

Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life; define yourself.

Harvey Fierstein

## Whistle blown for five ACs Ex-MLA now Minister

It is getting more and more interesting. Five Assembly Constituencies set to go for by polls on November 7 and adding to the spice is the presence of one recently appointed Minister. Come November 10 and it will be known whether the recently appointed Minister will be promoted to the status of a sitting MLA or will be remembered as an Ex-Minister. This is where it will be interesting to watch how the people of Wangoi Assembly Constituency vote on D Day and one wonders if they are aware of the immense responsibility that rests on the tip of their finger when they punch in their choice on the EVM. The BJP has done its part in going full steam ahead to ensure that the ex-Congressmen, who are ex-MLAs but Ministers now, are placed in the best possible position to bring in the voters to their favour and this is what will make the coming by elections all that more interesting. Will the voters back a candidate who first ditched the party on which ticket he was elected, or will they be overwhelmed by the Ministerial portfolio which now adorns his name? All questions at the moment but more than enough to make the run up to the elections interesting and exciting. It is not only Wangoi Assembly Constituency which will see an Ex-Congress MLA but now appointed Minister but also Wangkhei Assembly Constituency and to be sure this can push all pollsters running back to their favourite indulgence of calculating the swing pattern and which will weigh heavier on the minds of the voters, the Ministerial post or the party hopping indulgence of the candidate. Tough to say but this is what should weigh on the minds of the voters when they go out to vote on November 7.

Not unexpected that the Congress has also gone ahead and announced that they are ready to take the fight to the citadel of the BJP when the by elections are held. That the Congress picked the opportune moment to announce this, when 37 members of the Lok Jana Shakti switched over to the oldest political party in the country, more than says that it was waiting for the right moment to spell out its mind. Making this more significant is the fact that the lone LJP MLA who was in the Council of Ministers was dropped in the recent Ministry reshuffle. Moreover the LJP has been a staunch supporter of the BJP led Government and in so far as Manipur is concerned, its lone MLA was never seen as someone who raised any voice of dissent against the BJP leadership in Government. So lone Minister of LJP dropped with 37 of its members joining the Congress and surely the situation could not have been better for the Congress than this. It will also be interesting to see how the Ministers in the BJP led Government throw their weight behind the BJP candidates in the by elections. Campaigning in Constituencies other than their own will go a long way in determining the vote catching capabilities of the Ministers and just how they conduct themselves will be significant. Apart from the Chief Minister, how many BJP Ministers have it in them to convince voters in other Constituencies? The politically conscious will certainly watch the conduct of not only the party but also in how the other Ministers go about selling the prospects of the BJP and the candidates to the voters. This can go some significant distance on deciding who the star campaigner of the BJP may be when Assembly election is held sometime in 2022.

### Notice

Contributors are requested to submit their articles within 1000-1500 words. Any article exceeding the word limit will not be entertained.

Editor

## Etc etc

### Performance Rating: The problem creator Vaidehi Mendhekar

(Contd from previous issue)

The 'growth mindset' holds that people learn, grow, and improve all their lives. Most people do learn throughout their years.

However, they could learn far more effectively and bring a high-performance attitude to everything they did if numbers did not bind them.

If we want a high-performance organization, we need to reverse the destructive effects of conventional performance management. The evaluations must be based on a growth mindset, recognizing one's abilities, and giving them chances to improve. The starting point can be educating the company's leaders about demerits in the current performance system, primarily if it is based on numerical rankings.

The SCARF Hypothesis

When an organization's apparent degree of any of the SCARF factors is low, individuals feel compromised and irritated—increasing the SCARF factors degree allows better growth of the company.

1. Status: Individuals in lower-status positions have been marked with numbers since the beginning, as a method of dehumanizing and crippling them. In performance rankings in many associations today, any number aside from 1 naturally implies a lower-status position, with pay levels and advancement possibilities to match. Individuals carry that number intellectually around with them for a year, until their next review.

(To be contd)

# Sustainable development and community aspirations : The case of Chadong

Dr Jeebanlata Salam

The Brundtland report of the World Commission on Environment and Development conceives of sustainable development as a blueprint of promoting social justice for all keeping in mind each of the matrixes—social-economic and environmental sustainability with an overriding focus on the poor and vulnerable sections of community. With the pledge that 'no one left behind', all United Nations Member States adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 to be achieved by 2030. The SDGs are functionally interrelated that performance in one goal will affect the outcomes in others. Having played a prominent role in the formulation of the SDG agenda, India is expected to play a pro-active role in effective implementation of SDGs.

