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CONTENTS

PREFACE

Dear Readers,

The Regional Cooperation Newsletter in its current issue carries two special articles and three commentaries. Some issues related to the developmental and social challenges of a culturally diverse society of South Asia are dealt with in this issue.

Ankit Kumar Keshri in his special article "Securing Rights of Children in Conflict with Law in India" with extrapolation to learnings from other South Asian countries primarily discusses how the rights of children is sidelined due the hidden stigma attached to them in the case of children in conflict with law. While putting forward the argument that such children most commonly referred as juveniles are severely neglected population among the group of vulnerable children, the article review some child-friendly practices of existing juvenile justice mechanism in other South Asian countries.

The article on "Imperialistic Assam: An analysis of cultural imperialism in Assam" by Srija Brahmachary argues that the imposition of a majoritarian culture based on popular language reinforces the cultural hegemony in the society. The experience from one of the North Eastern states of Assam suggests that the Assamese society has indulged into an imperialistic rule over the ones who don't speak "Assamese" as their mother tongue thereby creating a cultural "other" among the demographically marginalized communities such as the indigenous population of Assam. In this article we shall see how the dominant culture dominated the other cultures with the manipulation of nationalistic sentiments.

Roderick Wijunamai in his commentary on "Changes in National Banking Policy and its Impact on Rural Credit" suggests that while the post-liberalisation banking policy in India has resulted in a manifold increase of aggregate figures of rural credit, the same is not getting reflected in the debt portfolios of rural cultivator households. By analyzing the banking data during the post liberalization India, the author suggests that there has been a broadening of indirect credit thereby creating an image of significant credit inflow into the rural and agricultural households which is not the case. The article also calls for a reform in financial inclusion premised on social and developmental banking to regenerate rural credit.
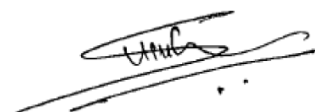
While smoking has been legally banned in all public places in all the South Asian countries, the production and trade of tobacco has never reduced. Firdous Barbhuiya in his article "Tobacco Consumption, Production and Trade: Political Economy in South Asia" explores the conflicting policy contexts in the region in particular and less developed countries in general. The need for complete withdrawal of tax incentives for transnational tobacco corporations and increase in excise duties on tobacco products are highlighted as necessary steps to reduce tobacco consumption. Further insufficient help offered by the governments in South Asia to people who would like to quit tobacco use is also highlighted in the article.

The role of social media in disaster response is underscored by Priya Namrata Topno in her commentary on "Social Media: An effective tool for Disaster Response. The article discusses how collaborative measures along with government agencies, disaster experts, civil society and social

media can bring about changes in the way disaster responses are carried out. It suggests that respective governments must educate the public about the use of social media for interaction, responding, sharing, receiving and generating information during catastrophic events.

I sincerely thank Mr. Abhimanyu Datta, a senior research scholar at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences for being the Guest Editor of the issue and diligently pulling together very meaningful contributions to this issue. All the contributors have made one of their best contributions to this issue which could elevate or maintain the quality of articles and commentaries in the newsletter.

I am sure the diverse topics covered in the current issue of Regional Cooperation Newsletter are of immense value for social workers, policy advocates and development practitioners in the region.

P.K. Shajahan PhD
Editor
10 October 2016

SECURING RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH LAW IN INDIA: LEARNINGS FROM SOUTH ASIA

- Ankit Kumar Keshri

ABSTRACT

In the Indian context, children in conflict with law or most commonly referred as juveniles are severely neglected population among the group of vulnerable children. Rights of such children are further sidelined due to the hidden stigma attached to them. With these understanding of the dual treatment of child rights, this article attempts to review some child-friendly practices of existing juvenile justice mechanism in other South Asian countries. Based upon the review, the article concludes by putting emphasis on India to adopt such practices.

Keywords: *Juvenile justice system, child in conflict with law (CICL), child rights and child-friendly practices*

Introduction

Indian juvenile justice system seeks to address concerns of children by dividing them into two broad categories; those are children in need of care and protection (CNCP) and children in conflict with law (CICL). It is quite unfortunate to say that among these two broad groups of children the former have received very less attention and in many instances have been forgotten by their parents, community and all relevant duty bearers at large (Dabir, 2005). Neither the civil society nor the authorities have given required emphasis for securing their rights. Likewise, misrepresentations of juvenile data and cases of serious offences have made the present scenario a bit harsher for them. Based on the distorted data with percentage manipulation in number of total incidents, mass media in specific and the majority of citizen of Indian in general have jeopardise the entire group of CICL. This further lead to a situation of dual treatment of child rights among children based on their nature of vulnerability. Thus the present state of affairs in reference to CICL demands for a greater attention towards CICL and robust system for addressing their need; with restorative justice and diversion as its salient features. Intended for this purpose, revisiting the existing system is a necessity. However, only looking at loopholes within the existing system shall not be the only way forward, along with incorporating child-friendly provisions practices are required too. Thus this article attempts to chalk out few child-friendly practices which Indian juvenile justice system can integrate and what can be more meaningful than looking within countries of the same region. By the virtue being from the same region i.e. South Asian region, it can be worked out as a strong rationale behind incorporating such provisions in the present juvenile justice system of India.

Reviewing Different Frameworks

Prior to moving ahead to different framework, it is necessary to reflect that in contemporary world child rights have been in the centre of all major policy debates. This has happened because of countries obligation to uphold different international, regional and national legal frameworks. Likewise, the voice of child rights has become significant since the countries become the signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and ratified it.

As a framework, concerns related to different forms of vulnerability of children have been addressed under UNCRC by granting each and every child their rights. A long list of 54 articles (four article has given special emphasis and mentioned as general principles) (Refer Box. 1) comprehensively defines the right to survival, development, participation and protection granted to every child. Drawing insights from the UNCRC, every ratifying country has framed laws and included provision for ensuring rights of their children. Similarly, all countries of South Asia too have made respective changes in their existing laws or framed new provisions.

Keeping in mind the discriminatory practices with children in conflict with law in most of the countries, few articles were given to explicitly define rights of these children under UNCRC (Refer Box. 2). Similarly, speaking of global context or in reference to South Asia[1], UNCRC is complemented with United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules), United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty; Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines), United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty and respective national legal framework (UNICEF, 2007). These obligations and rules laid down the overall ideology behind the rehabilitation of juveniles in conflict with law. Equally, principles of diversion, restorative justice, and alternatives to custodial sentencing constructed the ethos of the juvenile justice system (UNICEF, 2006 and Dabir, 2008).

Indian Context

Last part of the paper discussed about different frameworks for guiding the juvenile justice system and ensuring the rights of such children. Now let us discuss the Indian context in specific. Till 2015, juvenile justice in India was understood in the reference to the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 which was further amended in 2006. Although it had its own limitations and critiques, this act was considered by far the most child-friendly and widely in synchronisation with international standards (Shanmugavelayutham, 2002; Kumari, 2004; Bajpai, 2006 and Sharma, 2010). Provisions of this act address the concern of CICL in three different stages and can be referred as pre-institution[2], within institution[3] and post institution[4]. However, this largely remains within the law and practical implementation remains quite disappointing. Abysmal condition of government observation & shelter homes for CICL, horrific experiences of child abuse in such homes, delayed process & stigma of being in the justice system, failure in maintaining institutionalisation as a measure of last resort are some examples of the implementation of the law.

Nevertheless, keeping the same act in place the need of the hour was to relook into the implementation. Similarly, findings from

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[1] South Asia includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

[2] Supporting the children and their families who are at high risk of becoming CICL. Diverting the children from the formal juvenile justice system.

[3] Providing support to all such children in juvenile justice system by ensuring their rights of non-discrimination, participation, best interest, survival and development

[4] Providing a 3-year support to the children who have lived all their life in an institution; with the objective of helping them to socially reintegrate in the society.

different studies have revealed that the issue of implementation can be addressed by looking into various factors interrelated with each other like the financial crunch from the government, overburdened on probation officer, advocacy for rights of CICL etc. (Dabir, 2008; Gupta and Bose, 2010; Nigudkar, 2013; HAQ, 2016). However, in place of giving focus on implantation of the present act, it is being replaced with a new Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. This new act predominantly highlights the issue of age of CICL and their involvement in heinous offences leaving the other important factors of implementation unaddressed.

