policy monitoring as well. In this context we can refer to the example of Chipko movement, the movement for protection of trees and environment, once started in the Garhwal region and gradually had its spread from Kashmir to Arunachal Pradesh. Collective mobilization of the women were noted in this case for the preservation of forests with insistence on maintaining traditional status-quo in the Himalayan and other forest regions of India has brought about a conflict regarding their own status in the society. Their demand for sharing space in the decision making process, along with men, initially led to strong opposition from the male members of those societies and they put strong opposition to the women's support and participation in the movement using all the patriarchal forms of domination. The Chipko workers thus made direct appeal to the women, who were the sole in-charge of cultivation, livestock and children-rearing and who frequently lost all for recurring floods and landslides. Slowly the women started to act as agents of environment preservation and gradually they were able to establish themselves in the local level decision making and opinion making groups. Though Chipko as such was not a feminist movement per se, but issues of ecofeminism definitely were dominant in it and the governmental response in changing some forest policies reflected their victory.

Environmental causes and feminist ideals in India quite often have addressed the local ecofeminist politics in different areas from within with an objective to change the gender relations and ecopolitics. In Kerala both the Silent valley and the anti- Cocacola movements to an extent successfully addressed the ecofeminist issues by emphasizing on the dominant institution of care, the modern family and environmental care. In the case Narmada Bnachao Andolan also the displacement strategies of the intruders have affected the women most and they always took a leading role in the struggle in a peaceful way. The revival of this Gandhian tradition of *ahimasa* and *satyagraha* as strategies of ecofeminist movements is an interesting feature of the South Asian states. In Thailand and Bangladesh also these twin strategies have been implemented for environmental protection by the women. The forest lands in Thailand declined from 53% in 1961 to 29% in 1985. The Thai women through their Dhamma Raksha Reforestation programme began the reforestation programme with emphasis on promoting sustainable agriculture. They also have

opposed the plantation of eucalyptus trees as they lower the water level of the ground and dry up the region. Similarly, in coastal areas the women strongly opposed shrimp cultivation as it severely affects the mangrove forests and wetlands. Moreover, shrimp aquaculture is a source of several serious diseases. The rural women of Bangladesh, particularly of the coastal areas are quite vocal for the protection of mangrove forests in their land because 70% of the people affected every year there for flood are women and children.[24] Moreover, women's access to the government rehabilitation programmes are also little as land in the most cases is registered in the names of the male members of the family. So, they are more interested in the conservation projects as it gave them substantial benefit like food security, health care, income and a sustainable system. In Indonesia destruction of rain forest and the palm trees are a major concern. In an estimate [25] it is stated that 76 million acres of palm trees have been destroyed for supplying raw materials to the cosmetic industry only. Besides this dreadful mining operations are also dislodging the ecological balance in an alarming way. In their struggle for environment and natural resources protection Indonesian women often keep strong vigilance against the intruders who try to grab the environment with the help of state administration. The story of Aleta Baun can be mentioned here who recommended to all women who joined the movement to stay in the forest, and urged all men to mind the children and our house.

In a more recent development the struggle and determination of the poor tribal people of the Niyamgiri hills of Orissa have forced the Vedanta Resources to withdraw their bauxite mining ambition. Here also the women took a leading role not only in the struggle but also as conscious agents in the decision making process. As per the Supreme Court order of 18th April, 2017 Government of Orissa had selected seven villages of Rayagada and five villages of Kalahandi districts to hold Gram Sabha from 18th July to 19th August,2018 to express their opinion on whether bauxite mining in Niyamgiri will be permitted to Vedanta. In all these Gramsabha meetings, all of which rejected the proposal of bauxite mines, the women participated in large numbers as discussants and voters. Quite often they also outnumbered the men like in Kesarpadi, Phuldumur, Lakharpadar, Lamba, Khambesi, Palberi and Batudi villages.[26] The women led vehement protest movements in the Niyamgiri hills against the powerful industrial giant by putting forward the ecofeminist issues of peace, health and livelihood in front with a clear concern for themselves and their posterity.

The class-gender effects of the processes of degradation, nationalization and privatization of nature's resources, the erosion of

the traditional system of knowledge and resource management techniques have severest effects on the poor rural households. Poor rural women are mostly burdened with the responsibility of gathering and fetching from the forests, village commons, rivers and wells. Often they are the primary if not the sole economic providers. Systematic gender differences can be noted in the distribution of subsistence resources and healthcare and education. They are always in a disadvantageous position because of low status in the labour market with fewer employment opportunities, less occupational mobility, lower levels of training and lower payments for similar works. They face greater seasonal fluctuations in earning and have extremely limited right to private property. Thus are more dependent on common resources. Moreover, marriage related mobility leads to weaker support network for them.

Feminist environmentalism of Agarwal calls for struggles over both resources and meaning. It implies grappling with the dominant groups who have property, power and privilege to control resources, natural as well as educational, media, religious and legal institutions. On the feminist front there is a need to challenge and transform both notions about gender and the actual division of work and resources between genders. On the environmental front there is a need to challenge and transform the notions about the relationship between people and nature and the actual methods of appropriation of nature's resources by few. The feminist environmentalism underlines the need of addressing the different dimensions from both ends.