In development paradigm discourse, the modern State is often identified as the principal actor in political, cultural, social and economic normative of societies. To conceptualize it, State is at the centre stage as policy making actor with the public interest carefully chartered to bring about development or to end poverty. This indeed presents a very powerful view of the state with its notion of a benevolent leviathan as in the works of Hobbes while philosopher such as Hegel enlivened the State in the realm of higher ethical order, capable of pursuing as neutral arbiter of public interest. However, in actual practice, both the interpretations have remained a fallacy.

State pursues competing agendas that tend to normalize people's grievances, especially the weak and vulnerable communities. As also observed by the British political scientist, Steven Lukes who introduced the concept of radical power of State to convey the idea that State exercises radical power by preventing grievance narratives of people in the first place; and then gradually shape their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in ways that the aggrieved people begin to accept their roles and positions in the existing order of things. Thus, issues never arise, so neither do decisions to include or exclude them from the political agenda. This observation lends credence to the grievance narratives and collective sufferings of the people of Chadong village.

It goes without saying that the Maphithel mega dam construction in and around Chadong village in Manipur's former Ukhrul district brought structural destruction to the old-age social structure and habitus. The French sociologist, Bourdieu, on human practices, argues that social structure and habitus are constitutive of each other. Habitus constitutes a range of socially acquired human practices such as beliefs, ideas, value systems, customs, worship and rituals, traditions, human creativity, economic activities, collective identity, social relationships and so on. It's the habitus that produces practices that tend to reproduce the regularities in structures.

Maphithel dam destroyed both structure and habitus of Chadong tribal populace, who once enjoyed a life of abundance and exuberance in their pristine world. As the rising dam water began to engulf their habitat, it separated the community into two groups—one community moved to the western hillock that is easily connected to the valley population, while the eastern occupants preferring to remain in their ancestral abode moved to the higher elevated hilltop amidst surmountable obstacles ahead. During my recent visit to the village and close interaction with the community discovered that their grievance narratives are inexplicable hardships of inner pain, psychological trauma, angst and despair caused by the reverberation of losing their sacred ecology—collective habitus with which they had constant reaffirming existential ties that they are only beginning to rebuild.

However, one most dominant grievance is against uprooting livelihood after the dam construction destroyed their paddy fields—the only viable source of their food security, while other subsidiary economic activities such as community fishing cannot be undertaken any longer. Going by the Food Insecurity Multidimensional Index of the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation, the Chadong community is currently facing food security crisis in terms of food availability, access, utilization and stability of food. Hence, timely and appropriate State intervention is the need of the hour to avert the crisis of chronic food insecurity and collective hunger.

One of the important goals of sustainable development is to transform the conditions of the poor and vulnerable community by taking community aspirations of development into consideration alongside protection of community rights over economic resources, ownership and control over land and other forms of natural resources, access to basic services, appropriate new technology and so on. It's delightful to have witnessed the Chadong mountainous village as not only a hot biodiversity but also awash with rich horticultural plants, fruits and medicinal herbs of different varieties – papayas, bananas, oranges, apples, pears, plum, pine-apples, grapes,



cabbage, cauliflower, beans, tomato, red potatoes, mushroom, radish, beans, king chilies, black pepper, cinnamon, sesame, ginger, turmeric to mention a few. From my close dialogical engagement with the villagers, it's understood that there is strong community aspiration for horticultural development on sustainable model as they see in it as the immense possibility of improving their economic situations and overall quality of life.

Their collective demand of developing horticultural activity on sustainable model is worth considering as the best option for several reasons: it can help in improving their present socio-economic conditions by taking care of their resource base; prevents the adverse effects on their environment and its ecology or other surrounding natural resources. The community aspirations of development model also clearly align with the sustainable development model without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. What's more, the logic of the Chadong Community aspirations of development is justifiable as the famous Anthropologist Appadurai rightly stated, people's capacity to aspire is conceived as a cultural in which the ideas of the future, as much as those about the past are embedded and nurtured. It's this culture that shape collective horizons that constitute the basis for collective aspirations located in the larger map of local ideas and beliefs that hold good for community themselves.

The Chadong villagers have made enormous sacrifices—their traditional ownership over land, forest, water and other resources that cannot be compensated with piecemeal cash distribution. In unequivocal terms, the previous Government caused much humiliation, material deprivation and catastrophe to the lives of Chadong community. It can also be recalled that it was during this political culture that the State of Manipur witnessed frequent ethnic conflict and other forms of violence—a visible political climate adverse to peace and development. It was this political culture that shaped the development agenda of the State which often misused its overriding power by diminishing the poor and vulnerable communities of which Chadong community is an experiential glaring example.

Taking cue from the mistakes of the past Government, it would be prudent for the present Government to bring development reforms rooted in local community's aspirations and choices to address sustainable development goals with equity and inclusion.

The writer is a faculty at NIAS, IISc Campus, Bengaluru.