Child-Friendly Practices of Juvenile Justice System in other South Asian Countries

Dissimilar treatment of the children in conflict with law based upon their regional location is quite evident from the inequality in the implementation of different provisions of international guidelines and other related instruments. Practices from South Asian region have highlighted that too. The country wise difference in minimum age of criminal responsibility, the age of juvenile or CICL, measures of diversion etc. are few of the leading examples of such difference in practice (UNICEF 2007; 2006b). This can be assumed to be linked with socio, political and economic condition of these countries. However, some practices followed by other countries in dealing with CICL are worth noting as well as following. India too needs to follow such examples. But, India in place of learning from such child-friendly practices of other South Asian countries have further reduced the age of CICL to 16 from 18 years in case of their involvement in heinous offences (GoI, 2016).

Prior to highlighting such child friendly practices which India could learn, it is important to mention the contextual difference of India from it other South Asian counterparts in reference to its gross domestic production (GDP) and human development index (HDI). India tops in GDP and ranks third in HDI among all South Asian countries (UNDP, 2014). Despite having such affluent background it has unable to ensure child-friendly practices which other countries are doing.

Beginning with the minimum age of criminal responsibility, this varies across the region and can be different as per the judicial assessment of country specific law (UNICEF, 2007). At present, India does not have the minimum age of criminal responsibility as per international standard but Afghanistan has. Similarly, fixing the age limit for dealing with any human being under juvenile justice system has been the main agenda of discussion in India. India, with the enactment of its new law, includes a provision where a CICL above the age of 16 years can be tried as per adult judicial system if involved in the heinous offence (GoI, 2016). This had happened because of incidents of involvement of children in heinous offences, unavailability of birth certificates or other records to their proof of age and demand of strict action by media and community leaders (Kumari, 2004 and UNICEF, 2007). However, the scenario in few other countries of this region is quite child-friendly. Bhutan, Maldives, Afghanistan and Pakistan have kept the age of dealing offences done any human being under juvenile justice system at 18 years. Now moving on to general principles to arrest and pre-trial detention in juvenile justice system, Maldives is the only country which by law maintains the status that arresting children should be used as a measure of last resorts. Similarly, the law of Maldives and

Afghanistan prohibits arrest on any status offences. These are examples of a child friendly practices which India need to adopt looking into the context of their own practices where most of the children were arrested and come in contact with the juvenile justice system for status offences.

Other child-friendly practices include detaining children during pending trials as a measure of last resort. Only Afghanistan has this provision. Likewise, Maldives have a provision of expediting the case if the juvenile is detained during a pending trial and few countries like Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan have a provision of regulating maximum period for such pre-trial detention. At present India do not have such child-friendly provisions in their juvenile justice system and can think of incorporating them.

Diverting children from the juvenile justice system is another important domain of child-friendly practices. A few countries of the region have provision for dealing with most of the juveniles without resorting to judicial proceedings and use informal mechanisms such as mediation or conferencing for resolving minor offences. In Bhutan, there is the practice of giving warning to the CICL by police for initial offences, in Sri Lanka use of mediation boards to settle down the concern of CICL is in practice, family conferencing is in practice in Maldives and customary law and traditional justice is notable practice in Afghanistan (UNICE, 2006b and 2007). Another example of such child-friendly practice is granting discretion to prosecutors and judges to resolve cases through diversion. This practice is common in Maldives and Afghanistan. Along with that these two countries also recognise and practice different community programmes in order to facilitate diversion among CICL. Local mechanism called *Jirga/shura* from Afghanistan is an

example of such practice to reach the goal of providing restorative justice to CICL (Dabir, 2008). However in comparison to other countries of the region, India at present do not have any such formal or informal practice of diversion so this practices can be taken up as an example in India's juvenile justice system.

Conclusion

Before concluding the article two areas needs my clear stance. Firstly, it must be accepted that no country in this region has evolved as an ideal juvenile justice system as per the UNCRC and other related international frameworks, however, few practices across different parts of the region somehow maintained the ethos of child friendliness and other countries needs to adopt those practices (UNICEF 2006a, UNICEF 2007 and Dabir, 2008). Secondly, a strict measure of punishment and incarceration or institutionalization as a measure for addressing the issue of CICL have failed to give the desired outcome worldwide and did nothing but diverting the attention from the root cause of this issue; like risk and protective factors attached to every child, life history etc. Likewise, alternate models for juvenile justice have found to be less expensive and effective way in many countries like Philippines, Republic South Africa, New Zealand etc. (Dabir, 2008)

India too has its own comprehensive juvenile justice mechanism and state-specific model rules to address the concerns of CICL. It incorporates the provision of probation, special juvenile police unit and gives an essence of child friendliness in it. However, many provisions present in other countries of this region and discussed in the earlier part of the paper are missing. Likewise, the one which is there in the Act lacks severely in terms of their implementation and are mostly taken as

an additional responsibility. Adopting the examples of child-friendly practices from other South Asian countries and filling up the gaps in implementation will be a step forward towards securing rights of the CICL in India.

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List of Boxes/Tables:

Box 1. General principles under UNCRC

Non-discrimination (Article 2): It ensures all rights to each child, anywhere and anytime without being discriminated under any grounds.

Best interest of the child (Article 3): Prior to taking any action concerning children, best interest should be the primary consideration.

Survival and development (Article 6): It ensures every child's rights to survive and develop as per their fullest potential.

Participation (Article 12): Views of children must be listened and given due consideration in all matters affecting them.

Source: United Nations, 1989

Box 2: Article ensuring rights of the children in conflict with law under UNCRC

Article 1: Every human being under the age of 18 years is a child (Defines minimum age).

Article 6: Right to life (Prohibits taking away essentials for a meaningful life)

Article 9: Right to live with parents (Demands institutionalization to be a measure of last resort).

Article 37: Right to not to be punished in a cruel and hurtful way (Ensures diversion, alternate measure for passing decisions).

Article 40: Right to defend oneself if found accused of breaking any law (Ensure protection during the process of the juvenile justice system).

Source: United Nations, 1989

Table 1: Child-friendly practices in juvenile justice system in different South Asian countries	
Minimum age for criminal responsibility as per international standards[1]	Afghanistan
Protection to all children below the age of 18 years	Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan
Arresting children as a measure of last resort	Maldives
Law prohibiting arrest on status offence[2]	Afghanistan, Maldives
Detaining children during pending trial as a measure of last resort	Afghanistan
Expediting the case if the juvenile is detained during a pending trial	Maldives
Regulating maximum period for pre-trial detention	Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan
Provision for dealing with juveniles without resorting to judicial proceedings	Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka
Informal mechanisms[3] to resolve minor offences	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka
Prosecutors and judges have discretion to resolve cases through diversion	Afghanistan, Maldives
Community programmes[4] in order to facilitate diversion	Afghanistan, Maldives

Source: UNICEF, 2006b and 2007
1. International standard for the minimum age of criminality is 12 years.
2. Status offences include such conducts which are not considered against the law if committed by adults.
3. This includes mediation or conferencing etc.
4. This includes temporary supervision and guidance, restitution, and compensation of victims etc.

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IMPERIALISTIC ASSAM:

AN ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL IMPERIALISM IN ASSAM

-Srija Brahmachary

ABSTRACT

Language for a community is its identity and only through its language it communicates cultures to other communities. However like every society Assam also has indulged into an imperialistic rule over the ones who don't speak "Assamese" as their mother tongue. With the pressure it has created on the demographically marginalized communities it has imposed its culture on them through language. The imposition of the culture reinforces the cultural hegemony in the society. Through several forces Assamese has taken control over the rest of the "others" in the society. This "others" are the indigenous population of Assam. In this article we shall see how the dominant culture dominated the other cultures with the manipulation of nationalistic sentiments.