Wickramasinghe in her research on South-Asian context has pointed out that while various efforts for promoting women and environment and development have been put forward by various interventionists, including the ecofeminists, women's status as managers of local environment has been either deteriorated or women have been pushed further toward marginal environments. The implication for environmental politics, particularly from the perspective of empowering women is serious because the conventional gender gaps have been re-endorsed in the newly created developmental paradigms where unequal distribution of power over local resources has been established. Environmental justice for women, particularly in agrarian economy of the South Asian countries, whose livelihood systems are local resource based, will not be achieved as long as stratification in the conventional social, economic and political systems alienate them. Environmental justice for women in South Asia is not merely matter of structuring the rationale for women's claims, but also of highlighting issues that undermine women's status. The ascribed discriminatory gender relation has contributed in their lower rate of literacy, lower

educational enrolments and consequently lower status in local environment. Ironically this lower socio-economic status of women has allowed the policy makers to ignore them. Their rights are being compromised regularly and women are forced to labour as passive workers in local environments without any power to control their workplace environment. The women-environment linkage systems are complex and are influenced by many factors including quality and quantity of resources available to women, local livelihood systems, policy, legislation, customary practices, and so on. The intra-country variation, like India, is also quite greater. [27]

Social and environmental injustices are interconnected. Attempts for raising the social status of women through welfare schemes have not been able to eliminate the environmental inequalities developed locally over time. Asian women actually need rights as "environmental citizens" to make decisions and act as equal citizens in their own surrounding. It is for this Wickramasinghe's prophetic remark is that [28](Wickramasinghe2006:248) if the actual aim is to promote sustainable, environmentally responsible societies, then it is important that in these countries, as well as in other parts of the world women's environmental citizenship should be granted. She in her study has observed that in South Asia the rural areas are the particular centres of ecofeminism and this has also helped the women to conceptualize the links between women and environment. The existing inequalities in education, health or work opportunities have not been solved by the state initiated development programmes. Adequately and thus newly created development paradigm has become a necessity. Ecofeminism here tries to combine theory and activism to challenge and redefine some foundational principles and to ensure environmental and gender justice.

Conclusion

Since the early 1970s a growing interest in women's relations with the environment in the countries of the south has emerged within the development discourse. At the Nairobi Forum 1985, held parallel to the UN Women and Development Conference, women's actions and special role in environmental management were presented with case studies that documented their involvement in forestry, agriculture, energy and so on based on the experience of the women of the south. Women were portrayed as environmental managers whose involvement is crucial to the achievement of sustainable development. After the publication of the Brundtland report (1987) the WED (Women, Environment, Development) debates focused on the imperative for women's involvement in strategies and programmes aimed at sustainable

development. Since the late 1980s the images of the poor women in the south as victims became transformed into images of strength and resourcefulness in the WED theme. In the wider debate on sustainable development women were increasingly promoted as privileged environmental managers and depicted as possessing inherent skills and knowledge in environmental care. [29] The UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 included a set of objectives in Chapter 24 entitled "Global Action for Women towards Sustainable and Equitable Development". The link was consolidated at the 4th UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The resulting Platform for Action identified women and environment as a critical area of concern. Decades after the UNCED, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) did little in reality to advance women's equality with respect to environment, though the concerns were written thoroughly in the Plan of Implementation. The Johannesburg Declaration adopted at the WSSD, referred to as Earth Summit, 2002 also, declared that commitment to ensure women's empowerment and emancipation and gender equality are integrated in all developmental activities. As opposed to these positive connections between women-nature we found that on several occasions even the leading environmentalist women have failed miserably to raise their voices against the dominant politico-social forces either deliberately or for some other reasons. For example, the role of the women Congress representatives during the days of the Gulf War, which reflected an essentially masculinist domination over natural resources and resulting in one of the serious destruction of environment, can be mentioned. There were eight leading women legistors of the US Congress at that time who was considered as powerful environmentalists, but unfortunately all of them preferred to remain silent over how the Middle-East war could affect the eco-system. Only Nancy Pelosi mentioned some possible devastation that could happen if Saddam's threat to blow the Kuwaiti oilfields became true. Unfortunately, her speech prompted huge ridicule for her colleagues.[30]

Ecofeminism as a movement and a body of research bridges the gap between environmentalism and feminism and draws parallels between the subjugation and socially constructed hierarchies around women and nature. It asserts that all systems of oppression are connected and must be critiqued in totality. Women bear the brunt of civil and environmental violations most as they account for 75% of the displaced refugees and 66% of world labour. [31] Globalization has led to the poverty of the women and indigenous cultures most as they are the first victims of the destruction of nature. Ecofeminism is identified as a sort of remedy to the invisibility of women facing industrialization and globalization. It addresses the contradictions between production and

reproduction while attempting to make problems more visible. The multiple perspectives of ecofeminism continually cross check and critique each other. It is a dynamic and evolving perspective. Its various strands are woven together by the concept of reproduction and continence of life on earth. The diverse perspectives of ecofeminism have one "common goal of restoring the quality of the natural environment and for people and other living and non-living inhabitants of the planet". [32](Merchant 1992:209) Precisely speaking, ecofeminism is an alternative to the dominant androcentric form of environmental theory. It helps in reshaping our basic sense of self in relation to an art of living in this world. We can remember Karen J. Warren who believes: "A re-conceiving and re-visioning of both feminism and environmental ethics is the power and promise of ecofeminism". [33] Last but not the least; ecofeminism is an important futuristic ideology which has a long way to go. Ecofeminist identification of the problems of our planet is quite justified though disputes exist regarding their redressal strategies. To conclude though ecofeminism is never a panacea for all the injustices and inequalities towards women and nature but it definitely helps in generating an ideological and practical awareness against those. It embodies a search for inclusive and humanitarian development. Actually, ecofeminism's challenge to social domination extends beyond sex to other forms of social domination, because the domination of sex, race and class and the domination of the nature definitely are mutually reinforcing. So, this approach can be considered as an alternative development discourse by eradicating the ambivalence and disrespect that the dominant culture displays towards women and nature. It attempts bring about a world and world-view overcoming the prevalent socio-economic and ideological structures of domination. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to identify this project as an alternative path towards gender equality, which can be reached by non-stop negotiation and collective action at local, national and international levels.

