

SACH

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Culture and History of South Asian Indigenous People

Indigenous people are closest to the nature and have played a leading, crucial role in nature's protection. In South Asia Indigenous people have diverse and distinct history, traditions and live a distinct life. The article "Tribal Communities of Jammu and Kashmir in India" shows the culture and history of the Gujjar and Bakkarwal communities of the states, and their connection with forest.

Various reports and researches shows that modern notion of progress has always affected the cultural attributions and lives of Indigenous people particularly in developing countries of South Asia. Their cultural heritage and natural resources have been pulled away from them by all means and due to the forcible integration of Indigenous people in mainstream society, the cultural heritage and traditions of these communities have either been lost or diminished.

Hana Shams Ahmad in her article "Memories of Lives from Villages Under Water" talks about forgotten Indigenous people of Chakma community of the Hill Tracts region in Bangladesh, who had to migrate to Arunachal Pradesh after their land got submerged in river due to Kaptai Dam. In another article "Shrouded in Myth and Mystery: The Origins of the Kalasha" written by Hamid Hussain, professor Amin has explained the life of Kalash community in Pakistan, how the dressing and eating habits of Kalash community have changed when the world became a global village.

The question of preserving the tradition and culture has always been a challenge for Indigenous communities. In Nagaland the Naga communities and institutions have made lots of efforts to preserve their age-old folk songs and indigenous instruments called Libuh. Nepali artist Subas Tamang through his canvas recreated the History of Indigenous community of Nepal called Tamang. For his canvas he choose round seeds of the tree of Damocles, considered sacred by many indigenous people of Nepal, another medium which Subas choose for his artworks is "lokta", handmade Nepali paper, the same paper due to which his kinsmen had to suffer a lot in past.

Though continuous efforts have been made in seeking solutions against the problems faced by the Indigenous people and various international communities in recent years have recognized their needs to safeguard the distinct identity and culture. Nevertheless it is difficult to say whether these measures and laws provide sufficient protection to indigenous communities and can effectively safeguard their cultural heritage. Among all these, the struggle of Indigenous women needs a special mention, their struggle is not separate from their community but still they face various difficulties within their community due to mainstreaming of Indigenous people. In present times in the name of protection of culture and tradition of Indigenous people we have become so busy in making laws and policies that we have forgotten the knowledge that has been passed down over generations. We forgot that the knowledge the culture we harbor have been part of the solution all along.

Indigenous People

KALIA GEORGE, NEW ZEALAND

Indigenous people
Live their lives
Unknown, unsure
To a land no longer ours
Lost in wars
Of long ago
Many of us
Cultures no more
We live in societies
Torn from the past
It breeds in us all
A culture no more
We fight our own doubts
About cultures lost
Who are we really?
Natives of this land
I speak for those
Who believe in their dreams?
Only to learn
We are heathens of old
Land once belonged
To the natives of this world
Now it belongs to a system

That is tainted with wars
The wild fields of old
Live on in our dreams
Dreams that our forefathers bared
I'm a native, a warrior
Born of this land I fight for the freedom
To be indigenous and free
I call forth my forefathers
To claim to all whom I am
An indigenous person
Who fights to be free?

Courtesy: Poem Hunter



The Significance of Libuh in the Indigenous Music of Nagaland

By TOSHINARO IMCHEN, INDIA

SINCE time immemorial, Nagas have been known to love music and it has remained an integral part of every occasion. It is believed that Naga ancestors often communicated with one another by singing in different tunes and expressions. Though Naga history lacks written records, oral history passed down from generation to generation has proved that songs were used as a medium of communication.

Nagas are known for their rich culture and tradition, which encompass every area of Naga life. Nagaland is proudly known as the 'Land of Festivals', as tribal festivals of the 16 tribes in Nagaland are celebrated throughout the year. Any festival is incomplete without folk songs and dances. Folk songs and dances accompanied by fitting instruments are performed during every festival. Festivals are celebrated with pomp and gaiety with expressions of rich cultural folk songs and dances with different significance and relevance. Often folk songs and dances are accompanied by indigenous musical instruments in the form of drums, bamboo flute and single-stringed instruments.

ANCIENT NAGAS AND THEIR FOLK SONGS

Nagas were known to be animist before the advent of Christianity. Naga ancestors were aware of an almighty deity and revered the forces of nature, by worshipping them with songs and dances. Wood sculptors or any artisan who wished to cut wood from the forest would first perform a ritual before the forest and sing a song, requesting Mother Nature to allow them to cut the wood for their work. They would request Mother Nature to

allow the woodcutter to have the wood so that he could sculpt the wood and beautify the village or town. Such was the impact of folk songs in the ancient lives of the Nagas.

However, after the advent of Christianity in the 18th century, Nagas shunned worshipping nature and animism. Calling out Mother Nature through the medium of songs was avoided. However, folk songs have been modified according to the gospel songs of the Christians. Earlier, folk songs were sung in honour of 'Lijaba' meaning God in Ao/Naga tribe. But now they are sung in honour of Jesus Christ. Though the lyrics have changed the tunes and significance remains the same.

CHALLENGES: INDIGENOUS FOLK SONGS AND INSTRUMENTS IN NAGALAND

There are many challenges being faced by the Nagas to preserve and protect the indigenous folk songs and instruments of the Nagas today. The Naga youth are not immune to the influence of Western culture. Western music has had a profound impact on the lives of the Naga youth. Modernisation has brought rapid development to the music industry in the state. Naga youths are more attracted to Western music than the traditional folk songs and instruments.

The government having realised the growing interest in music among the youth has even started a Music Task Force to promote young singers and help them grow in their singing careers. Many schools and music schools offer courses on Western music and instruments. However, not much has been done to promote indigenous folk songs and

music in the state.

Realising the importance of preserving the rich culture of the Nagas, many social organisations have initiated various programmes to encourage young people. However, not many are showing interest in learning the age-old heritage of the ancestors. Though youngsters are frequently involved in practicing folk songs and dances during cultural programmes and festivals, not many of them have taken it up professionally. Schools, colleges and Universities are also some places where cultural programmes are organised to promote cultural values and harmony among the students. Such programmes encourage young people to uphold one's tradition and culture and to practice this in their daily lives.