Keywords: *cultural imperialism, hegemony, language, nationalism, Assamese.*

A Background

Towards the south East Asian continent, Assam is a state located in the north east of India and is one of the richest biodiversity hubs in the world. Assam is geographically spread over an area of 78,440 km^2 and has a world famous name in tea and silk production (Assam Population census, 2011). However there is much more to that when it comes to the people and their history in Assam. There have been dramatic changes in Assam since the time immemorial, and people from different parts of the world have migrated to this place and settled down in the beautiful valley. Throughout the history there have been several stories of how Assam has attracted people and how people have made this place their home and never had any longing to go back from where they came. The utmost availability of abundant resources that the land provides reduces a lot of hard work for the people. Assam has been a fertile land and is ideal for agricultural society. It has a lot of potential for enormous profit. My indication is not towards illegal immigrants of present time which the state identifies as the ones who have come from Bangladesh without proper documents since decades (Report on illegal immigration in Assam, 1998); in fact what is understood is that the "migrants" from different phases of history have created Assam as a rich cultural entity. Starting with the Kamarupa Kingdom in the ancient Assam to the medieval Assam with advent of the Kamata kingdom, the Bhuyan chieftains, Ahom kingdom, Chutiya kingdom, Kachari kingdom, Koch Bihar and Koch Hajos and later the British annexation under the Bengal Presidency rule during Colonial India, clearly shows the path of cultural accumulation in Assam.

Legacy of Sovereignty

Different cultures have come up and have moulded themselves into one Assamese culture that is picturised in our minds when we say Assam. A *mekhela chador* [5] with *dhulbiri*[6]

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[5] **Mekhela chador** is the traditional Assamese dress worn by women

[6] Traditional Assamese ornaments.

or a white *dhoti*[7] and a white *gamosa*[8] with red embroidery is the image we have of Assam and its culture and tradition. This is our identity today and this identity makes us "Assamese". Now what I am going to discuss about here is the diversity that the advent of the migrants have resulted, in the land of Assam. Assam has present population of 31,205,576, according to 2011 census (census, Assam stats, 2011).Within these populations there are about 25 different communities with different languages and culture altogether (onlineportal, 2016). The communities are Bodos, Kacharis, Dimasas, Karbis, Hmars, Mishings, Deoris, Rabhas, Lalung/Tiwa, Khamti, Sonowals, Tai-phakes, Barmans, Kukis, Rengma Naga, Zeme Nagas, Hajong, Garo, Mechs, Nepalis, Biharis, Marwaris, Tea Tribes, Bengalis and Assamese and other communities from different parts of India (onlineportal, 2016). All of these communities have different cultures, they speak different languages have difference in food habits, traditional attires and several other aspects of diversities. Geographically Assam has two major river valleys; Brahmaputra valley towards the north and Barak valley towards the south and in the middle of it is covered with hills and mountains of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao (two hill districts of Assam).

Looking back at the history of Assam, one can observe that there has been a synthesis of linguistic nationalism in protecting language through a series of movements .The legacy is evident till date and has taken up a huge fat shape ,with the addition of different languages ,which is trying to fit into the spaces of the communities. To further explain this I shall

begin with how language has been of prime importance in Assam.

During the British colonial rule when Assam was a part of Bengal presidency there was an upraising due to the Bengali language domination over Assamese and this domination played a vital role in the growth of linguistic nationalism in the state which has its legacy till today. The Bengali ruling class had actually taken over several aspects of economic and political control over the then province of Assam. Apart from that, there was enormous immigration of East Bengal migrants towards Assam after the Partition of Bengal both in 1905 and 1947 and even after independence during the riots of Bangladesh liberation war. This made dramatic changes to the linguistic demography of the Assam state instigating a sense of demographic marginalization of Assamese community and the repercussions of all of these gave rise to Assam agitation. We must understand that the movement was to identify illegal immigrants but it did give one singular identity which was cleansing of Bengalis from Assam (Bhaumik, 2009). The exceptional pride and strong sense of insecurities can only unite a whole community against a linguistic group. Pride for a language which was independent and not any offshoot to Bengali, and insecurity about losing its status played a crucial role in the upraising of the linguistic nationalism in Assam (AssamGovenment, 2016).

The East Bengal/ East Pakistan migrants who migrated to Assam and here I do not use the word Bangladesh, specifically, because I am talking about the ones who came before "Bangladesh" even existed, also did not accept the Assamese language's official status and revolted back giving rise to a much stronger linguistic sub-nationalism among the Bengalis (Choudhury, n.d).

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[7] Traditional Assamese male wear dhoti which is a long garment tied around the waist to cover the lower body.

[8] A red bordered woven rectangular piece of cloth with a deep cultural significance

But the picture changed when there was a turning point in this history of linguistic nationalism with the upraising of ethnic nationalism within the state of Assam. The struggle for the Assamese identity during the agitation ignited the flame of ethnic nationalism among the "plain-tribal" group who were already irked by the "colonial" attitude of the Assamese elite and the imposition of Assamese as the official language through the Assam Official Languages Act of 1960. Bodo separatism thus became in some ways a direct aftermath of the Assam movement. Bodo leaders accuse the Assamese government of conducting a deliberate policy of "Assamisation" through the imposition of 'Assamese language and culture upon the tribals undemocratically, violating the constitution of India (Basu & Kohli, 1998) (Ghosh, 2008).

Their rebellion began by the rejection of the Assamese script and acceptance of Roman and also the revival of Bodo literature and folklore through the Bodo Xahitya Xabha . They fought for cultural differentiation, similar to what the Assam movement initially campaigned for and finally with the formation of Bodo Autonomous council the Bodo language was declared the official language alongside Assamese (Das, 2014).

The major issue of concern here was relative economic deprivation concerning infrastructure development which they believed was being manipulated by the Assam Government at the policy making level. The autonomy movement by the tribal people of the Karbi Anglong and the then North Cachar Hills district of Assam state in India is a result of continuous resentment and frustration of the hill tribal people, due to discrimination and oppression by the government of Assam and the plain people of Assam. They demanded

autonomous districts which also were backed up by the "imposition" of Assamese. Assamese was taught in schools and most of the Government employees were non tribals (Menon, 1987). Recent declaration of Telangana Statehood ignited the hill tribes to bring up the long stated demand for a separate statehood, to which again the Government of Assam disagree as they believed Assam cannot be divided further and become demographically more marginalized (Sharma, 2016).

Reinforcing power

All of this resentment from the indigenous population of Assam is an indication towards the greater truth which is cultural hegemony of Assamese community. Drawing the concept of cultural Hegemony from Antonio Gramsci what I understand is there has been a prolonged domination of Assamese language over the other linguistic group in Assam. Assam is a diverse society and around these diversities of communities prevail the dominant culture. In the case of Assam the tool for domination is language, and history has enough evidence to support the argument so has the present societal set-up. The Assamese language has been used to create a hegemonic wall between the demographically large group and the smaller groups. Just how we have a compulsion with the usage of English language same has been the compulsion of people living in Assam with Assamese.

The linguistic domination has tried to manipulate a sense of inferiority among the ruled class and linguistic superiority among the ruling class. The language has been used as a weapon for cultural imperialism from the time immemorial. If we look at India as a whole we clearly see how it is suffering from a colonial hangover with such popularity and

acceptance for the language of English. The obsession of English language has not only given a superior status to western world in our country but also has manufactured a class based society which consists of the English speaking Indians – intellectuals and the "otherwise" less educated. The divide that English has created in India however is of a particular manner but the divide that language has brought in Assam has much to do with imperialism in disguise of nationalism.