Notes

[1] Val Plumwood, *Feminism*, in J. Agyeman, R.D. Bullard & B. Evands (eds.), 2003

[2] Susan Buckingham, *Ecofeminism in the Twenty first Century*, in The Geographical Journal, Vol.170, No.2, June 2004

[3] Rosemary Radford Reuther, New Woman/New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation, The Seabury Press, New York, 1975

[4] Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Ecofeminism: First and Third World Women*, in American Journal of Theology and Philosophy, Vol. 18, No. 1, 1997

[5] Louis P. Pojman, Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application, Jones & Bartlett Publishers, London, 1994

[6] Ynestra King, *The Ecology of Feminism and Feminism of Ecology*,1983, Quoted in ManishaRao, *Ecofeminism at the Crossroads in India: A Review*, in DEP n.20/2012, p.125 in www.unive.it/media/allegato/dep/n20-2012 accessed on 04.09.15

[7] Barbara Arneil, Politics and Feminism, Blackwell, UK, 1999

[8] Hans Achterhuis, *Scarcity and Sustainability*, in Wolfgang Sachs (ed.), 2004

[9] Peta Bowden & Jane Mummery, Understanding Feminism, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 2012

[10] Leila R. Brammer, *Ecofeminism, The Environment and Social Movements*, 1998 in www.homepages.gac.edu/lbrammer/ecofeminism/html accessed on 30.10.15

[11] Ariel Salleh, *Class, Race and Gender Discourse in the Ecofeminism/ Deep Ecology Debate*, in Linda Kalof& Terre Satterfield (eds.), 2005

[12] Karen J. Warren, *The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism*, in David Keller(ed) ,2010

[13] Karen J. Warren & Jim Cheney, *Ecological Feminism and Ecosystem Ecology*, in Andrew Light & Holmes Rolstron (eds.), 2003

[14] Greta Gaard&LooriGruen, *Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health*, in Andrew Light & Holmes Rosltron (ed.s), 2003

[15] Rosemary Radford Reuther, Op.cit. pp. 34-39

[16] Karen J. Warren, *The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism*, in David Keller(ed) ,2010; Gaard and Gruen, Op.cit. pp. 279-287; Karen J. Warren & Jim Cheney, *Ecological Feminism and Ecosystem Ecology*, in Andrew Light & Holmes Rolstron (eds.), pp. 296-320, 2003

[17] Carolyn Merchant, *Feminism and Philosophy of Nature*, in David Keller (ed.) p. 291, 2010

[18] Barbara Arneil, Op.cit. p.202

[19] Val Plumwood, Op.cit. pp. 52-55

[20] Leila R. Brammer, Op.cit.

[21] Vandana Shiva & Maria Mies, Ecofeminism, Rawat Publications, Indian Reprint, New Delhi, pp. 319-321, 2010

[22] Cecile Jackson, *Women/Nature or Gender History? A Critique of Ecofeminist Development*, in The Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol.20, No.3, p. 398, April 1993

[23] BinaAgarwal, *The Gender Environment Debate: Lessons from India*, in Feminist Studies, Vol.18, No. 1, pp. 119-149, Spring 1992

[24] Moinul Islam & T.A. Chowdhury, *Role of Rural Women in Environment Conservation : A Bangladesh Study*, in www.conference.phuket.psu.ac.th/conf2012/proceedings accessed on 13.08.2018

[25] Beth Greenfield, *These Beauty Products are Causing Deforestation*, in www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/210601228.html accessed on 13.08.2018

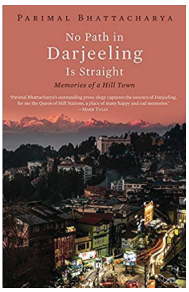
[26] Ranjita Behera, *Impact of Displacement: Understanding Women's Impoverishment and Recent Developments,* in International Journal of Development Research, Vol. 7, Issue 12, December 2017, accessed from www.journalijdr.com/sites/default/files/issue-pdf/11810.pdf on 13.08.2018

[27] AnojuWickramasinghe*, Women and Environmental Justice in South Asia*, in Andrew Dobson & Robyn Eckersley, pp. 229-236, 2006
[28] Ibid., p. 248
[29] R.Braidotti, E.Charkiewiez, S.Hansler and S.Wieringer, *Women, The Environment and Sustainable Developmen*t, in N.Visvanathan, L.Duggan, L.Nisnoff&N.Wiegersma (eds), pp. 54-56, 1997
[30] Andrienne Elizabeth Christiansen, Rhetoric, Rape and Eco-warfare in the Persian Gulf, in Karren J Warren (ed) Ecofeminism – Women, Culture, Nature, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 2014
[31] Nicole Brown, *Ecofeminism-is the movement still relevant? In Gender Across Borders*, March 22, 2012, www.genderacrossborders.com/2012/03/22
[32] Carolyn Merchant**,** Radical Ecology, Routledge, New York, p. 209, 1992
[33] Karen J. Warren, *The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism*, in David Keller(ed.) ,2010

Book Review

By

Anup Sekhar Chakraborty*



Parimal Bhattacharya's *No Path in Darjeeling is Straight: Memories of a Hill Town* **(New Delhi: Speaking Tiger, 2017) Pages: i-vi, 1-194, Price: Rs. 450 (HB)**

Parimal Bhattacharya's *No Path in Darjeeling is Straight: Memories of a Hill* is an interesting addition to the popular books on Darjeeling. Abound in vivid description of the hill town and the townies-'Darjeelingeys'. The book is structured into 7 themed 'contents'-

Home Weather (pp.1-25) The writer claims that "Perhaps Darjeeling is not a town, perhaps it is a narration that is being put together for more than a century." Bhattarchrya provides an intense reading of the town and its people and at times takes the reader into the dense,dark and the brightness of the 'hill town' as the 'little stories' unfold and weave itself into a larger one. The chapter borrows from many earlier writings on the building of a sanatorium and the white life and the relations with the natives. The construction of the hill station and the associated social imaginaries at play- 'this home weather'- 'English Rain', 'English Mud', - everything British is reflected in these lines.