She can be reached at jeebanlata@nias.res.in/ jeebanlata90@gmail.com

# Impact of Covid pandemic on Manipuri women

Naorem Sujata Devi and Sonia Meitram

When the entire Nation was hit by the pandemic and the lockdown was imposed, people were asked to stay at home but they were not told how to deal with the issue. Knowingly and unknowingly all of us were getting affected by the sudden lockdown. The more difficult part in dealing a pandemic is the fear and panic it brings along with the virus.

The crisis of food shortages rose and economic crisis followed. Whatever the problem it may be, we come to know it was/is never gender neutral. Pandemic or no-pandemic it is the women that are affected the most. As we can see from the reports of most of the organizations and health departments COVID-19 issue will have a long-lasting effect to all of us socially, culturally, economically, politically etc.

Since the first case of COVID-19 was detected in Wuhan, China in December-2019 more than 34,345,342 people have been affected, out of which more than 23,890,360 have recovered and with a death toll of 1,023,817 all over the world (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronavirus\_disease\_2019). The first case of the Coronavirus pandemic in India was reported on 30th January 2020. India currently has the largest number of confirmed cases in Asia with 6,394,068 cases out of which

5,352,078 recovered and a death toll of over one lakh till date (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19\_pandemic\_in\_India).

According to the UN's report on the Impact of COVID-19 on Women, it strongly suggested the need for a revision in policies in view of this pandemic since inequalities have been making all of us more vulnerable to the impact of any crisis be it COVID-19 or any other.

It also suggested rebuilding a more equal, more inclusive economy, focusing on the lives and futures of women and girls in terms of the socio-economic plans, etc. by understanding the gender impacts of this pandemic since many reports claimed that it is the women and children who will be severely affected by the pandemic (UN, Policy Brief, 2020).

In many countries like United States, United Kingdom, Brazil, China, India etc., there are reports on increasing number of cases of domestic violence during the lockdown.

The National Commission for Women, India has also received an increase in the number of complaints of domestic violence. It is also expected that there might be many more unreported cases.

Domestic violence not only affects the victim physically but it will lead to

lifelong mental health problems of the women.

In order to avoid the rise in such cases, the Government and NGOs can start campaigns to promote awareness about domestic violence, which is expected to be rising, and can impart the information of where to file the complaints.

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in Manipur on 24th March 2020. First, the lockdown was imposed for 14-days, and it has affected every section of the society. It affected the daily wage earners at large.

In Manipur, there are many women who are the lone bread earner of their family. When the lockdown started, they do understand that it's the need of the hour but a big question arises when it begins to extend. Which is better: die due to the virus or due to starvation?

We came across a news report of Laibi Oinam, a mother of two and a lady auto-driver who is the sole bread-earner of the family, leaving behind the fears of being infected by the virus and many other attacks, volunteered and drove for eight long hours, over 100 km away from the capital city Imphal to drop home a recovered COVID-19 patient when the ambulance service refused.

In recognition of her human act and service, the

Chief Minister handed over a cash award of Rs 1,10,000/- sponsored by some entrepreneurs of the State and by Manipuri expatriates to Laibi (ndtv.com June 11, 2020).

An online survey was conducted to know the condition of Manipuri women during this pandemic. More than 100 women from urban, rural and hill areas responded to the survey.

And from the online survey we came to know that most of the women despite of their qualification are unemployed. Many of them were working in private firms and were earning their livelihood through small-scale business. But the sudden imposition of the lockdown affected them hugely. Majority of them responded that they opted for another business to sustain their financial independence.

The sudden lockdown has in fact affected every section of the society despite of one's economic or social status. But the womenfolk are getting affected in every arena let it be economic or psychological. We all know that women are the primary care provider in a family. Whenever any crisis arises it is the women who have to stay focused both inside the home and outside.

Despite losing their financial independence during this pandemic, women are trying their best to balance both inside and outside. From the

survey it has come to notice that the workload has become double as the family members are staying at home and the demand for food or care has increased. There are also responses of men helping the women in doing the household chores during this pandemic. However, it is same for many men whether there is pandemic or no-pandemic. They still think that it is the sole responsibility of the women to do the household works. It shows the genderization of household work. It in turn increases their stress level and they do not have any portal or source to let out and decrease their stress. In such cases, the role of counsellor who provides psychological support becomes important.

Those who are well-trained in this field can help them in dealing with the psychological impact of the pandemic. There are many women who have started small scale business to sustain their livelihood during this pandemic. But they do not have access to the right platform which will let them earn income. In addition to providing psychological support to the women, the counsellor can also help them in searching for the platform to earn money.

COVID-19 or economic crisis, food crisis or war, it is the women that is always at the receiving end. When

the pandemic broke out people were asked to stay strictly at home and not to come out. It has affected all section of the society. It makes women lose their business, their financial independence and to become dependent again upon their partners and parents.