What we see in Assam is a compulsion of understanding and speaking Assamese because that is how we measure ones sense of nationalism with Assam. This is a creation of a situation which has an unequal position for the ones who do not speak Assamese as a native language. Mother tongue for one is not mother tongue for someone else and therefore no one chooses to accept another language as more important than their own language. However the compulsion that I am talking here has many folds. To understand the process of the compulsion lets understand the different levels it undergoes. In the initial level one comes to know that their language is not the "official" language which means there is some other language accepted in a larger level compared to the language one has been speaking. This understanding sows the seeds of inferiority inside an individual and within a community as a whole. Then the person understands that in almost every sphere of life it's a necessity to know the language when the local TV speaks the same, the bus conductor speaks the same, the vegetable vendor speaks the same and even the college teacher lectures in the same language which had remained a stranger while the persons lived in their village. It is conveyed to the people that knowing the language is a strategy to fulfill the necessities of living a "social life". Then there comes possible retaliation and non conformist

attitude which makes the person use other languages if not their own. One stops attending classes as they make no sense to listen to things they do not understand. Also they avoid public transport and try using cabs instead, along with the switch to malls that sell vegetables from local vendors. But this however takes a toll on the economy of the person and eventually one is bound to take the classes which otherwise will get them attendance issues and adjust to public transports and local markets in order to live economically. This sounds like a trap which one gets into, unwillingly but knowingly. This eventually makes the person submit to the social rule out of the fear of social ridicule, isolation and even personal attacks.

The social rule here is the absorption of the culture that is imposed on to the people and acceptance of it whole heartedly. Conforming to the greater identity of 'Assamese' is because of the fact that one is born in Assam. And this is a "fact" because Assam was long back anglicized when the British recognized Assam after Ahoms and named the People who live in Assam as Assamese (Das, 1987). The play of cultural imperialism is not exclusive to Assam but to the whole world. For instance if we refer to an Indian in a global context we have hardly imagined an Assamese man or woman dancing to Bihu or even a Malayali celebrating Onam. It is always a north Indian hindi speaking person who creates the image of an Indian to the world. This is cultural imperialism where one culture is made so popular that the rest of classes are bound to accept it as the natural way of living. If one is born in Assam one is Assamese no matter what they descend by blood and people accept it eventually because they have a lesser demographical, political and economic representation. Therefore the ruling class justifies the social, political, and

economic *status quo* as natural and beneficial for everyone. The ruled class is dosed with the medicine of "hope for development" and through this hope that the "ruling class" brings development, one fails to realize that this is just a social construct in the form of domination to benefit only the ruling class. Deprivation prioritizes the basic needs of a human being and thereby identity becomes secondary concern. And in this process of prioritization the hegemony is established among the groups (Barker, 2004).

The cultural imperialism reinforces cultural hegemony (Singh, 2012). It makes sure that the worldview that the dominant culture has, is the worldview of the whole society including the dominated culture. The worldview of people who speak Assamese language is systematically and gradually, with the interplay of different stake holders, is made the worldview of the other groups in the state. When it comes to worldview it is necessary to talk about the fundamental differences between a tribal and a non-tribal society. But the language plays a vital role in here when the dominant culture targets the worldview of the ruled class and defames it indirectly with utmost importance to the validity of the dominant culture worldview. This has been explained in post colonialist theories and I refer to Edward Said here who explained this phenomenon through binary opposition wherein one concept is defined in opposition to the other concept, and from which they emerge as of unequal value (Said, 2006). The classic example of such unequal representation is with the culture of language and food. One who is not able to express them in "assamese" language and speaks broken Assamese immediately falls into the zone of less "nationalist" towards their mother land. Also in terms of food the Assamese food culture is dominant but so is the north Indian and south

Indian food but not the tribal food. In a few decades of migrants influx in Guwahati from different tribal communities of northeast the "north eastern food "is explored through some food ventures. But even today when you go speak to a middle class family you will find the perceptions of tribals eating whatever comes in their way and the term that way of living as primitive. Allegations like, tribals even eat dogs, snakes, monkeys and smelly food for some basic ground for this cultural imperialism. Tribal do not dress modestly is yet another major part of culture wherein the Assamese society has felt threatened and thereby defined such dressing habits as "provocative dressing". I will not miss here to point out how Bengalis and all the 'plain" people have contributed enormously in defaming indigenous culture in northeast. Spivak (1988) says that cultural imperialism has the power to disqualify or erase the knowledge and mode of education of certain populations that are low on the social hierarchy.   This is exactly what happened in the Assamese society first with the Assamese than with by the Assamese. The Bengalis disqualified the Assamese culture and traditions and referred them to as the black magicians and jungle. And now the Assamese culture is being successful in erasing the knowledge and culture of other communities under the guard of nationalism because nationalism is a very important issue in our country. No matter what one must grow up a nationalist and must have sentiments attached to their mother land. For me there is nothing wrong in making oneself dedicated for your land but when the dedication undergoes basic changes and the shifts to some other land which demands dedication it is kind of a stress and confused situation for human being. The disqualifying of one's nationalism and shifting or rather I would say accepting and adopting

the one that is imposed through several sources definitely is a power play. And where there is power there is unequal division.

The cultural imperialism is a very complex process. It is the creation of an unequal position between different cultural groups and maintaining the power hold of one particular culture over other cultures. One of the very important aspects in this process is manipulation by the dominant class. The dominant classes use every means to manipulate the culture of societies is Assam. It tries to manipulate the religion in the beginning and imposes its religion on the other groups. Like is Assam, a Dimasa Hindu or a Bodo Hindu is not a follower of Hinduism but they have their own specific religion which are animist. But in order to fall in some category to fill up a form in the Government office one has to settle down to nothing but Hinduism. Because just like rest of the India if one is not a Christian, Muslim, Sikh or Buddhist or Jain one inescapably becomes Hindu, Assam is no exception even after having such a huge population and diversity of ethnic population having several religions. Similarly in terms of ethnic development one can hardly find initiatives from the government to promote other crafts and designs from other communities. In this connection I feel there has been a purposeful neglect which again roots up to imperialism because when we keep it one and simple cultural identity it attract more cultural appreciation and promotion whereas if there are many it wont attract much attention and instead become clumsy. So we end up working on one dominant culture's traditional crafts and designs. Also the food habits, as discussed before is another major ways of dominating a culture. Food items which are stapled to the tribes are not "main stream" in Assam and in India too. All the initiatives to popularize

ethnic food that include pork and beef are not main stream because the religion doesn't 'allow' consumption of such food openly. There have never been initiatives from the Assam Government that promoted the ethnic ways of cooking and preservation by the tribes.

Social conditioning

Values, norms and mores are also influenced and manipulated by the dominant culture where in we can observe, there are set moral conduct for the girls and boys of tribal and non-localite communities to behave. One of the incident in assamese media where they aired a news about how short dresses do girls in Guwahati wear showed how "responsible" the society is towards the culture and the insecurities went to such audacity that media appropriates the youth to wear that which is allowed within the mores and values of Assamese society. Media is the ideological state apparatus of a society these days, and the ruling class controls it to impose on its culture onto the society as a whole. The "openness" between young boys and girls are matters of insecurity for the culture. It is the moral responsibility of the media as the apparatus to portray the youth and focus them publicly (Althusser, 1971). This sort of targeting scares the youth and that's how they conform to the norms. And without much protest the other communities who also get targeted along with fall prey to this hegemonic relation and submit to the mores and values imposed on them.

Going back to my own life experiences being in Assam within different parts, I want to share how I myself felt the cultural imposition. However I also now identify myself with that culture and now it isn't a stranger like many others feel. In my initial days when I was in a tribal dominated area and lived in a township, I had people around me from all over the

country. The only two languages I had spoken with people were broken English and a Hindi which was typical and local to that place. That was every other kid's identity in terms of language and only that shaped our culture. Until everyone came out of the place no one was aware of their own identity much. But when we moved to places which were the bigger cities we understood that we need to get familiar with the dominant culture. I started having more friends when I began to learn and speak Assamese than to just remain in the "I can understand phase". And gradually it became my identity and I believed in it. Because the identity that was beneath was ridiculed and mocked. With that identity, I could not have had the bits of social capital I have today, and that's just because I learned to speak a language. So I say language is the most important weapon of cultural imperialism.