The chapter re-narrates and thus duplicates the already known aspects of British romanticism of hill stations, sanatoriums and their strong desire to recreate European highlands in South Asia. The spectacle that

*Anup Shekhar Chakraborty is Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science & Political Studies, Netaji Institute for Asian Studies, Kolkata.
Email: anupshekharc@rediffmail.com

Darjeeling commands even today can be grasped from the 'spotting games' (p. 22) played by the author and his student Pratap in a remote nondescript village Tuia (14-25). Also, the tendency to be attracted to Darjeeling has been paralleled to the attraction of the insects to light bulbs. The 'young' are more susceptible to the 'attractions' of Darjeeling. The author tries to force this point through his description of the sitting arrangements of the people during an evening get together at Tuia village in Pratap's house : 'all the elderly men had their backs turned to the glittering townscape, the relatively young ones sat facing it' (p. 23). Though just a simple sitting posture, the point could be significant and raises associated questions 'Which way did the women sit and look? Given that in the chapter '*The Lights of Jorethang'* women from remote places (tea gardens) seem to be the problem and the source for spreading disease and having a damaging effect on Darjeeling and its residents.

The section devoted to tendencies of suicides and Darjeeling (pp.4-7) connects the tendencies to its historical links of similar tendencies of the soldiers posted at Senchel[1] and the current cases of suicides by tourists in Darjeeling. The root of the problem here - 'suicide'[2] -is strangely linked to the melancholy and the incessant rains and the white fogs that cover the horizon for months at a stretch. In another part the author mentions 'life is hard, death is even harder' (p.11) in the hills, given the grim realities of development-maintenance deficit and the general governmental/administrative (both localized and that from the state of West Bengal) apathy, the author's statement seems to be true.

Dawn at the Butcher Shop (pp.26-39) the chapter is a continuation of the first in the sense that both the chapters speak of the towns initial histories and the people therein. The text is largely hooked to the inter-generational memories of the town passed to the author from his grandfather; one cannot ignore the specter of his grandfather's versions or visions of the colonial bastion of Darjeeling and the Kanchenjunga. The following a scripts point to this: 'knew of the town was through his grandfather, a garden variety ex-*babu,* who believed Darjeeling to be India's answer to the Lake District of the Romantic poets, and whose favourite flower was the daffodil, even though he had never seen one in the flesh'. The author tries to develop the polarized attitudes of the Bengali towards Darjeeling (one represented by his mother, the other by his *Dadu* (grandfather)) especially amidst the concerns of the *Chiyasi ko Andolan.* Travelling to Darjeeling for the first time to join a new job as a lecturer in Darjeeling Government College, the author learns to become 'local', become a Darjeelingey. This marks an important issue of 'how migrants attune and acclimatize themselves

amidst challenges and the nostalgia of a 'Home', interestingly for the migrant the new space over time also becomes another 'home'. This conveys the aptness of the saying the 'Home is where the heart is'.

The author once again replicates and reproduces known facts of the place, such as the description of Sukna, contributions of O'Malley and Hooker, the Darjeeling Himalayan railway etc. (p 30- 39) This is diversion is not essential to develop the plots or the linked stories.

Salamanderland (pp.40-70) The choice of the title is apt. The 'salamander' as an amphibian has the unique ability to live in diverse situation- be it land or water. The 'adaptiveness' of Darjeeling is what is celebrated in this chapter. In sync with the title of the 'content' the chapter feeds the reader with an astute narration of the myriad adaptive ways of the town and its people both 'now resident' and the 'migrants' and their claim to being 'local'. This claim to being local also doubles as claim to ownership, and this being a vexed exercise the notion of 'local' keeps fleeting: 'But that Darjeeling would have belonged entirely to the sahibs, memsahibs, and the native coolies, not the Bengalis' (p.56); the author also attempts to camouflage himself during his service in the hills by resorting to this claims making: '*daju, mo local ho*' (p.68).

Finding or discovering Darjeeling and the claims to Darjeeling is a thematic current within the larger points in discussion in the initial parts of this chapter. 'Darjeeling is not to be found in Darjeeling then because it is already been hijacked into the posters hanging on the railings of Laden La Road, sold at twenty rupees per piece' (p. 49).[3] The author repeats already documented history of 'Hope Town' as nuggets of history or 'non-history scattered all over these hills' (p.51). To those unaware of the histories of the region this might give a feeler of being informed 'first hand' however this is not so.[4]

The author suggestively says that the taxi route to Darjeeling could be named 'longing'. This choice of name is befitting the author's melancholy and deep seated desire to retain and put into operation his 'inherited sense' of time and space in an alien new space where he was in 'exile' (p. 40). The author uses 'long empty evening' (p. 60) to describe that time of the evening which fails to be in tune with his inherited sense of time and space of Kolkata city.

The Lights of Jorethang (pp.71-83) The choice of the title I must say is apt for the descriptions layered in the chapter. I would say 'the lights are far ways we can only see the teeny lights across the other-side of the hills, that being so the fine rays, the exposure of the lights, their

radiance etc., thus remains the problematic of the 'bird's eye' and fails to catch the 'worm's eye'. The author's lines 'on spotting jorethang' aptly point the issue that I am highlighting. While Benson could see the lights in Jorethang ('I've found it! 'I've found it! Look, Bhatta, look-it's there! Can't you see it? p.79) the author could only see the white teeth of Benson ('I could only see rows of white teeth gleaning on a face perfectly blended into the surrounding darkness' p. 79).

