

Conclusion

Violence begets violence. In case of Assam the central government always believed in militant counter-insurgency. How can it be eradicated if the root causes are not addressed? Sanjib Barua in his essay, "Separatist Militants and Contentious Politics in Assam, India: The Limits of Counterinsurgency" writes: "In 2006, it was widely expected that the talks between ULFA nominees and Indian officials would pave the way for a negotiated settlement of Assam's quarter-century-old armed conflict, but this was not to be the case. Ajai Singh, a former Army lieutenant general who was then the governor of the state, told the press that he opposed talking to ULFA. Instead, he supported tough military action: 'What is (there) to talk? They should surrender and seek rehabilitation. Otherwise they should be crushed because such talks only help the militants'" (952). The two novels of our discussion mirror the ill effects of insurgency and counter-insurgency on Assamese society. The simple village of Assam, Mayong is oppressed and repressed by Indian Army. The novel replicates the bizarre scene of secret killing in Assam. Similarly *Sons of Brahma* represents how innocent and uninvolved students and academicians are dragged into the turbulence. Furthermore, the novel also shows how the bureaucrats and administrators are working for their selfish gains and innocent people like Rekib and Jongom's parents are suffering.

Both the novels mirror how many house-holds were passing sleepless nights for fear in which they played no roles. Jongom's father was a generous man and he became a target for no fault of him. Even Jongom was a research scholar untarnished by the game play between militants and anti-militants. Yet the novel brings to light the fact that many educated, prudent and responsible citizens performed the role of instructors and leaders clandestinely. The character of Pranab and his father were quite convinced about the causes the Nationalist Revolutionary Army were fighting for. Some other characters like Suren mama were not helping pro-

militant people out of fear, they had sympathy and concern for them. Considering all these facts we can be certain pure aggressive military operations will never lead to any peaceful and consensus solution.

Nonetheless, as has been discussed in the chapters even the militant group performed inhuman atrocities which broke the hearts of those who had sympathy for the militant groups for their causes. The villagers were deprived of a serene and peaceful life in *The House with Thousand Stories* for no fault of them. They could not move freely in their own village for fear of militant and counter-militant groups. That shows how the common people were entrapped. In this context Harekrishna Deka, the former DGP of Assam comments, "I believe that extremism in the long run fails as a strategy to achieve a mission and it often degenerates into terrorism. When this happens it loses direction and becomes a self-defeating doctrine. But at the same time, the state cannot dismiss it simply as a senseless ideology and itself use only extreme measures to crush the extremists abandoning all other modes of action or strategy. Often groups seeking recognition or justice resort to extremism in desperation when there is absence of a dialogic path. The state's response to extremism has to be a combination of hard options and soft power. I recognise that the state needs to exercise hard option when a culture of violence is deliberately spread by certain elements but the state should avail this choice for the purpose of restoring rule of law only when it tends to break down under the weight of culture of violence. An important component of the state's strategy has to be reduction of social discontent by means of developmental plan and political dialogue. Terrorism may be self-defeating, but what causes terrorism becomes enduring and contaminates the social soil if the soil is not nourished properly" (14-15).

The unrest in Assam and its disturbed relationship with mainland India has been documented by narratives. As has been viewed by Dr Nandana Dutta "Assam's turmoil in the last three decades has been the result of narratives about it generated by the centre and narratives about

itself generated in response. How does one explain such a claim? One could examine public utterances from the nineteenth century onwards about Assam's relationship with the rest of India—a Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla or an Ambikagiri Roychowdhuri, both acknowledging the value of alignment, albeit in different ways, and imagining a great nation of which Assam is a part. Or one might look at the political relationship in the post-Independence era, when the rhetoric about indifference and neglect is fuelled by Nehru's infamous reply to real fears about invasion by China and immigrant influx from East Pakistan communicated to him by the then chief minister, Gopinath Bordoloi" (124).

However, to narrow down the gap between India and rest of Assam and also to initiate the peace-process, what is needed is a dialogic discourse. The narrative should be participatory in which both the parties enjoy equal space. Recently Assam and the other north-eastern countries are receiving a kind of attention from the state government which was denied for long. Still it is difficult to identify any significant change in the overall outlook of mainland to north-east India.

Neither the rebel groups nor the central government have a clear vision about the future of Assam. The rebel group is of the view that everything will be fine once they get independence. They never tried to address the burning problems of Assam like flood or immigration. The rebel groups are involved in such criminal activities that it has become difficult to differentiate between the criminals and insurgents. They are involved in all kinds of criminal activities to raise fund for their group. As Bethany Lacina puts it: "Much of the fighting in the region is inter-communal, aimed at running a rival militant group off certain pieces of territory, ethnic cleansing or pogroms against civilians, or dispensing vigilante justice. And commentators point out that many insurgent groups in the area are difficult to distinguish from criminal organisations because they are heavily involved in extortion, kidnapping, and the cross-border drug trade" (332). In this type of a situation the insurgent

groups have lost all the ethical norms and have deviated from their original goal remarkably. The counter-insurgent agencies, on the other hand, should follow the spirit of the task rather than the letter. The numerous police, military and other counter-insurgents with uniformed dress often get involved in aggressive control method. They never try to analyse and understand the real situation. Instead of such rigid deployment if the state and central deploy them to study the ground realities without uniformed dress so that they become one with the mass and understand their trouble. It is important to be aware of every stakeholders' opinion in such a situation. The situation may beget competing narratives, but it is important to know their contrasting views. Then only the counter-insurgent agents can take more fruitful and effective steps to prevent the violent activities of the insurgent groups.

However, Samir Kumar Das in his essay "Peace sans Democracy? A Study of Ethnic Peace accords in Northeast India" says, "But there is reason to believe that the tradition of democratic theory spanning from Kant to say, Rawls, does not make it imperative on the part of democracies to observe democratic norms and principles while dealing with those who themselves do not observe them... A good number of policy makers and analysts, for example, make an advocacy for firmly dealing with insurgents and insurgencies in India" (236-237). It shows that since ancient times people never thought of coming to a peaceful solution with any militant groups. They resorted to firm and hostile ways to control them. Perhaps that is the reason that till now we are waiting for peaceaccord to be actualised. In the North-East the Naga peaceaccord, the peace process with ULFA and many more in the offing for many years. The separatist tendencies exhibited by various ethnic communities in different states of North-East including Assam have remained eternally unresolvable.

In an essay entitled. "State Response to Violence in North-East India (With special reference to surrender issue in Assam)" Dipesh Bhagawati, a professor commented that the money and security the surrendered militant receives after they surrender may create a misunderstanding

in the minds of the youth that to join a militant is more lucrative than toiling hard for some other business. He views that government should give them a secured life but not a luxurious life immediately after they resign the insurgent group. They can be given free education but should be encouraged for hard-work (54-55).

We, the general citizens of an agitated state have not been convinced by any of these groups neither the insurgents nor the counter insurgents. We have understood that gun battle will bring no solution. Nonetheless we still hope and will hope for a peaceful solution because peace can be hailed by hope not by despair. At this juncture when insurgent and counter insurgent groups both fail, artists and writers can voice their democratic views. Their opinions can sensitise the readers even more to the scenario of violence. Eventually it can aid in actualising a terror-free Assam.

Works Cited

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