In this connection I will like to draw attention towards another phenomenon. Why do you think people migrate? The simplest answer is 'for better opportunities'. In the case of Guwahati chances are high that you will meet migrants from different places all over northeast in a huge number. People who migrate in search of education and employment from backward places of Assam admit that it is because they do not have enough educational facilities as well as employment that they choose to migrate leaving their homeland. Also they accuse the Assam Government to control development and related funds for these places. Why is Government not able to bring development to the places which are not so "Assamese"? However if we reverse the idea and look at it from another angle we might find that the Assam Government does not want to develop these areas. Just to have a control over the economy of a place a strategy of such a kind

makes total sense. In a simple example we can understand this better. Haflong which is the district headquarter of Dima Hasao hills is a remote area in Assam and has very limited facilities compared to Guwahati which is a fast growing metropolitan these days. In such a situation, a student comes from Haflong to Guwahati for Graduation/higher studies because may be there aren't abundant facilities of further studies in Haflong which can provide quality education. Now the person as soon as starts getting the forms and prospectus to entrances to admission fees to tuitions fees and every other money that they spent in the name of fees goes to the college which is already established in a already established city . In an alternative case had there been a university in Haflong and students came to study their and help improve the economy of Haflong and the university, who would have been in the utmost loss: the 'Assamese Culture'. There have been numerous protests by other communities in Assam against the "step-motherly" attitude of Government. And the demand for separation is nothing but a fruit of such imperialism in the form of neglect.

There has been hardly any work or initiative to explore the history of Assam with regards to the history of Bodos or Dimasas or Kacharis or Karbis or any other ethnic group. At least that is what we find in the education of Assam. The history of Assam is the different kingdoms that have ruled the Brahmaputra valley and the history of Assamese language is about the struggle to defeat Bengali which was again an imposing culture. There is much more to a language but nevertheless language has always been used for imperialism and it marks the dignity of a nation/state/land. There have been efforts to protect the language from the time immemorial. The Language Act declared in the year 1960, Assamese as the

official language along with English for two hill districts, and Bengali for Cachar district of Assam. After Bodo language was included under the schedules in the constitution it was declared a official language in the Bodo land territory (The Assam Official Language Act, 1960) .This in itself was a presentation and analysis of the ethnic minorities and how marginalized were they demographically. However even after no recognition to ones mother tongue, one has to struggle hard to fit into the society that the culture has created, and this process of fitting in is cultural imperialism. One of my friends who once raised his voice and conveyed that lectures are to be conducted in a language which everyone understands but he was shut down reminding that if you live is Assam you must know Assamese. And I agree there are numerous such stories which the ethnic minorities have faced and the test of nationalism is passed with adoption of the dominant identity.

There are many who actually have believed that their indigenous identity is "uncivilized". This binary is not what the indigenous people have created or understood. This binary is the part of the cultural imperialism where in the concept of civilization is emerged with the opposition of the dominant culture and the dominated cultures and thereby one is civilized and the other is uncivilized. But eventually the imperial rule also gives rise to upraising. How the Bodos revolted and rejected Assamese as a language is a step forward to the indigenous upraising. Demand for a separate statehood accounts for the part of upraising that the domination has brought in. Such realizations are not only an instinct but also the result of education. Education among the people with the awareness about constitutional amendments has brought in tremendous sense of responsibility for protection of the ethnic identity.

However it is not an ideal society if we have sovereign separate state in every fifty kilometer because that's not how we can ever be sensitive and respectful towards any other community. It is indeed a destructive approach to the world. But Unity if needs to be established in diversity of such heightened level we have to make efforts to know others and their worldview. It is the oneness in language that prevail unity in diversity

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CHANGES IN NATIONAL BANKING POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON RURAL CREDIT
-Roderick Wijunamai

Banking plays a very important role in money supply. It mobilizes savings for capital creation and in turn for investment. Hence, it is an instrument for the process of growth and poverty alleviation. By providing saved resources to others with more productive uses for them, it raises the income of the saver and borrower alike. Without an efficient financial system, lending can be both costly and equally arduous. Theorists like Ross Levine (1990) et al have pointed out how financial structures affect economic growth while simultaneously economic development elicits creation and conception of financial structures. Development of any economy demands a responsive financial system free from undue temptation for acting merely as *Profit Unit*. It has to act as a constructive agent, a resource-mobilizer for development.

In the Indian context, post-independence, the control of banks had become a complex dynamic of political economy. In the backdrop of a 'passive and soft political and administrative environment', the rich wealth-creating elites took control of the finance capital possessed in banks (Shetty, 2016). The government of the day soon understood the severe consequences, if the interest of the poor and deprived were not realised. Many households were being exploited by moneylenders by charging exorbitant interest rates (50 to 60 per cent). It became very crucial for these households to be financially included. Thus, this rationale led to the nationalisation of banks in 1969. Nationalisation compelled the banks to extend more prominent credit to the agricultural sector providing credit at affordable interest rates besides aiming towards wider territorial and regional spread of branch network. The RBI had issued a guideline directing banks to set targets for expansion of commercial banks in rural areas, imposed ceiling and subsidy on interest rates and dictated sectorial allocation of credit. Specifically, a target of 40 per cent of advances for the priority sector viz. agriculture and allied activities, and small scale and cottage industries, was set for commercial banks. The sharp increase in rural bank branches led to an increase in both savings and deposits considerably (Mohan, 2005). It provided for a faster mobilization of financial savings through bank deposits and re-orientation of credit in favour of the (priority) small and disadvantaged classes all along the production spectrum.

Banking Aftermath Reform

Notwithstanding, the contribution of the branch licensing policy, a significant impact on rural poverty particularly in the more backward regions where banks if guided by profit motives alone would not have opened branches (Burgess & Pandey, 2005), the policy came under severe criticism on the pretext of 'low profitability, low capital base, high non-performing assets, ostensible inefficiency and lack of transparency of public sector banks' (Chandrasekhar & Ray, 2005).This led to the constitution of the Committee on the Financial System headed by M. Narasimham which marked a deviation, to a liberalization of banking practices. The financial liberalisation was based on the rationale of providing more operational flexibility and functional autonomy with the aim of enhancing efficiency, productivity and profitability of the financial system. The

implementation of the Committee's recommendations clearly necessitated a reversal of the policy of social and development banking. It successfully reduced the role of banks (credit system) as an instrument for realizing development objectives by increasing the real interest rates and reducing the proportion of credit available to agricultural sectors (Patnaik, 2005).

A Silver Jubilee of Financial Liberalisation

This year (2016) marks the 25th year of financial liberalisation in India. Hence, to analyse the impact of the banking policies on rural credit, let us evaluate the outcome based on few indicators using the latest available data. Since the All-India Debt and Investment Survey (AIDIS) carried out its survey as part of the 70th Round of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) for the period January-December 2013, we take into consideration the bench mark years 1992, the point of commencement of economic reforms and the year2013.

First, to see the demand for credit from rural families and supply of credit by credit agencies, we look at the share of average rural households indebted. While in 1992, we find that an estimated 23% of rural households were reported indebted, the percentage of indebted rural households for the year 2013 rose to31.4%. The households in the rural sector are broadly classified as *cultivator* and *non-cultivator* households to present the different occupational categories of households. On observing the occupational category-wise share of rural cultivator households' indebtedness, a much higher corresponding growth can be noted, an almost double increase from 25.9% in 1992 to 45.94% in 2013. This indicates that the supply of rural credit has increased. Second, in order to assess the percentage of total assets that

were financed by creditors (via liabilities and debt), we shall look at the debt to total assets ratio, an indicator of financial leverage. In other words, this ratio reflects the burden of debt on any particular group of households on a given date. While there has been a trend of diminishing debt-asset ratio, decreasing considerably from 4.43% in 1971 to a low 1.83% in 1981 and further to a new low 1.78% in 1991, the ratio almost doubled to 3.23 % in 2013 indicating an intensification of debt burden on the rural households and farmers.