The chapter touches on multiple issues and peels the onion to the core. In the opening page (71) Bhattacharya focuses on the change in communication amidst the larger global changes in the hills that had just returned to peace or 'normalcy' of its own construction. This point noted by the author though touched fleetingly forms the crux of inter-personal reciprocations that we can experience at global levels across societies especially in South Asia for instance, the decline of 'letter writing' (letter writing skills or writing skills in general) and the rise in mediated conversations or communications through the gadgets such as the telephone in the late 80s through the 90s and the mobiles through the 2Ks. The author observantly connects the 'global-local' interfaces as operative in Darjeeling of the 90s to the market changes and wave of global agents in a hill economy that was largely based on the colonial economics of 'tea-timber-tourism' and the 'flow of remittances of male out-migrants from the hills'. To bring the points the author replays the 'visible' that is the hoardings of Coca-cola with Shahrukh Khan as the poster boy in the advertisement. 'Porters[5] drinking coco-cola, 'eating plain rice mixed with coco-cola', spending a days earning on most expensive ice-creams at the ice-cream parlour at the mall (p.73), students at his college (Darjeeling Government College) wearing 'designer' dresses, a particular female student arriving in class with 'refurbished looks, permed golden hair and black eye' (p.74) etc. Visiting the dark, dingy alleys of Darjeeling the author pointedly brings the grim reality of 'poor economics' as operative in the hills through the 90s.

The author reinvokes the earlier laments for the romanticized past of Darjeeling and the present (1990s) grey pictures of the town- 'gone to the dogs' (p. 72) in continuation from the preceding chapters. And connects the 'dogs days' or the dogs rule with that of the larger political that is the Hill Council and the nepotisms that it entertained, unaccounted funds from Delhi and Kolkata and the spell of 'get-rich-quick' dreams that it injected among the 'Darjeelingeys'.

Though thick with ethnographic descriptions the discussions end up cementing 'stereotypes' and here is what remains problematic with the authors observations and his sources of information. The stereotypes

that the author further cements if marked by the descriptions throughout the chapter and the book itself: 'women more hard working than men' (p.76), 'men lounging on the wayside' (p.76), 'inspite of the freedom that a loosely matrilineal setup gave the women' (p.77), 'young women as 'baini' (sister), and reciprocal gesture 'daju' (brother), 'Tea garden girls!' (p79- 83) etc.

But then not much can be expected of a chapter that has been named so '*The Lights of Jorethang'* the distance between Darjeeling and the dim lights of Jorethang in Sikkim are unable to convey the warmth that those lights in Jorethang might have exhibited at a close proximity. The distance of the 'dim lights' and the viewer much like the distance of the narrator/writer and the objects/issues discussed becomes glaring.

Gnuiye and the Scarecrows (pp.84-120) this chapter is dense with repetitions of earlier colonial works on Darjeeling, ethnographic studies on the tribes, mass reproduction from O'Malley, Pinn, and many others. For those well versed with the history and the ethnography of the region this chapter gives a déjà vu sense of having read it before and therefore close to 'plagiarism'[6] defined.

The contributions of this chapter lie between the stories of Pratibha Datta (p. 93-96) and Newton Subba (pp.107-111) and the discussion on 'bandhs' in Darjeeling (which the author describes as a 'state of mind' rather than an event, p 119-120), while the former brings to the fore the continuation of the colonial hangover and the 'past' the latter injects the angst and fumbling steps of the 'new'. Between these two stories is the life world that Darjeeling weaves into existence and the emic prioritization that operates underneath. For instance, the importance attached to 'language' over 'water' (p.107) for making the residents aware (*Sachet/ Jagrukt*) of their political rights. Or for instance, the desire to muster the Gorkha votes in support of an Indian Idol contestant over the possible public donation for the purpose of re-building potholed road'. This is the classic case of the contest over 'Identity' and 'Development', and the understanding that the two run in polar directions and which is more urgent to address. This strong urge for Darjeeling to take its 'own shape' is also reflected in its as piratorial politics of a territorial representation of its self constructed community identity. The author notes (in chapter *Drumbeats in the Mist*, p.170) very aptly through his story of cooking mutton in Darjeeling and how the craving for 'mutton' (separate state of Gorkhaland) cannot be appeased with 'eggs' (DGHC or GTA).

Pemba's Umbrella (pp.121-164) the title of the chapter flows from a story of a mountain shepherd coming to collect the heirloom (a

wooden umbrella) passed on to him from his uncle. The story absorbs the pages 150-151. The story narrates the importance attached to mundane objects and their significance as an idea of a inheritance of an integral part of a shepherds life. (p.151). Drawing a parallel with the descriptions of the town 'now' and 'then', the reader can connect the notional aspect of the hill town much like the 'umbrella' that was passed on to Pemba from his uncle and to his deceased uncle from another generation. Darjeeling as a town has changed its shape, its size, its look, and its residents but still amidst cataclysmic changes there are continuities to retain its own flavor, its own identity.

The author in his narration in this chapter unfolds events such as a trek to Sandhakphu with a colleague and a European lady (pp. 140-158). The chapter shows among the many important points the subservient attitude of the writer. Throughout his interaction with Julia the author reserves the role of the listener for himself (p.156), and allows the conception of the Eurocentric world views as superior to subsume and control him. Julia as the 'Memsahib' is seen as the final word. Very little does the author enter into a counter conversation baring the point where the author interposes: 'But Buddha's teachings have spread all over the Himalayas. D'you thinks it is possible for a human group, however cut off it may be from civilization, not to come in contact with them?' (p. 156)).