TRANSITION FROM TRADITIONAL FOLK TO MODERN FOLK

In spite the influence of Western rock and pop music amongst the Naga youth, the Tetseo Sisters, who have fused Naga traditional music with modern music, stand out among the musicians in Nagaland. Their Li (folk song) is accompanied by Libuh (one-stringed musical instrument), which is very popular among the natives in Nagaland. Their folk fusion is composed keeping in mind the interest of the young listeners.

Their mother Mrs. Setsulu Tetseo, who is the woman behind the success of the Tetseo sisters, said that initially she had a hard time persuading her young daughters to learn folk songs. 'Folk songs are very hard to learn and my children didn't like it. I lured them with pocket money to learn the folk songs and that's how I was able to teach them to sing and play the Libuh,' she said.

Today, the Tetseo sisters are not only popular in Nagaland but they are known all over the world. Their father, Mr Kuvesho Tetseo designs and produces the Libuh (one-stringed instrument) and their parents' contribution is significantly reflected in their performances. Belonging to the Chokri-Chakesang tribe, the sisters are the ambassadors of Libuh as it is synonymous with their folk songs. In any given situation or any song, even those that are in Hindi and English,

the Tetseo sisters have the edge of using the Libuh to accompany the tunes and lyrics.

FUTURE OF LIBUH AND FOLK SONGS

Though not much have been done to preserve and promote the folk songs and instruments, the efforts made by the Tetseo sisters are commendable. Fusing folk song into modern fusion is something, which the sisters can capitalise upon. But there are also some cultural organisations who oppose their fusion of music, by saying that it will diminish the essence of traditional folk songs. They say that it will confuse the true identity of the Nagas among the younger generation. But some young people argue that such innovations will attract them to folk music and instruments.

'Such are the musical talents among the young Nagas, that we can even modify the indigenous instruments if only we are given due opportunities and resources,' said Sashiakum T.Imchen- a music enthusiast at Kohima.

CONCLUSION

The question of preserving the traditional folk songs and instruments becomes all the more imperative today when there is a threat of this music diminishing or even becoming extinct. The age-old folk songs and indigenous instruments of the Nagas have been preserved from generation to generation. The need for major focus on its preservation and promotion has been emphasised on various platforms.

In the past few years the state government has even started organising a ten-day annual cultural festival, the 'Hornbill Festival' in the state capital every December. A rich plethora of cultural activities in the form of folk songs and dances accompanied by various musical instruments is witnessed during the festival. Such initiatives by the government can encourage young people to love and preserve their folk songs and dances.

However, the Music Task Force, which is initiated by the state government, should promote indigenous folk songs and instruments among the young talented Nagas. Such initiatives will go a long way in its preservation and promotion.

Courtesy: Sahapedia

Seeking Solutions from Within

By SUNITA CHAUDHARY AND BIRAJ ADHIKARI, NEPAL

NATURE is an essential part of our identity and life. The best examples of harmonious and beneficial co-existence with nature come from places where nature is valued and respected as an essential part of people's identity and life. Sacred valleys in the



Himalaya, called *beyul*, have special significance in Tibetan Buddhism. Local Buddhist communities believe that the physical and spiritual worlds overlap in *beyul*, which is why they have been preserving environments in such valleys for centuries. Similarly, the indigenous Gond people from central India hold an intimate relationship with nature, believing that spirits preside in nature's different forms. They preserve patches of forests—designated as sacred groves—with deep spiritual fervour. Today, these lands are among the last remaining patches of forests left unspoiled in the region.

These and many other indigenous tribes from around the world have been custodians of nature for centuries, protecting their landscapes, biodiversity, and ecosystems for the benefit of future generations. Thirty-five percent of protected areas across the world fall within indigenous territories, and these areas have been found to be more successful in conservation than others, mostly because of the practices and beliefs of indigenous people.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AS A SOLUTION

There are countless examples of success

stories of indigenous communities around the world providing solutions for environmental issues such as soil degradation, pest and disease control, desertification, climate change, and water shortage. In Nepal too, indigenous knowledge,

beliefs, and traditional practices have influenced better land-use practices, sustainable use of resources, and enhanced biodiversity conservation.

For example, the Chepang community believes that holy spirits reside in plants, animals, rivers, and mountains, so they extract resources sustainably, following strict tradition. Likewise, the Pungmo community from Dolpo valley follows the animist worldview of the Bon religion, which teaches them the intimate relationship between nature and livelihoods. Such beliefs, along with traditional knowledge and informal social mechanisms passed down from generations, contribute to maintaining genetic diversity in farmlands, regeneration of grasslands, protection of forests, and sustainable management of natural resources. The discourse is even more important at this time because various demographic, social, economic, and political factors are further pushing these systems to the margins.

COMMUNITIES SIDELINED

Around the world, indigenous communities are facing increasing challenges of lack of recognition of their collective rights to

land, discrimination and poverty. Indigenous communities also reside in regions that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and are therefore exposed to food insecurity, extreme events, increased pests and diseases, and acute water shortages. Furthermore, many mainstream protected area approaches have negatively impacted indigenous people as conservation norms and regulations may require their relocation, thereby affecting their livelihoods.

Nepal's indigenous communities have also faced these challenges. The Sonaha fishing community of Bardiya, Kailali, and Kanchanpur districts have had their land access, livelihoods, and culture deeply impacted by sanctions imposed by national parks; Chepang communities have frequently been vulnerable to hazards and climate-induced disasters; the indigenous communities in the far west had to forfeit their customary rights and access to natural resources when the Shuklaphanta wildlife reserve was established.

Other socioeconomic factors have further burdened indigenous groups. For example, new economic opportunities in urban areas have led to out-migration of youth from villages in the Tarai and the abandonment of knowledge on wild and cultivated plant diversity and plant knowledge has been declining over generations in Baitadi and Darchula districts because of socio-cultural and economic transformations in the region. Such challenges have been collectively leading to the loss of observations, interpretations, and knowledge, adopted and enriched over time and passed down by our ancestors over many generations.