According to the Sixth Labour Enquiry (1993-1994), the Report on Indebtedness among Rural Labour Households estimated that 64.9 % of the total rural (labour) debts were sourced from informal sector, of which 37.6% was from money lenders. Subsequently, in Eight Labour Enquiry (2004-2005), the Report on Indebtedness among Rural Labour Households estimated that 71 % of the total rural (labour) debts were sourced from informal sector, of which 44.2 % was from money lenders. While there was increase in borrowing from money lenders, a regressive decrease in indebtedness to the banks from 18.9% in 1993-1994 to 16.5% in 2004-2005 of the total rural debts was witnessed (GOI, 2010).

Concluding Remarks

Despite the large scale opening of the number of rural bank branches post 2005, the increase in number of bank branches could not keep pace with the growth of the rural population. The rural population per bank branch was 15,153 in 2011 as against 13,757 in 1990 and 14,591 in 1995 (Ramakumar & Chavan, 2014). While, 922 banks were shut down between the year 1995 to 2005 post liberalisation the resurgence in the number of rural bank branches was rather an outcome of the policy of 'financial inclusion',

implemented after 2005. The official claim states that the credit towards agriculture post 2004, after the central government announced a package of measures aimed at doubling agricultural credit over three years, has been increasing apace, even exceeding the annual set target in the same period since. The agricultural credit in the same period rose from just 2 per cent to 20 per cent. In 2004, about 96 thousand crores were given out as agricultural credit and currently it stands at around 6.267 lakh crores (ibid). Yet, it was not reflected in the debt portfolios of rural and cultivator households. A disaggregated analysis of the credit project tells us few facts that have created the vacuum. The share of direct finance from 2002 onwards has decreased from 85 per cent to about 72 per cent today. What constitutes indirect credit has been significantly broadened. Priority sector which limits the indirect financing by dedicating 13.5 per cent for direct financing out of the 18 per cent has also been done away with by abolishing the distinction between direct and indirect credit. Direct agricultural

loans of the size two lakhs and below stood only at 44 per cent loans with more than one crore had increased (RBI, BSR). Some of these loans accounting to about 28 per cent of the total credit are given out from urban or metropolitan branches. More revealing is the figure of agricultural loans given in off season, as high as 37 per cent of these loans were given out in February or March (ibid).

Drawing cues from the above discussion, it points us to reality of how farmers and rural household are completely marginalised in the process of credit expansion. This oppugns the tall claim and the rosy picture of the banking sector. The social role of the banking sector has been obliterated. The performance of rural banking post reforms has undoubtedly shown to be actually more restrictive through the process of exclusion of farmers and rural households, making profitability the motto. There is a necessity to call for a reform in financial inclusion premised on social and developmental banking to regenerate rural credit.

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TOBACCO CONSUMPTION, PRODUCTION AND TRADE: POLITICAL ECONOMY IN SOUTH ASIA

-Firdous Barbhuiya

Tobacco – South Asian Scenario

Tobacco consumption is the most preventable cause of death in many developing countries including the South Asian Region (SAR) nations. Tobacco is the only product in which it is mentioned by its manufacturer that it kills the consumer. Around the world, tobacco consumption has grown up dramatically and has doubled in the last two decades (Frey, 1997). In 1997, World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that there are about 1100 million smokers in the world, representing about one-third of the global population aged 15 years and over. The vast majority of the smokers are in developing countries (800 million) and most of them are men (700 million). Among the smoking tobacco products, along with cigarettes, Bidis and clay pipes are widely used in South Asia. Bidis are very much popular in India and the WHO estimates that 675000 million bidis were smoked annually in India, 50000 million in Bangladesh, and 25000 million in other SAR countries. Besides, among the smokeless tobacco, pan chewing is widely practised in South Asia, especially in India (WHO, 1997). In SAR countries, it is reported that there is an increasing use of smokeless tobacco not only among men but also among children, teenagers, women of reproductive age group. In India, the per capita smokeless tobacco consumption has increased among the poor between 1961 and 2000 in both rural and urban areas (Gupta & Ray, 2003). Remarkably, the per capita cigarette consumption has declined in the developed countries, whereas the reverse has taken place

in the developing or less developed counties (Frey, 1997). The World Bank study (1999) estimates that worldwide 33 million people are associated with tobacco farming and most tobacco are produced in less developed nations. China is the world's largest producer and consumer of tobacco, followed by the several SAR countries, namely- India, Bangladesh, Indonesia etc. (Warner, 2002).

In SAR countries, approximately 1.2 million people die every year from tobacco use. South Asia, where more than half of the world's poor live, is also the single largest area on the globe for production and consumption of tobacco products (World Bank, 2008). According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimate, Bangladesh is the largest producer of raw tobacco in South Asia which is followed by India and Pakistan (2002). The prevalence of tobacco consumption is also the highest in Bangladesh among the eight SAR countries. Nearly six in ten (58%) males and three in ten females (28.7%) use some form of tobacco. As per Global Adult Tobacco Survey (2009), the prevalence of smoking among males is 44.7% as opposed to 1.5% among females. On the other hand, smokeless tobacco consumption is 26.4% and 27.9% among males and females respectively. Besides, In India, 57% of males and 10.8% of females aged between 15-49 years use tobacco in some form. The major forms of tobacco use are bidis (hand-rolled), various types of chewing products and cigarettes. According to National Family Health Survey (2006), 33.3% of male and 1.6% of female in India smoke tobacco and 38% of male and 9.9% of female consume

smokeless tobacco. In India, the state of Mizoram tops the rank in consumption of tobacco. Tobacco consumption is more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas both among men and women (NFHS, 2006). Moreover, like in the rest of the world, in South Asia also male smoking rates are much higher than female ones except for Nepal, where both are high (World Bank, 2008). Also, in all the SAR nations especially in Nepal, India and Bangladesh, tobacco chewing among rural women has a higher level of social acceptance than smoking (WHO, 2012). However, among urban women, smoking is often seen as a symbol of modernity and emancipation.

Political Economic Perspective of Tobacco

Around 72% of the world's land under tobacco cultivation is located in the less developed nations and majority of the tobacco sold in the world is produced by the farmers in these nations (Frey, 1997). But the whole process of production, marketing and the like are regulated and controlled by the developed nations and their multinational companies. British-American Tobacco, Philips Morris, and RJR Nabisco, American Brand, Japan Tobacco International – the top companies which are in operation in most countries of the world, dominate the international production, manufacture and distribution of tobacco. The transnational corporations arrange loans for the farmers provide tobacco seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and required inputs and after the cultivation, they buy the tobacco form the farmers. Then after processing and producing the final tobacco product from these raw materials, these corporations sell their tobacco products to these poor people of the developing or less developed nations. Thus, these companies belonging to the developed nations are exploiting the people of the

developing and the less developed countries.

Globally, countries like China, Brazil, USA and others are at the top in the production of tobacco leaves. Tobacco consumption has declined in the developed nations, where as in the less developed or developing countries it is increasing. The developed world exports the tobacco and earns profit, on the contrary the less developed nations import tobacco and that affect various aspects of the human life. Typically, in majority of the countries, tobacco represents no more than a small fraction of the total gross domestic product. In addition to the hazardous effect on health, tobacco cultivation and production also affect our eco-system, environment and all these unite to affect the larger ambit of society. Generally tobacco companies and transnational corporations uphold cultivation and production of tobacco by saying that the process generates lots of employment. Actually, tobacco production and marketing provide employment from 15 million to 140 million people in many developing nations including the SAR countries. But, if the same amounts of resources are invested in other goods and services rather than tobacco, it will also produce the similar number of jobs as would tobacco. The only additional cost will be the cost of transition from one economic activity to another. Indeed, reduction in the use of tobacco would not throw out the farmers and others from their employment. In fact, in the world where people are dying because of starvation and also suffering from scarcity of food, it is worth less to contemplate about tobacco production and its allied aspects.