The chapter deals densely with the ever problematic grid of identities in the region. As Julia notes 'Identity is a label an outsider sticks on you.'[7] Supposedly a good idea but construing from numerous studies on Identity and identity constructions we argue that Identity is not as neat as this statement ends up making. There is much more to understanding and living with Identities and south Asia is the laboratory where such coinages were minted during the days of the Raj. The text like all preceding works on Darjeeling engages deeply into time lining the arrival of different sets of people into the colonial bastion and create a rooster of 1st arrivals, 2nd arrivals, and so on a so forth. In the process such studies have typecast all people as 'migrants', and indeed all of us come from somewhere or the other. The folklore of the Lepchas (who are treated as the 'autochthonous') themselves show how they arrived into the present geopolitical space from their snow home in the Kanchanjunga. The tendency to write a migrants history pits one group against the other and thus identities become a vexed engagement in the hills. I draw a strong connect between the narration of the author about the incident of Hemraj finding a salamander in the in the frozen *pokhri* : 'It had come to the *pokhri* during the summer season for mating, but couldn't return to its nesting place in time because winter has set in early this year' (p. 158). This failure of the

salamander to go back on time can be seen as the inability of those who arrived in Darjeeling at various phases to go back on time and therefore acclimatize themselves to the conditions of the town.

The text in places loudly sanctifies 'otherization'. The authors own perceptions of communities and people in South Asian run hither and thither through the interweaving descriptions of the places and the people. 'East Bengal accent of the hotel owner at siliguri bus terminus' (p. 163). Here the author entraps himself to the popular idea that the residents of Siliguri that is the Bengalis in Siliguri are all from Bangladesh therefore illegal infiltrators. This kind of narrative finds popular buyers in parts of Kolkata and what is referred as South Bengal. Just by mere listening to a particular language to cage a person's roots to a particular locale is problematic. Bangla or Bengali is spoken in a variety of versions and the speakers are not caged into a Westphalian model of state nation boundary. South Asia is more porous and people are always on the move, the sense of the border, the boundary, and the lines are distinctly different from that of our European counterparts. Also in this section of the chapter the writer shows his prejudice towards the people and the township and everything (be it the food, the people, the woman coming out of the sulabh swachalay, to the heat of the place) that Siliguri provides. It is indeed strange to understand how and why should a person born and raised in the plains which is always hot and humid be so irritated and repulsive of life in the plains just because he was privileged to spend sometime in the hills. Here we witness that living in Darjeeling also emits its own class, geography positional superiority. Being from Darjeeling is supposed to emit an air about being from the 'Queen of the Hills" and creates a new set of superior people, they become a class in itself. What connects the hills and the plains in the authors thick weaving of events, memories and experiences is: 'Baazigar o Baazigar cacophony (p.163).

The text in parts repeats the already known and much discussed issues of caste, kinship, Lepcha kinship patterns etc., as operative in Darjeeling (p.139, 144-146). This portion is an unnecessary duplication of studies and should have been edited out or tucked away in some footnote.

Drumbeats in the Mist (pp.165-192) This chapter displays the hovering nostalgia of 'Darjeeling days' for the author post his transfer to Kolkata. He tries to 'find' Darjeeling in small measures in the tea packets, momos on a Chowringhee pavement, but 'could not manage to go back'. These accounts crisscross in time and presents the writers cherished 'moments' in the hill town in the 90s, weaved into a text of

'nostalgic memoirs' or as the author mentions quoting Naguib Mahfouz the Egyptian writer "not really about memories but how it felt to have them".[8]

The discussions in this chapter develops through a mix of comparisons, contrasts & contortions of the authors experiences during his working days in Darjeeling in the early 90s and his brief autumnal sojourn to the 'Queen of the Hills' in 2006.The author pointedly mentions the 'different types of urbanizations competing for their space' in the hill town, and that the 'old timers' were replaced by 'new unfamiliar faces'. I find this observation of the author to be reflective of the residents competing to be 'rooted' to the town and claim to be the 'original', the 'authentic, the 'autochthonous', the 'local', the 'sons of the soil' at one level, and the discomforts that the disparate people trying to weave into a 'homogenous identity of a Gorkha' are faced with in Darjeeling and the tensions of being swarmed by 'outsiders', the 'others' forms the other level.

As a reader we can see a shift in the pen of writer in this chapter. Reading the text one observes that much to the dismay or surprise of the author, the author transforms into a past glorifying' past loving, present critiquing entity. This shift in style of observation and the points of interjections also reflects the author 'self-maturity' as an observer, also the decadal gaps in the memories of the 90s and post 2006 can be strongly felt in this chapter. This shift in style of penning the 'memory' drives further understandings outlined by numerous the studies on memory that memories shift, wean, wane, and wax over time, space and across generations.

The author's transformation comes close to the laments and enquiries of the older residents of the town such as the Dattas, the Mukherjees, Banerjees etc., whom he met and few he befriended during his stay in the 90s. Now in 2006 on seeing the 'new avatar' of the township post benefits of peace and the political-economic tricklings of the DGHC, the authors memories of the town come into sudden death, faced with the inability to connect back to time. Here I would say two things: First that 'each generation feels it is better, and that theirs was or is the best history ever, and that the new generation and the new is not worth any history or any story.' Second, that 'once you leave 'home', the spatial and temporal change effects both the 'home' itself and the one that 'moved out of that 'home''.

The irritation with the new avatar of Darjeeling is zoomed into the 'life-style' of the 'youth in Darjeeling'. And this becomes the final ground for the angst or discomforts of the author in changed times (pp.167-168).