A SHIFTING TIDE

But this disregard of indigenous knowledge is changing. The recognition of indigenous peoples as custodians of land and keepers of valuable knowledge has slowly started growing. The Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), an international body

established to develop and present evidence-based knowledge for policymakers in biodiversity conservation has highlighted the importance of diverse worldviews and stakeholders to value nature, including both scientific knowledge and indigenous and local knowledge systems. For this, the IPBES has developed the concept of nature's contributions to people (NCP) to synergise both knowledge realms and provide an inclusive picture of human-nature relations.

The 2019 global assessment report by IPBES, one of the most comprehensive reports on biodiversity and ecosystem services, has also included a substantive body of indigenous and local knowledge. Further, 'Supporting Identities', one of the 18 NCPs introduced by the IPBES, explicitly takes into account the relationship between indigenous groups and nature that co-produces important values and services for wellbeing.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a tremendous opportunity for the further protection and recognition of indigenous peoples and their knowledge. Over the world, 193 countries have made commitments to prioritise the most vulnerable populations, including indigenous people, in development. In fact, indigenous knowledge systems have been increasingly found to be important for the advancement of multiple SDGs.

In Nepal, many studies have implicitly found that traditional and local knowledge can contribute towards multiple goals—locals from Bonch in Dolakha collect and consume wild foods to fulfill their nutritional requirements (SDG 2); indigenous communities in the far west without access to modern health facilities use wild medicinal plants to treat ailments (SDG 3); the spiritual beliefs of locals from Maipokhari have helped keep the lake free of pollution (SDG 6). More importantly, indigenous knowledge on farming, soil conservation, and water use efficiency has been important in many cases for climate

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Memories of Lives from Villages Under Water

By HANA SHAMS AHMED, BANGLADESH

SPEAKING from his home in Agartala, the capital of the Northeast Indian state of Tripura, Mohendro Chakma recalls his role as the leader of the 19th group that was preparing to trek to the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), present-day Arunachal Pradesh. Mohendro's family home was permanently flooded by the waters of the Karnaphuli River following the construction of the Kaptai Dam in the 1960s. Mohendro recalls his long trek from Demagiri (now in South Mizoram) to Aizawl (the capital of Mizoram) to Anipur in Assam and finally back to Agartala (Tripura) that spanned over several years with stays at several refugee camps. Mohendro Chakma's journey from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of the then East Pakistan through India is one of the many untold stories of displacement and disenfranchisement that Samari Chakma, the author of *Kaptai Baadh: Bor Porong – Duburider Attokothon (Kaptai Dam: The Great Exodus – Autobiography of the Drowned)* brings together in her collection of oral history.

Stories are an important way of learning about historical events. This is even more true of historical events that involve state-led oppression that never quite became part of the nation's official history. Given the nationalistic nature of official history written to serve the purpose of the dominant population it is not surprising that little to nothing is known about the 100,000 indigenous peoples, mostly Chakmas, who lost their lives, possessions, and property to the waters of the Karnaphuli River, and after more than five decades, are on the verge of being forgotten. The Kaptai Dam was completed in 1963 with financial support from

the US development agency, USAID. The power plant supplied electricity mainly to the port city of Chittagong and there was never any intention to provide either electricity from the dam or any other kind of benefit to the indigenous peoples of the Hill Tracts. Upon losing their ancestral lands, around 40,000 Chakmas migrated to Arunachal Pradesh. Many migrated to other parts of India; others sought refuge in other parts of the CHT. Most of the Chakmas living in Arunachal Pradesh struggled for decades to be recognized as citizens of the country, with many still stateless.

Samari Chakma collected the stories of these people whose lives have been uprooted and changed forever by the construction of the Kaptai Dam. In academic work, the story of the Kaptai Dam has become a necessary background story that needs to be acknowledged and referenced to understand the present political situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. While there are references to the construction of the dam in these works, the event is reported in a clinical manner of numbers and dates. As important as these numbers are, they say little about how the event impacted the lives of the people for whom this place was home and all that they had known from birth. Samari's work brings to light the stories behind the numbers and the dates and talks about how the lives of the people living there were irreversibly changed – families split apart forever, siblings growing up as citizens of different countries and people being forced to depart from their homes and their ancestral roots. This is a critical work of decolonising Bangladesh's history from the

perspective of the indigenous peoples who live under constant surveillance and are still treated as the nation's other. In the introduction to the book, Samari writes about how she has grown up listening to the stories around the Kaptai Dam from her mother and her grandmother, realising that these stories and such an important historical event of the Hills would forever disappear if not recorded.

Oral traditions in the form of life histories and oral stories are very important in indigenous cultural inquiries around the world. Canadian First Nations scholar Margaret Kovach has argued that stories help us understand the relational world. She points out that stories explain how a person is related to an event; they are a means of passing knowledge from one generation to another; stories contextualise knowledge and are both method and meaning and a culturally nuanced way of knowing. Chakma's work does just that. It lets us hear the voices of the individuals who lived through those moments when the construction of the dam was an obscure rumour that would not go away to when it became a reality as the waters engulfed their households and finally to when their homes and lives became memories, where one could only visit as *duburis* (divers). The most powerful aspect of oral history is the telling of history from the perspectives and experiences of the people who are not recognised or written about in official history.

While the Kaptai Dam was envisioned during the British colonial period, it was finally implemented during Pakistan rule. The state fully disregarded the anguish that such a decision would cause the people of that land. In his book, *The Departed Melody*, the former Chakma Raja Tridiv Roy writes that he believes that an important political motivation behind building the dam was to target and disperse the "influential" Chakma families. This is, of course, correlated by the fact that the main source of political influence in the CHT, the Chakma Raja's palace, went under the waters of the Karnaphuli River. The purpose, according to him, was to weaken the politically and economically strong Chakmas. He writes that "the biggest single calamity for the Chakmas up to 1960 has been the Kaptai dam".