Almost all the eight South Asian countries have prohibited advertisement for tobacco, especially cigarette in television, radio, newspaper and magazines. Bhutan is unique in its tobacco control efforts. The manufacture,

supply, distribution and sale of tobacco products are banned in the country. But the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) and the Global School Personnel Survey (GSPS) indicate that tobacco use is high in the country. However it is reported that advertisement is allowed in a few countries in restricted form and a lot of advertisements were noticed for cigarettes on billboards, in newspapers or in magazines (WHO, 2010). In the countries like – India, Bangladesh, Maldives, Sri Lanka etc. where number of female smokers is less compared to the male, tobacco industries target them by associating smoking behaviour with increased social liberty and emancipation. The other tactics used by tobacco companies to enhance their market in the developing nations in the South Asian region are through sponsorships of sports and cultural events, surrogate advertisement along with brand identification, several contests, by launching attractive schemes, cigarette placement in movies and television, distribution of free samples, and several corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives etc. They also provide bribes and kickbacks to the state officials and apply the political and commercial pressure to regulate and promote tobacco marketing. Moreover, the threat posed because of tobacco on health, economic and sustainable development, environment, social well-being of people is vivid. Though control of tobacco has been taken care of by the developed nations but the issue is not put forward in the global platform because of the profit gain of the transnational corporations and the developed world. None the less, tobacco control was not in the agenda of global poor and control of non-communicable diseases., and also non-communicable diseases were not included in the Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000 (Reddy, Yadav, Arora & Nazar, 2012).

The demand for tobacco in the SAR countries is extremely high including India. Most of the demands are from the poor sections of the society especially poor farmers. Importantly researches have demonstrated the link between poverty and tobacco use, and this finding can also be used in a broader ambit to look into the economic status of the South Asian countries. Thus, it can be analysed that tobacco use can pull users in the vicious cycle of poverty, that may lead to several other issues like poor health, low productivity, low income, inadequate diet and many more.

All the eight SAR countries have signed and ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and Sri Lanka was the first country in the Region that ratified the WHO Framework in 2003 (WHO, 2010). Many initiatives have been undertaken in the SAR countries, like - All forms of smoking tobacco products are banned in Bangladesh by the Tobacco Control Act of Bangladesh, The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of Govt. of India has launched anti-tobacco IEC campaigns for creating mass awareness among women about the adverse consequences of smoking and also established Tobacco Control Cells in the states. In Sri Lanka, sale and promotion of tobacco products to minors (below 21 years of age) and sale through vending machines are prohibited. Bhutan has a policy that stakeholders should consider regulating or censoring the exposure to tobacco use through national media. In addition, no one is allowed to promote, sponsor or render service to promote the consumption of tobacco products. In Myanmar, although the Control of Smoking and Consumption of Tobacco Products Law prohibits all forms of direct and indirect tobacco advertisement, the GYTS findings showed that exposure to pro-cigarette advertising was very high. In Nepal also, the

Cabinet passed an executive order on tobacco-free initiatives such as prohibiting smoking in public places, promoting advocacy efforts for tobacco control, increasing awareness on the harmful effects of tobacco, collecting health tax from tobacco industries, and implementing effective health warnings on tobacco products. In Maldives, there is no tobacco production and products are solely imported. Though several measures have been undertaken, but no ban has been levied on international media and the internet to which young girls and boys have a wider and easier access. Countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan have also taken tobacco control measures somewhat in the similar line with other SAR countries. However, the SAR countries face severe difficulties with FTCT implementation and their tobacco control efforts, mostly due to lack of national capacity, including inadequate and weak infrastructure, legislation, regulations and acts, in addition to a shortage of financial and human resources. All these issues are thwarted by fragile mechanisms to put into effect the existing tobacco control measures (World Bank, 2008).

Suggestions and Conclusions

To control and regulate tobacco and its consumption, a number of activities need to be taken care of. At first, developed countries efforts to encourage less developed countries to relax their restrictions on tobacco marketing and consumption should be stopped. They should not subsidise (through tax incentives) tobacco transnational corporations in marketing and promoting cigarette in the less developed nations. Researches indicate that increase in excise taxes on cigarette reduces consumption, especially among young and poor who are sensitive to price changes. So, the SAR countries should levy high rate of taxes, and such a policy would not only reduce

tobacco consumption, health, human and environmental costs, but also generate revenue. These funds can be utilised in promoting health care services and also in anti-tobacco smoking campaigns. Furthermore, countries' public health systems hold the responsibility for treating tobacco dependence. In fact, there is insufficient help offered by the governments in South Asia to people who would like to quit tobacco use. Some non-governmental organizations are involved in this area. The governments should take these matters forward by considering the interest of the masses. Besides, it is also obvious to note that higher cigarette taxes exhort smuggling. Consequently individuals and gangs smuggle cigarette and other tobacco products from low-tax countries to high-tax countries. Surprisingly, almost one third of the world's legally identified exports are never registered as having been imported (Warner, 2002). Thus, there should be stringent laws to deal with the issues of smuggling and other aspects including advertisement, promotion, marketing, sponsorship and free distribution of tobacco products. The social and cultural acceptance of tobacco use as a social norm greatly challenges the tobacco control programme and necessitates intensive IEC campaigns, workshops, training programmes and talks. These activities should be carried out at the community level in active participation of the people. Furthermore, there are many actors in the armament of tobacco, viz. tobacco production and sales: farmers, tobacco transnational companies, governments that collect taxes and foreign exchange from tobacco sales, and the media that earn profit from the advertisement. As long as, all these stakeholders don't come together to address this common issue, an epidemic will persist in near future. Lessons from countries as diverse as Brazil, South Africa, Poland and Thailand,

suggest that when there is political corroboration for tobacco control of a country, and it is supported by solid in-country research, and an open and transparent media, progress will happen.

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SOCIAL MEDIA: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR DISASTER RESPONSE

-Priya Namrata Topno

"Don't believe everything you read on the Internet just because there's a picture with a quote next to it"— credited to Abraham Lincon

Should social media be trusted for the information it displays during any disaster situation? What are the ethical issues concerning social media and the news it shows?

Social media plays a vital role in our day-to-day life. It is the most commonly used communication system during crisis period using multitudes of mobile based and web based technologies like short message services (SMS) and blogs (Start, 2012). Various social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Viber, Whatsapp, Instagram and Youtube are extensively used for help, mapping and sending status reports. The media is also used for fund raising, donations and gathering volunteers for help through phone. Social media can reach to millions within seconds and is useful in pre-, during and post- disaster situation. Social media being fifth pillar of democracy is actively involved in disaster response.

Social media has become the integral part of disaster response in the present era. Ancient one-way communication days are long gone where the authorities used to provide information regarding disaster on bulletins. Social media has captured every sphere of our society, platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are often used to be connected, keep informed, locate loved ones and photo tags to find missing people, express support and notify the authorities. According to Micheal Beckerman, "the convergence of social networks and mobile has thrown out the response playbook out of window".

Emergency management has adapted social networks to broadcast information during disasters. Every disaster has its own complex web of fast-paced information exchange which enables quick response and allows the affected population to get more prepared to face the adverse situation (Maron, 2013).

According to FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) more than 20 million users tweeted during Hurricane Sandy. Twitter was effectively used to send words regarding daily locations of the tents and generators; it was also used to alert the customers. Google document emerged as a medium to provide immediate services to the strangers for lodging, food and hot shower when everything was standstill. But there are also some drawbacks too, as tracking of relevant information on Twitter becomes difficult when there are no consistent hash tags. Even the false information can go viral easily. The scammer uses social media to steal cash which is another form of major risk. During Haiti earthquake (2010) money were raise for humanitarian assistance within 48 hours, but social media could also be used as lucrative platform for scam during such emergencies. Many people use social media like Facebook to get the compensation money of victims claiming to be their relatives (Maron, 2013). During any calamity when the telecommunication system becomes futile and congested then the internet based social media become the major source of information exchange and transfer of reports regarding it.