The pandemic surely doubles their daily household works but many of the women perceive this time as a boon in disguise. It gives them ample of 'me time'. They got time to learn those activities which they always wanted to do but never got the chance. But we really need an intervention of making people aware of the basic things that one can do despite of one's gender identity.

The lockdown is indeed a boon-in-disguise. It surely improves the condition of nature. It decreases pollution. People are taking extra care of their hygiene like washing hands frequently. It also taught people to use the available resources wisely. And it also taught us that all those functions, rituals or celebration of festivals that one used to observe pre-pandemic are not necessary.

All of us have started considering the pros and cons of 'what is needed' and 'what is not needed'. We are more able to differentiate between the 'need' and the 'want'. We think it is a good lesson for all of us despite all the hardships.

## Revisiting India's forgotten battle of WWII

# Kohima-Imphal, the Stalingrad of the East

Ranjan Pal-Courtesy CNN

In a cataclysmic year during which the whole world has been beset by COVID-19, gone almost unnoticed is the 75th anniversary of the end of the last great catastrophe to befall our planet – WWII.

But even within the context of that extraordinary war, there are amazing battles that have been forgotten.

One such slice of history is the Battle for Kohima-Imphal, which was a decisive turning point in the war. It ended with the first major defeat suffered by Japanese forces in the Burma theater and thwarted their ambitious plans to invade India.

In fact, in 2013 it was voted by the National War Museum as Britain's greatest battle ahead of the more celebrated engagements of D-Day and Waterloo.

"The victory was of a profound significance because it demonstrated categorically to the Japanese that they were not invincible," said historian Robert Lyman at the museum, following the announcement. "This was to be very important in preparing the entire Japanese Nation to accept defeat."

The two North Eastern States of Manipur and Nagaland and their capitals of Kohima and Imphal formed the critical frontier for British India in their war against Japan on the Burmese front.

A key route ran from the British supply base at Dimapur through Kohima up on a ridge in the Naga Hills and down to Imphal in a small encircled plain in Manipur and from there into Burma, the country known today as Myanmar.

"Operation U-Go" was an audacious plan by the Japanese military command to capture this road by using three divisions to attack simultaneously south and north of Imphal and to directly take Kohima. Had it succeeded it would have given them the critical springboard they needed to launch an all-out attack on British India.

Today's visitors to Kohima will see no traces of that long-ago battle. The urban sprawl of the town has covered up the hills over which it was fought.

But there is a World War II museum (entry Rs 50) located



within the Naga Heritage Village about 10 kilometers south of town.

Displays include a diverse range of weaponry, tabletop models of battlefields, soldiers' uniforms and historic photographs from both warring armies, though little attention has been paid to organization or detail.

Even the interesting war documentary that plays in the background is spoiled through poor acoustics and badly positioned display cases, which obstruct the screen.

A visit to the Kohima War Cemetery, however, is not to be missed. Beautifully maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, visitors will find the plots of British and Indian servicemen who lost their lives in the defense of Kohima, numbering 2,340 in all.

The British and Muslim soldiers are commemorated through simple elegant bronze plaques laid out in neat rows and terraces, while the names of their Hindu and Sikh com-

patriots who were cremated are inscribed on a separate memorial at the top of the cemetery.

It is impossible not to be moved by the quiet beauty of the place and the heartrending messages on the gravestones from the families of the fallen heroes.

Remembering the battle

The Japanese attack caught the British by surprise as their High Command had not expected the enemy to move so swiftly and in such large numbers through the thick jungle and mountainous terrain.

They cut the Kohima-Imphal road and quickly surrounded the British garrison defending Kohima.

Over 16 crucial days beginning on April 4, 1944, the much smaller British Indian force of 2,500 men held off 15,000 Japanese troops who had laid siege to the Kohima ridge.

In some of the bitterest close-quarter fighting of WWII, the battle raged the length of the ridge with the Japanese gradually pushing back the British defensive perimeter on Garrison Hill inch by bloody inch.

At one point the opposing troops were so close that they were dug in on either side of the tennis court belonging to the District Commissioner's bungalow.

Notably, the cemetery was built over the exact site of the battle on Garrison Hill and you can still see the lines of the famous court where the opposing sides faced off.

Raghu Karnad, author of "Farthest Field: An Indian Story of the Second World War," said of the battle: "The DC's tennis court served as the killing ground for a new sort of desperate and bloody match. If Kohima fell, all of eastern India might fall to the Japanese occupation -- if Kohima stood, it would begin the rollback of the great Japanese advance on the Asian mainland."

Relief came at the 11th hour with elements of the British 2nd Division breaking through the Japanese roadblocks to reach the beleaguered Kohima garrison on April 20.

(To be contd)