Many of the conversations in Samari's

book also revealed that the communities there did not know about poverty before being displaced by the dam. For the hundred thousand people who lost their homes, the promised compensation in the form of land never materialised; the land that was offered to some was a fraction of what they used to own. The Bangladesh state also never offered any reparations and, following independence, unleashed its own violent rule over the indigenous peoples that continue to this day. The political is also deeply personal for Samari, as she writes in the introduction to the book. Samari's mother, Nibedita Chakma, was only 10 years old when her family was uprooted from their place of birth in Boradam village, which went under water following the construction of the dam. Samari writes about how she grew up hearing stories from her mother about not just Bor Porong, but how difficult her life became after the exodus – growing up in a village in a deep forest where *shurjer rowd matite porto na* (the rays of the sun would not touch the ground).

The book *Bor Porong* was edited by Aloran Khisa and published by Comrade Rupak Chakma Memorial Trust in Narankhaya, Khagrachari in February 2018. The book was published with the financial support of Nibedita Chakma and is priced at 250 takas. The cover art is done by Joytu Chakma and shows the upside-down body of a Chakma woman with her head submerged under water. The forward is written by Meghna Guhathakurta, an important activist and intellectual writing about the Hill Tracts for many decades.

The book carries the stories of 10 survivors of Bor Porong – Priobala Chakma, Shushoma Bala Chakma, Korunamoy Chakma, Buddhodhon Chakma, Poncho Chakma, Mohendro Chakma, Arun Kumar Dewan, Omio Chakma, Anondo Mukhi Chakma and Protima Dewan. The stories were first published by the feminist blog *Thotkata.com* of which Samari and I are both members. Some of the conversations were carried out in Bangladesh, while others took place in the Indian Northeast. A number of the cross-border journeys consisted of days and weeks of

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Participation in Decision Making: Struggle of South Asian Indigenous Women in Public and Private Space

By **BABITA NEGI**, INDIA

AS per the International Labour Report “The rights of indigenous peoples in Asia” (2017), around two-thirds of the world’s indigenous people are estimated to live in Asian Countries. This constitutes approximately 260 million people that represent 2,000 distinct civilizations and languages. There are different names and terms to refer them; such as “Hill Tribes”, “Indigenous nationals”, “Tribal people”, “Ethnic minorities”, “Adivasi” and “Natives” etc. At global level South Asian, countries also have their own Indigenous tribe that makes them rich in culture and tradition. These natives of South Asia have their ways of living, which differentiates them from the rest of the communities. Due to their religion, culture, livelihood, and social structure they have diverse relationships and different gender dynamics. Although in most of the South Asian countries, both tribal men and women have equal status, however in present times under the influence of patriarchy and its value system the Indigenous women are facing various hardships and struggling for their rights. In Indigenous communities there are various factors such as age, marital status, occupation and traditional knowledge that affects the relationship of both men and women. Due to these factors, there has always been an idealized position of women in Tribal communities that have overlooked the inequalities they face in their daily life.

Over the decades, due to external factors such as mainstreaming of Indigenous communities, and globalization, position of women in Indigenous communities has

undergone various changes. Values and other dominant relationship of mainstream society, which has forced tribal society to co-exist in different circumstances, have influenced the status of Indigenous women. They have become doubly marginalized in society, as women and as indigenous.

In South Asia, the struggle of Indigenous women is not different from their communities but within that in present times, one of the major struggles which they are facing is their lack of representation and participation in decision-making. Hence, it is important to acknowledge their hardships and gender dynamics and ensure their full participation so that these women become empowered.

A series of unfortunate events in different South Asian countries exposed how Indigenous women are struggling and fighting for their rights in their respective countries. In Bangladesh, women are disadvantaged compared to men. Indigenous women are further marginalized than Bengali women, thus making these women the most disadvantaged group in the country. Similar to other Indigenous communities the prescribed gender roles of both men and women in Chittagong Hills Tract (CHT) of Bangladesh are not very much different. They all face social-cultural, economic and political barriers in life. However, this affects women in large numbers due to the unequal power, which is directly influenced by patriarchal norms. Even though women in CHT play a significant role in family attribution and community, they have always been denied

right of decision-making in family, forget about the community space. In this community, women have rarely been seen as part of any authoritative position due to the existing family responsibilities, restriction on movements, financial insecurity, language barriers and other diverse challenges. Their discrimination has largely been found in customary law and practices.¹

Similarly, in Nepal men make the decisions concerning matters relating to the purchase of land or house, affairs outside the home and politics, among others. Women, on the other hand, make the decisions mostly about the home such as planting, cooking and childcare. This is why family members, relatives and others confine their decision-making mostly within the private sphere. In the community, men are the main decision-makers although women are part of institutions but they are considered as only members they did not have any say in decision making only 1% of women give their opinion.²

India has a large number of Indigenous populations, which comprises of 8.6 % of the total population. Ethnically, they belong to distinct ethno-lingual groups, with diverse faith. Here the role of Indigenous women in family and society at different levels is unlimited. They possess all the traditional knowledge and wisdom, live in both patriarch and matriarch family and have better social status in comparison to other non-tribal areas. However, at the same time, Indigenous women suffer from the denial of rights and privileges that men enjoy. These women experience inequality, discrimination and injustice, both within and outside the community caused by internal factors, such as traditional and cultural practices and customary laws. There are some areas where they have no say or cannot give their voice hence remain disadvantaged, especially in terms of family decision making, equal access to land and property and opportunities in economic, political, and social sectors. Indigenous women are always burdened with more responsibilities in comparison to men. They take care of the field as well as the home yet they are always left behind.³

There is commonality among all the customary practices in Bangladesh, Nepal and

India, as the situation of Indigenous women is more or less similar. They enjoy their social status but at the same time, their domain is fully dominated by the men of the community. In most of the Indigenous communities of South Asian countries specifically in India, Bangladesh and Nepal, women do not have access to different public spaces and therefore are not able to participate directly in decision-making processes at the community level, like in the clan, village, or Indigenous councils. They do participate in various movements but that also is very limited and dominated.