Social media and Disaster

During any disaster situation, social media act as a useful medium focusing on various aspects which require quick response. Social media plays a vital role at pre disaster scenario by warning the public in advance and contributes in disaster preparedness and mitigation. It acts as a channel to spread awareness. Media is an effective medium for sending information, disseminating helpline numbers, emergency phone numbers and locating the safe place and medical camps. It also suppresses rumors to avoid panic situation.

Social networking being a new outlook has emerged as a new way to provide instant information during disasters. It is generally used in four ways:

1. Sharing updates and spreading awareness of the condition
2. Creating communities and volunteers for relief operation
3. Fund raising
4. Monitoring and providing insights of the whole situation

Information exchange through social media is pivotal in tracking with accurate hashtags and keywords (Harihar, 2015). Social media enables to take important decision and actions during disaster, accuracy and timeliness of ground information is necessary. There is a shift in the motive of social media from keeping in touch with family, friends and colleagues to sharing information and interaction through internet. During emergencies and disasters, social media becomes an important means of communication. The use of social media has been used widely in many disasters like Great East Japan Tsunami (2011), Mount Merapi Eruption in Indonesia (2010), Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004) and Chennai floods (2015). Social media has five characteristics in disaster management which includes collectivity, connectivity, completeness, clarity and collaboration. It is the firsthand reporting of news, a tool for updates and sharing it instantly with the public. It is also known as 'backchannel' communication when the public is engaged in discussion and provides feedback. Social media is active even when the other modes of communication fail (Annamalai, Koay, & Lee, 2014).

Before Disaster	After Disaster
Forecasting about disaster (Facebook (trending news), Twitter (hashtags)), weather forecast updates	Quick response and rescue, fund raising through Paytm
Spread precautionary measures (Steps to Follow)	Rescue (Whatsapp message by stranded people, Twitter #rescue, #volunteer, Facebook 'go to' places for rescue)
Mapping hazard prone zones (Facebook and Google maps), real time analysis	Relief (Facebook used for mapping, Google spreadsheet listing helpline numbers, volunteer details, accommodation etc.)
Early warning system (Radio, television),	Relocation (Twitter used by the authorities)
Mapping crowd intensity at public place	Rehabilitation (dissemination of Information regarding the availability of places.

Table 1- Role of social media before and after disaster

Though social media is a boon during any emergency situation as it is useful in fast dissemination of information and ground realities to the larger audience, easy and quick tracking of affected people, raising funds and relief materials, effective and timely relief

operations, interaction between the rescuing team and victims, alerting the authorities regarding the calamity, maintain database of missing people, mobilizing volunteers yet it has some negative impacts too. Media could come in bad light by proving wrong weather forecast information which may mislead the public. It may be used to spread fraud messages of aids and fraudulent money transfer for relief, online cash stealing, misleading information may create panic situation and chaos among public during crisis and exaggerating the situation by giving unwanted importance to certain issues. Policing of social media is very difficult. During Nepal earthquake and Uttrakhand floods the media was criticized for insensitive coverage. The ethics of journalism has been questioned many times as media changes attitudes and beliefs. During the Chennai flood, J&K floods, Nepal earthquake, Uttrakhand flash flood, social media such as Facebook and Twitter were full of post seeking help by displaying vital information's of affected areas, flashing emergency numbers to get information, spreading awareness, channel of information exchange, seeking support, gather news about disaster (Pradnya, 2015).

Though social media is still in innovative stage, yet according to Jeannette Sutton, social media is a crucial part of disaster preparedness planning but the public should know how to used social media effectively to get information from web and also to float relevant information to the society (Maron,

2013). Disaster mitigation and rehabilitation of victims became easy through social networking. Locating dear one and their safety became easy through Facebook's special feature –Safety Check. This was activated during 2011 Japan earthquake and was used during Nepal earthquake also, where users located near disaster site can mark themselves safe and notify their friends and relatives. Twitter's Alert feature started two way communications as seen during Nepal earthquake. During Kashmir floods (2014), automated SOS service for rescue operations was used by army. Twitter channelized the SOS information using twitter feed as hashtag information about the place (#kashmirfloods) having separate code that separated SOS tweets. The social media was used creatively to channelize relief material. (Saleem, 2015). Media strategy is required by the government to filter the information regarding damages and relief measures (Insight, 2015).

Conclusion

Social media has enhanced the communication medium which is turning out to be a life saving tool. The collaborative measures along with government agencies, disaster experts, civil society and social can bring about changes in disaster response. Social media can be used by the government authorities as preventive measures. Government must educate the public about the use of social media for interaction, responding, sharing, receiving and generating information during catastrophic events.

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NEWS AND EVENTS

Upcoming events

1. India Economic Summit to be held on 6th & 7th October 2016 in New Delhi India.
   https://www.weforum.org/events/india-economic-summit-2016

2. **19th SAARC Summit in Islamabad postponed indefinitely**

   Pakistan was expected to host the 19th SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Summit in Islamabad (capital city) and Murree on November 9 and 10, 2016. The meeting was to be attended by the heads of states or head of government of the eight SAARC countries. Besides, nine observers of SAARC have also been invited to attend the Summit. The 18th SAARC Summit was held in Kathmandu, Nepal in November 2014 with the theme Deeper Integration for Peace and Prosperity. It had focused on enhancing connectivity between the member states for easier transit-transport across the region. The Summit had to be indefinitely postponed due to growing diplomatic tensions between India and its neighbouring country, Pakistan in view of the terrorist attack on Indian Army base in Uri, Jammu and Kashmir killing 19 Indian Jawans. After India announced its boycott of the summit later in September, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Bhutan and SriLanka too declared that they will not attend the Summit in an atmosphere of tensions between the two nations.

   Read more at: http://currentaffairs.gktoday.in/tags/saarc

3. Asia-Pacific Joint Regional Social Work Conference to be held in Shenzhen, China from October 25th to 29th, 2017.

   http://ifsw.org/news/asia-pacific-joint-regional-social-work-conference/

4. World Congress of the World Association of Social Psychiatry (WASP)

   30 November – 4 December 2016, New Delhi, India

   http://www.globaleventslist.elsevier.com/events/2016/11/world-congress-of-the-world-association-of-social-psychiatry-wasp/

5. 4th UPI International Conference on Technical and Vocational Education and Training

   15–16 November 2016, Bandung, Indonesia

   http://www.globaleventslist.elsevier.com/events/2016/11/4th-upi-international-conference-on-technical-and-vocational-education-and-training/

AUTHOR GUIDELINES

The newsletter welcomes articles and commentaries on topics such as social welfare, governance, social policies, social protection, peace, and human security, with focus on South Asia. It encourages scholars and practitioners to write articles from their research work, academic papers, and field experiences. The newsletter strictly follows APA referencing style. It shall be the responsibility of the author(s) to ensure appropriate citations and referencing as per standard referencing rules. The selection of article and commentary would be primarily based on the quality of the manuscript and its relevance to the contemporary subjects and fulfilling the objectives of the newsletter. We request contributors to submit original articles and take due care in aspects such as methodology, theoretical discussion, clearer flow of arguments, and diplomatic language.

For Special Articles

The word limit is between 5000 and 6000 words (including abstract, keywords, and references). The author(s) should submit the article in MS Word format. It should have a cover page specifying aspects like title, author(s) name(s), affiliated institution, communication address, and short bio (of 100 words). Article should have an abstract of not more than 150 words and five keywords. In case of multiple authors, the first author will be considered as the corresponding author. A letter of authorisation from all they authors to agree to the order in which the names appear will have to be submitted along with the article.

For commentaries

The word limit for commentary is between 1000 and 2000 words. The author(s) should submit the article in MS Word format. It should have a cover page specifying aspects like title, author(s) name(s), affiliated institution, communication address, and short bio (of 100 words).

Review system

The manuscript received will be reviewed by the Editor and the Guest Editor. The accepted manuscript may undergo a process to fit within the policy outline of this newsletter. The Editor and the Guest Editor will provide inputs to the author(s) and it is the responsibility of the author(s) to make the necessary corrections. The decision of the Editor will be final. All the communication will be carried out through e-mail.

Communication

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