"Local youngsters sporting designer clothes and body jewellery. They spoke and accented Nepali thickly laced with English, called their friends in Delhi and Bangalore into the add with a flick of buttons on their expensive mobile phones". (p. 167).

The discussion holds on the old lingering problems of unemployed educated untapped human resources of the hills, the trends in out migrations etc. The vexed attitudes of the educated youth to meet the challenges of 'being unemployed' is neatly polarized into two ends, one represented by the 'Newtons' who stay behind and beat the heat of family pressure for not 'earning' and local political nepotism and lack of 'opportunities' (whatever that may mean); and those of the 'girlfriends' who move elsewhere to comfortable shores, earn and live in diaspora far from the '*samasiya* (problems, difficulties)' of everyday Darjeeling.

Observantly the book interweaves several issues, mundane everyday issues, to issues of autonomy, Gorkhaland, 'elder brother-younger brother' relation between West Bengal and Darjeeling, tendency of neo-colonial attitude of the Bengali, language of the people, the 'smiling, all trusting, honest hill people versus the cunning outsiders in particular the Bengali, The 'Open minded Gorkha (hill folks) and the conservative, non-experimenting/adventurous Bengali etc. The writer presents himself as the 'empathetic Bengali and therefore a different pedigree of the oft-hated community. The writer though very successful in weaving an 'Imagery' of the place and its people and the 'outsiders', ends up constructing and fine tuning (sometimes for worse) social imaginaries through the text. 'No Path in Darjeeling is straight' and that just as the *chor batos* that vein the *Auralo* and the *Ukali* (ups and downs, and the topsy -turvey) of the *Pahar,* the people 'there-in' are also veined and variegated. The imagery of the gullible hilly-billy, the simpleton, all trustworthy is also a construct that has flown to us through the innumerable writings and cinematic imagery or at times through the inter-generational memories of our friends, relatives etc.

Notes and References

[1] E. C. Dozey, *A Concise History Of the Darjeeling District Since 1835 With A Complete Itenary Of Tours In Sikkim And The District* Varanasi/Calcutta: Jetsun Publishing House; L.S.S. O'Malley, 1989 (1907, Reprint 1985). *Bengal District Gazatteers: Darjeeling,* New Delhi: Logos Press; Fred Pinn, , *The Road Of Destiny: Darjeeling Letters 1839,* Calcutta: Oxford university Press 1986; Theon Wilkinson, *Two Monsoons*, Michigan: Duckworth, 1976.

[2] Sociological studies on 'suicide' gives a different narration, *See*, Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, The Free Press; 1871, 1951; W.S.F. Pickering & Geoffrey Walford, *Durkheim's Suicide: A Century of Research and Debate*, Routledge, 2000.

[3] The author notes that these posters of Darjeeling are not locally printed rather they are printed at Siliguri (Lokenath Fotoprint, Hakimpara, Siliguri). This is important because the author again visits his unknowing tendency to otherize things. The location of the printer of the poster her becomes the source of subdued angst. At another level I would say this is the perfect operation of the politics of display and the politics of looking where the observed becomes the obsession of the gaze. Can the Right to Look be denied to the person looking? For an elaborate discussion on the right to look, *See*, Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011. Much like the eyes the camera has the capacity to catch what is displayed and reproduce it as images in print or digital (ASC).

[4] E. C. Dozey, *A Concise History Of the Darjeeling District Since 1835 With A Complete Itenary Of Tours In Sikkim And The District*, Varanasi/Calcutta: Jetsun Publishing House, 1989; L.S.S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazatteers: Darjeeling*. New Delhi: Logos Press, 1985; Fred Pinn,. *The Road of Destiny: Darjeeling Letters 1839*. Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1986.

[5] The porters in Darjeeling are in most cases seasonal migrants from Nepal. Their consumption and spending behavior cannot and should not be construed to be reflective of the larger Darjeelingeys. (ASC).

[6] The line between 'research' and 'plagiarism' is humorously summed by the late American playwriter Wilson Mizner as 'if you steal from one author, it's plagiarism, but if you steal from many, it's research!'

[7] Reverse is also true (ASC).

[8]Naguib Mahfouz, ***(***trans. Denys Johnson-Davies)*, Echoes of an Autobiography, New* York: Doubleday Books, 1997.

Movie Review

By

Xuejun Liu *

Operation Red Sea and Wolf Warrior

Figure 1: Operation Red Sea

Figure 2 Wolf Warrior II

In 2017, Wu Jing's Wolf Warrior II (Figure 2)[1] made a profit of over 5.6 billion yuan. A year later, under Dante Lam's direction Operation Red Sea (Figure 1)[2] was screened to the Chinese audience.. Both movies tell stories of how Chinese nationals were evacuated successfully by the government and individuals through large-scale overseas evacuation in recent years. These represent vividly, two approaches marked with Chinese characteristics to protect overseas Chinese.

Operation Red Sea portrays the evacuation operation for Chinese nationals under the commands of high-level officials. The story begins with a Chinese ship being hijacked by pirates in the Gulf of Aden. The Chinese navy commando *Jiaolong* (Dragon in the Sea) is ordered to

* Xuejun Liu is Graduate student, School of International Studies, Renmin University of China. Email: liuxuejun1996@foxmail.com
IAAPS Perspective, Vol.2, 1, September 2017

deal with this incident and eventually all the hostages are rescued successfully. Subsequently orders are also given to the *Jiaolong* assault teamto evacuate Chinese citizens and the consul from Yewaire(a fictional nation) where the civil war is intensifying. and the Yewaire governmentis incapable of resisting the rebels and terrorists.The *Jiaolong* assault team is also tasked with rescuing Chinese hostages and retrieving yellowcakeand nuclear materials from the terrorists. With the help of a French-Chinese journalist, the assault team eventually succeeds in its operation but two *Jiaolong* members are killed in the process while another two are heavily injured.