We all know that women in Indigenous society have equal status and they enjoy similar equal rights as men in different spaces but the forced integration of the Indigenous community in mainstream society and its influence on their lifestyle has impacted the women of the community due to which they are struggling and suffering. If we look into history we can see how for ages patriarchy and Brahmanism has dominated and discriminated against women in general especially in the Indian context. Similarly, the strong influence of patriarchy has challenged the gender balance and equality that has been part of Indigenous community since ages. It promotes male supremacy among the community and reduces the authority and representation of women from both public and private spaces this further decreases the interest and confidence of these women in worldly matters.

In this new era, Indigenous women are supposed to be in traditional barriers confined to the domestic arena along with the community rules and regulations. They are expected to be dependent on a male member of the family and society. Indigenous women have always had the right of inheritance but with the changes, they have to fight for their entitlements and land rights. In some cases, they become the victim of violence as well and face brutality at the hands of family and community members. Indigenous women have become an invisible entity with a lack of participation and power; therefore various groups have come forward to support and encourage them.

Various reports on Indigenous community such as United Nation Women

report, International Labour Organisation report and Asian Indigenous Women Network report have shown that there are end numbers of government and non-government institutions in different countries that are working for Indigenous women. Many of them are supporting indigenous women's voices in decision-making; building knowledge and raising awareness of their economic contributions; and tackling gender-based violence which particularly affects Indigenous and Tribal women. Such activities have encouraged and strengthened Indigenous women and have helped them in accessing

opportunities for social and political participation. One cannot deny the fact that despite discrimination, violence, injustice and other barriers Indigenous women have come forward for their rights and at the same time, they are fighting for the rights and justice of their community.

(FOOTNOTES)—

1. Unheard and Unseen: Indigenous Women's Path to Empowerment and Sustainable Development—Bangladesh, India and Nepal (Volume 1), Tebtebba Foundation 2021, Page no-08-24
2. Ibid, Page no- 61-64
3. Ibid, Page no-97-100

Memories of Lives from...

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travelling on foot which many did not survive. There are stories of pregnant women suffering miscarriages during these long and painful journeys. Priobala Chakma recalls elders talking about the dam in hushed voices about how everyone's homes would disappear. She recalls feeling confused about where all this water would come from that would engulf their entire home so the whole family would have to go and live somewhere else. Shushoma Bala, Samari's maternal grandmother, recalls the Bor Porong as only the beginning of her struggles. Others describe the feelings of confusion and skepticism about how and why such a catastrophe would take place in their lives.

Samari Chakma was born in Khagrachari in June 1975 and has been a vocal activist against state repression ever since she was a student. She finished her bachelor's degree in Khagrachari College and master's degrees from Eden College and has served as the President and Editor for the Hill Women's Federation. Later she went to law school and earned a law degree after realising that the fight for indigenous women's rights needed to take place in the courtroom. She worked pro bono to represent rape victims and wrongly incarcerated indigenous people in a district where most rapes and harassment of indigenous women go unpunished as

perpetrators wiggle their way out of the justice system. She became the first woman Chakma lawyer to be enrolled in the Bangladesh High Court.

While the Kaptai Dam was constructed by the government of Pakistan, Bangladesh has unceremoniously shrugged off the responsibility that the state has towards the indigenous peoples of the country. While the construction of the Kaptai Dam forced the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh to leave the country, it did not stop there. Indigenous peoples of the Hills have been leaving the country to take refuge in India and other countries over the five decades that Bangladesh has been an independent country. Ironically, Samari Chakma herself has been living in Australia since 2018 since she started receiving threats to her life for her work. Her departure has left a hollow in the important legal work that she was doing to ensure indigenous women had a strong voice in the justice system of Bangladesh. While her work in the courts remains suspended, she continues to write the stories of the displaced survivors of the Kaptai Dam. Samari is currently working on her second book of oral history that will give Bangladeshi readers a further understanding of the impact of the construction of Kaptai Dam on the lives of indigenous peoples—an important and tragic event in the history of Bangladesh.

Courtesy: The Daily Star

Tribal Communities of Jammu & Kashmir

By **KAJAL DALPATIA**, INDIA

INTRODUCTION

This article mainly focuses to understand the origin and cultural background of the tribes of Jammu and Kashmir, and their contribution towards the retrieving forests. India is homeland of multiple religions, ethnicity, tribes and groups of people. It has almost 705 ethnic tribal groups, which are residing in different States and Union territories of India; these include Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal etc. Tribal People are found almost in every region of the sub-continent. The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has a wide range of diversity of ethnic groups with different cultures and languages with more than 14 lakh tribal population which is further sub-divided into twelve tribal groups. Gujjar and Bakarwal are the dominant tribes of Jammu and Kashmir. Article 342 of Indian Constitution provides special status to the tribal communities of India. Gujjar and Bakarwal tribe are among them and important component of Composite Heritage of Jammu and Kashmir. Gujjar is the most populous tribe having a population of 763,806 thus forming 69.1% of the total ST population. Their culture, traditions, food habits are completely different from other sections of the society. Gujjar community is the first largest tribal community of the Jammu and Kashmir. They are also found in other parts of northern India like Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan but their life style (food, dress, language,) has been different as compared to the tribes of Jammu and Kashmir. Even outside the Jammu and

Kashmir, some Gujjar follow Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. Apart from this Bakarwal is the second largest tribal community of the region. Bakarwal are considered as a nomadic pastoral tribe. These are the goat and sheep rearing tribal.

ORIGIN OF THE GUJJAR AND BAKARWAL TRIBE

Jammu & Kashmir is also referred to as the crown of the India with having different social, cultural and ethnic identities. The people of this region relate to many indigenous languages like Gojri, Lada, Shina, Balti, Pahari, Khowar, Poguli and Buru Shaski. Many ethnic groups immigrated from different parts of the world. Therefore, there is huge debate regarding historical background of Gujjar and Bakarwal tribes in Jammu & Kashmir. Some scholars are of the view that they are foreigners and representing pastoral nomads from the Central Asia while other historians claim that Gujjars are the descendants of Kushan and the Yuchi tribes of Eastern Russia who inhabit a territory between the black sea and the Caspian sea, south of Caucasus Mountains. Under certain pull and push factors they migrated to India through Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Around 4th and the 5th centuries C.E, they occupied the territory around Rajasthan and Gujarat. After that they faced serious drought conditions and had to migrate from Rajasthan, Gujarat, to Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. Initially eight tribal communities fall under schedule tribe in Jammu and Kashmir but under amendment act 1991, four more tribes added in the category. These tribes are Gaddi, Sippi, Gujjar and Bakarwal. The districts which are highly concentrated by the

tribes are Kashmir, Jammu, Samba, Kathua, Reasi, Poonch, Anantnag, Kulgam, Pulwama, Shopian, Bandipora, Budgam and Ganderbal. In Jammu region they are more in number as compared to Kashmir because Jammu region is mountainous area on the Siwalik and its Pirpanjal range.

CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GUJJAR AND BAKARWAL COMMUNITY

Mostly Gujjar and Bakarwal follow Islam in Jammu and Kashmir. They have unique culture and linguistic identity. Their way of dressing is similar to the Pashto of Pakistan. They have tall personality with the Jewish features. Since Gujjar and Bakarwal live in the isolation for centuries they have developed strong composite heritage through their close interaction with environment and other groups. They have rich cultural characteristics as compared to the so-called developed people. Indigenous People of Jammu & Kashmir has vast traditional knowledge of indigenous flora and fauna. They celebrate their festivals, marriages, rituals according to the Islamic faith. There is no huge difference between the festivals of tribal and local people of Kashmir. Gujjar and Bakarwal communities celebrate the same festivals like Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir but few tribals also celebrate harvest festivals of like Baisakhi and Lorhi.

Gujjar and Bakrwal have a unique linguistic identity. They have their own mother tongue, called Gojri and Bakrwalli. The administration of Union Territory has put their endless efforts to promote and preserve the Tribal culture. Their foremost initiative includes daily broadcasting of one hour Gojri Programme; there is a Gojri section in Jammu & Kashmir Cultural Academy. They organize cultural activities and publish literature on Gojri culture and history.

Mostly men from the tribal community wear Laacha, Saffa, Salwar Kameez, Waskat, and Turban, and women wear ladies Salwar Kameez, and Cap. Gujjar community has a unique and old traditional dress and ornaments. They wear heavy silver jewellery on any special occasion. In their day to day life, they only wear large nose Pin.

Tribal of Jammu & Kashmir depend on

dairy products that include milk, buttermilk, curd, lassi, green chutni and mewa with bazra and wheat chapati. They also consume salted tea instead of normal tea. Their food habits also depend on geographical as well as their economic conditions.

Bakarwal mostly depend on the forest land for their survival. They do not have any land. Bakarwals rear goat and sheep. Gujjar of Jammu and Kashmir mainly engaged in dairy and farming practices. Some Gujjar have their own land. In Gujjar community very few are doing job in government/private sector. They are mainly involved in milk production. They tend buffaloes in a large number.

THE COMPANIONSHIP OF TRIBES AND FORESTS

Human beings have come a long way from forests dwellers to the resident of mega cities, towns and modern villages. Being in 21st century, technology, advanced information and development is accessible to all. It has overpowered human relations towards nature and inclination towards sustainability. People in every corner of the world are running after livelihood, success and growth. However, are all humans equal and at same pace of growth? No, it's not true as there are various social, economical and geographical disparities on earth. Forests, trees, natural resources are responsibilities of every person on the Earth. However, as men are busy with his own world of development and chase, no one has time for nature.

Tribes are the only ones on this planet for who forests play a pivotal role in their survival and comfort. As environment and nature is quite essential part of their micro system. Irrespective of various policies and planning, tribal people are marginalized section of society. They are academically uneducated, not much aware of modern science and technology and lack opportunities to compete with the outside world but no one can maintain and safeguard forests the way they do because it's a part of their folk knowledge, daily life and survival. Different Tribes of Jammu and Kashmir are only capacitated of cattle rearing and dependant

on forests produce for other things. Plants, animals, and humans if live in harmony without destroying each other's sphere can create best eco system. No one can ever take care of forests and nature like the way tribes do. As it is understood that they both are dependent on each other for their existence and maintenance.

Tribal have lived in isolation for years. They don't want to change their life norms, traditional farming practices and association with natural surroundings and habitat. Nature lies in the consciousness of tribe that's why they are closer to it and more meticulous towards it. The tribe and nature are two things that should remain unchanged and undisturbed. Forests and tribes are both important for sustainability and diversity hence should be preserved.

CONCLUSION

Indigenous People from all the over the world have been subjugated to deprivation which is explicitly and implicitly affecting their life but amidst these discrepancies, they have been protecting their cultural and linguistic identity. The Tribes of Jammu & Kashmir always prefer to live in a group and scattered cluster instead of living aloof. There is a strong bond among them due to their homogenous characteristics. They always promote the idea of shared culture through their agricultural

practices, rituals and festivals. The relationship between the indigenous people and environment is of interdependence and respect. They worship nature and preserve the essential resources of the forest. They possess a vast knowledge of their environment and depend on them for their shelter, food and healthcare requirements. However, the changing conditions of environment leads to the extinction of tribal groups in the country. They are completely unable to adjust in such conditions. In the rapidly change of environment and policies of government the right of Indigenous people must be protected. Many development projects have anti-tribal approach and they were displaced from their natural habitat. Whenever Indigenous people tried to adjust with the so-called developed people, they face strong rejection from mainstream society. Efforts should be taken from all corners of the society, especially by the policymakers.

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Seeking Solutions from Within

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change adaptation (SDG 13). Furthermore, animistic and spiritual views have been instrumental for the sustainable consumption of resources (SDG 12) and the conservation of biodiversity (SDG 15) in Nepal.

Vexed by the looming problems of climate change and challenged by the complexities in meeting the SDGs, we have forgotten the knowledge that has been passed down over generations. We and the knowledge we harbour

have been part of the solution all along. We just needed to look inwards to observe the seeds of knowledge planted by our forefathers and ancestors. It is high time that we co-create solutions to the environmental problems in Nepal by combining traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge. After all, humans are kin to nature, and naturally, we are part of the solution.

Courtesy: Kathmandu Post

Retelling Indigenous Tamang People's Torment and Trauma Through Sacred Seeds, Handmade Paper and Slates

By SANJIB CHAUDHARY, NEPAL

TRANSLUCENT seeds of the tree of Damocles (*Oroxylum indicum*), meticulously glued together, form Nepali artist Subas Tamang's canvas. The round seeds, known for their medicinal values, are considered pure and sacred since they are enclosed in sword-shaped pods — far from the touch of bumblebees and other insects. In a nod to the seeds' potential to grow into trees, Subas Tamang tells the stories of discrimination and oppression meted out to indigenous Tamang people by the State — the Rana rulers in particular.

"Called ko ko mhendo or heart flower in Tamang language, these seeds are ingrained in Tamang culture and rituals," said Subas, talking to Global Voices. "The Tamangs attach these seeds to invitations sent out on auspicious occasions. They have become symbols of Tamang identity."

That's why Subas chose the sacred seeds to tell the stories, called Kaiten in the Tamang language. Kaiten is the Tamang oral story of origins of human life, culture and tradition, usually told by an elder storyteller, called Tamba. Like shamans using the seeds to heal sick people, Subas uses them as a medium to heal wounds of the past, the wounds of torment and trauma.

The Tamang men were reduced to mere porters, palanquin carriers, hookah and umbrella bearers, and construction labour. The Tamang women, likewise, would work as nursemaids and wet nurses, while also singing,

dancing and entertaining the rulers.

The Tamangs were barred from joining the British Army. The only rank for them in the Nepal Army was that of the pipa, the menial workers at the lowest rungs of the army. They could never rise up the ranks. Subas illustrates this through his artwork *Pipa I*, showing four men carrying *doko*, wicker baskets, on their backs.

His woodcut print on ko ko mhendo titled *Gole Kaila* features the protagonist Tularam Tamang aka Gole Kaila who was martyred in 1950 in Biratnagar, a city in eastern Nepal. Though he died fighting against the Rana regime to establish democracy, he was never accorded the status of a martyr.

Another medium Subas chooses for his artworks is lokta, handmade Nepali paper, the same paper that his kinsmen produced from the bark of the Nepali paper plant and carried to palaces in the capital city Kathmandu as corvée (forced unpaid labour in lieu of taxes). The same paper carried orders and laws that would torment them further. But Subas retells the story of his community's anguish through the same paper. His artworks *Kagaji Rakam*, *Kagaji Rakam I* and *Baigani Rakam* show men in traditional attire but with their heads covered by, respectively, a bouquet of lokta flowers, a sheet of handmade paper and a bunch of mangoes.

Expanding on his work, Subas said:

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Shrouded In Myth and Mystery: The Origins of the Kalasha

By **HAMID HUSSAIN**, PAKISTAN

THE Kalasha community of Chitral district has long captivated the imagination of both visitors and researchers. But one aspect that to date eludes and confounds historians and archaeologists is their origin. Starting with the once popular and now discarded narrative of their descent from Alexander the Great's Macedonian troops, various theories have been put forth to explain the enigmatic identity of the Kalasha. But some more recent studies now suggest that their lineage is perhaps more close to home than it seems at first glance.

THE ALEXANDRIAN MYTH

The Kalasha community lives in three specific valleys of Chitral: Bumboret, Birir, and Rumbur. It is estimated that the community has a population of over 3,000 - making them the smallest minority group in Pakistan.

A Global Human Rights Defence paper titled, 'Tribe of Kalash: The last Kafir' describes the Kalash people as animists and nature worshippers who refuse to convert to Islam and states that their refusal to convert as the 'root cause of their marginalisation in the region.' The Kalash people, who don't even make up one per cent of the population in the region, are considered 'ethnically marginal' and demographically insignificant.'

According to that paper, the Kalasha are the last of the people of 'Kafiristan' – an area that once encompassed the entirety of northwest Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan before being divided by the Durand line – who retain elements of their ancestral cultural identity.

"While some long believed them to be in some way linked to the Greeks who arrived in South Asia with Alexander the Great, there is little in the way of concrete evidence to support

that suggestion," shared Professor Noorul Amin of the Pashto Department at the Islamic College University. "Even so, the Kalasha themselves have come to believe that they descended from one General Shalakhshah of Alexander's army," he said.

According to Professor Amin, the author of several Pashto books, the Kalasha hold onto their own religious beliefs, along with their own identity, way of life, and language. "The fair skin and blue eyes of the Kalasha people has resulted in a popular assumption that they were of Greek origin, specifically the descendants of Alexander the Great's soldiers who followed him on his campaign to India. The hypothesis that the Kalasha people were originally Greek has also been promoted officially in Pakistan," he noted.

Professor Amin explained that the Kalasha people settled in the Chitral region during the reign of Cyrus the Great, another conqueror whose campaigns match those of Alexander the great himself. "The Kalasha people had been living in the Chitral region for over four thousand years," he said, adding that to him the assumption that they are the descendants of Alexander holds no credibility because they were already present in the area much before the arrival of Alexander the great.

THE 'ARYAN' HYPOTHESIS

Chitral-based senior journalist Gul Hamad Farooqi who has extensively covered all cultural festivals and other relevant aspects of the Kalasha people says these people are 'Indian Aryans'.

According to Farooqi, the provincial Archeological Department with the assistance of international archeology experts had recently

discovered a 5,000-year-old graveyard in the Shindor area of Chitral. "The experts in their study of the graveyard had stated that the people inhabiting the region are Indian Aryans. However, the authorities do not force the Kalasha community to accept that they are not the descendants of Alexander the great. The Kalasha people take pride in associating themselves with the great conqueror," he added.

A genetic study conducted in 2015 found no evidence to support the theory of their descent from the soldiers of Alexander. Interestingly, however, the study did find that they shared a significant portion of genetic drift – a term used to describe a random effect that removes genetic variation in populations of living beings – with a 24,000-year-old Paleolithic Siberian hunter-gatherer fossil. The link is thought to hint at some shared lineage with the steppe pastoralists of the Yamnaya culture, who lived in a region known as the Pontic-Caspian steppe.