In comparison to the Operation Red Sea, Wolf Warrior II which is also based on evacuation operation focuses mainly on the role of the individuals. Leng Feng, a former member of Chinese Special Troop, leaves for Africa where one day, a sudden rebellion breaks out in the country where he lives. In response Leng Feng takes some Chinese nationals as well as an African boy, Tundu, to the Chinese embassy Where under the protection of the ambassador and security troops, these people are led to the harbor safely with plans to leave.Feng however decides to go back to the war zone on hearing from the captain of the fleet and the ambassador that there are still some workers left in a factory along with a Dr. Chenwho possess a vital knowledge of vaccination , in a hospital. Since there is no permission from the UN, no other Chinese forces can enter the area but Feng can and thus, he has to perform this task by himself. Leng Feng drives to the hospital to find Dr. Chen initially, but unfortunately, the doctor has already been left to die by the mercenaries. Followingthe doctor's last words he rescues a girl named Pasha who has been treated with this vaccination along with another doctor named Rachel. Accidentally, Feng injures himself while escaping and gets infected with the virus.

The trio then reaches the Chinese-owned factory to evacuate both Chinese and local workers. But the same evening, the mercenaries led by Big Daddy attack the factory to capture Pasha and kill Leng Feng. Many workers are injured and killed in this incidentbut Pasha and Feng manage to escape having withdrawn from the factory as soon as they read the signal of the mercenaries approach.

Few days later, a UN helicopter arrives to rescue the women and children .Butthe mercenaries shoot down the helicopter and attack the factory again. Feng and Zhuo Yifa (the boss of the factory) along with the Jianguo (the security guard) manage to hide the workers inside and fight against the mercenaries. In the ensuing struggle Leng Feng is heavily injured and gets trapped under a collapsed wall. He therefore records a video of ongoing the shooting and sends it to the Chinese

fleet captain on time. As a result of this evidence, the fleet fires missiles with the permission of higher authorities and the UN and higher authorities and ultimately Feng kills Big Daddy and takes all the workers to the UN safe zone.

As a reviewer, I think that Operation Red Sea and Wolf Warrior II are similar but not the same. Both of them focus on evacuation operation but one of the most vital differences between them is that Operation Red Sea attaches more importance to the collective action of the assault team whose tasks are commanded by higher authorities, Wolf Warrior II mainly shows how an individual behaves in the evacuation where all the steps are determined by himself. The second movie to some extent is rather similar to an Indian film "Airlift" with Akshay Kumarin the lead role.

In Operation Red Sea there are two major steps in the whole evacuation process. The first segment of evacuation operation focuses on the search for people requiring lots of resources and cooperation with many parties. Apart from diplomatic approaches, the arrangement of personnel and materials as well as the punctuality of each action is vital. This highlights the major role of the government during a crisis. The next segment of evacuation is rescue which is as difficult as the search. It is a big responsibility not only for the government but the assault team as well. Hence the resultant force incorporates within it government officials as well as to *Jiaolong* assault team who all do their utmost to evacuate all the nationals safely while keeping the rescue strategy flexible. *Jiaolong* performs the entire evacuation operation as well as other tasks through remote orders. In addition, in Operation Red Sea, the French-Chinese journalist cooperates *Jiaolong* members actively when rescuing the hostages in the terrorist camp, which also fully shows the major role of individuals in crises. The assistance of gun firing and arrangement of resources further allows the operation to be accomplished successfully.

In that regard, compared to the *Jiaolong* assault team in Operation Red Sea, Leng Feng in Wolf Warrior II has to take all the risks alone. Although he was a member of the special troop once, when faced with many pressures like diseases and mercenaries he is still too weak to cope with the tough job. However, with the permission of the fleet captain and the ambassador, he comes back to the war zone where his behaviors illustrate his unbroken spirit and responsibility as a Chinese national.

In conclusion, it must be noted that these two Chinese blockbusters are both visual representations of recent evacuation operations with

distinctive Chinese characteristics. In spite of the fact that one focuses on the assault team and the other on individuals, both of them show the overall planning ability of the government as well as the high quality of the executives. One thing has to be noted, that both films pay attention to emergency consular protection and their service to Chinese nationals in crises in the face of the major concern for Chinese diplomacy brewing in recent years. However, some plots in the movies can also be viewed as precautionary to consular protection, such as searching for assistance before going abroad or confronting crises. For example, the French-Chinese journalist asks for help and provides crucial clues by dialing Chinese consular protection hotline 12308. To some extent, these types of moves can be regarded as an approach of precautionary consular protection.

Notes

[1] The poster is quoted from the web :
https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7131870/mediaviewer/rm562176768
[2] The poster is quoted from the web :
https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6878882/mediaviewer/rm3749007360

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Articles submitted for consideration of publication in **IAAPS Perspective** should be around 3500 words. Book Reviews can be around 1000 words and review articles can be around 1500 words. Articles will have endnotes. Endnotes should be restricted to the minimum. Enquiries about possible submissions are welcome.

For submission of articles and all other matters, correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, **IAAPS Perspective**, iaaps.iaaps@gmail.com or anasuab@gmail.com . Authors will have to submit articles in soft copies (in MS Word).

Deadline for submission of the article with abstract is **31 March**. The articles/review articles/book reviews will be selected by the reviewers.

Please visit our website: www.iaaps.org.in

IAAPS Perspective

Volume 1, Issue 2, December 2017

Essays

Book Review