The people of the Yamnaya culture are believed to have migrated eastwards and westwards in waves, settling in regions as far apart as South Asia and Great Britain. Their migrations led to the proliferation of languages that are classified under the Indo-European language family. In the Indian sub-continent, the Yamnaya migrants are believed to have been among the forefathers of the 'Ancestral North Indians', one of the many ancestral populations the modern inhabitants of the region are descended from.

According to the 2015 study, the Kalasha, due to their uniqueness, may have been the earliest group to separate from the ancestors of the modern population of the subcontinent, sometime around 11,800 years ago.

A TALE FOR TOURISTS

Renowned historian, author, scholar Parvesh Shaheen says he has explained the origin of Kalasha people in the third chapter of his book titled as 'Kafiristan'. "The Kalasha are indigenous people but this theory that they are Greek is being promoted which is aimed to promote tourism."

Shaheen who is the author of several books on the history of Kalasha community said Georgios Papandreou, former Greek prime minister had also visit the Kalsha community Greek in late 1960s when he was on official

visit to Pakistan. "The media reported that Prime Minister Papandreou spoke to Kalasha people in their language, which was an exaggeration. Since then, the theory about the Greek roots of Kalasha people has been promoted which is not based on evidences but merely to promote tourism."

The historian added that the Kalasha people who are also known as Waigali are indigenous people residing in the region just like other ethnicities. "The only difference between them and other communities is that they still practice their centuries old culture while cultures of the rest of the ethnicities have changed with the passage of time. These people are considered unique for being Pakistan's smallest ethno-religious group with a distinct culture and religious beliefs, he informed."

The scholar explains that the religious beliefs, which the Kalasha people practice, are labelled as animism or ancient forms of Hinduism. To question, the historian says there the key hypothesis regarding the ancestry of the Kalasha is that they are the descendants of the Greek soldiers and this link between the Kalash and the Macedonian king is perhaps best seen in Rudyard Kipling's well-known story, 'The Man Who Would be King.'

Shaheen who has studied the Kalasha community and other indigenous people of the region for over three decades says, "It is an established fact, the Kalash are indigenous people who may migrated within the region just like other communities." The religion of the Kalasha is very much close to the Hinduism than to the religion of Alexander the Great, which is yet another evidence that they are indigenous people, he explained.

The author of the 'Kafiristan Takreekh Nasal Zuban Saqafat Aur Sayahti Jayza,' says the people of Nuristan– the bordering province of Afghanistan– which is historically known as Kafiristan once had the same culture and religious beliefs before their conversion to Islam during the era of Afghan ruler Abdur Rahman Khan at the end of the 19th century.

Shaheen who hails from Manglawar area of Swat valley and has been visiting the Kalasha community for over 30 years and have studied their way of living, houses, culture, food, dressing and how they do their daily household chores. According to him, the

way Kalash women behave, and the rights they have, is quite different from the Muslim women in the neighboring areas. Kalash women are allowed to marry whomever they wish, to divorce their husbands, and even to elope, he explained.

Another belief, the educationist says, among many Kalash people is that their ancestors arrived in the region from a place called Tsiyam, which is also mentioned in their folksongs. The historian says to date no one has located the country or region of this name.

THE CHALLENGE OF MODERNISATION

Professor Amin of the Islamia College University says the Kalash culture has evolved with the passage of time due to its geography. Their folklore have changed.

“Kalasha people have a special a culture, which is neither Greek nor local; they developed their own culture,” said the educationist. The specialty about their culture is that they celebrate when someone dies while their spiritual leader is called Chilamche. When someone solemnises their-into a marriage, they respect him more. They have no societal pressures and live a free life. “The Kalasha people have developed their own norms which are free in nature,” he added.

Professor Amin further says that the life of Kalash community was affected when the world became a global village. The dressing of Kalash men have changed while they now eat

foods somewhat similar to what other people in the region eat.

A threat to the culture and lifestyle of Kalash community has been witnessed in the recent past as Muslim people living in the Ayoun area, which is adjacent to the three valleys of Kalasha people, have begun luring Kalash girls in order to convert them to Islam after marrying them. However, most of these girls end up divorced after few years and are sent back to their people and when they resume their lives according to their own beliefs and culture; they are threatened for leaving Islam. Several such incidents have happened in the recent past and the authorities need to take some measures to prevent them.

According to Farooqi, another perceived threat to the Kalash culture is modernisation. Young Kalash people sometimes move to bigger cities for work and education, and due to the temptation of modernity and technology, it is feared that they may abandon their culture.

Abdul Qahar, a resident of Lower Chitral, says that even though modernisation usually kills traditional cultures, but this particular culture has not been affected so far. “The Kalasha people have exposed their culture to the rest of the world. The Kalash love their way of life and take pride in their culture and this has definitely helped in preserving it for future generations,” he said.

Courtesy: The Express Tribune

Retelling Indigenous Tamang...

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“In order to pay taxes, Tamangs had to work for free for the State. The Tamangs from Bumtang of Nuwakot District had to collect lokta barks, process them into paper and carry those papers to the palace. Each household would need to produce 200 sheets of paper. Likewise, Tamangs had to work in fruit orchards and carry the fruit, especially mangoes to the palaces in Kathmandu. They had to leave Kathmandu the same day after dropping the fruit.”

Subas doesn't stop here. In his artwork *Hami aafai aafno pahichan*

lekhnechhau (we will write our identity ourselves), a series of five slates, he carves excerpts from problematic and judgemental texts about the Tamangs, then erases it with sandpaper and leaves a blank slate.

“Even a social studies material said to be based on the new curriculum of Public Service Commission wrongly portrays Tamangs as people willing to sell their daughters and daughters-in-law, and even themselves just for a good meal,” said Subas. “I want to say why we should rely on the story written by others. We will write our own story.”

Courtesy: Global Voices

A Tribute to Kamla Bhasin

KAMLA Bhasin, the prominent fearless feminist South Asian leader based in India has left us. She has been much more than a representative of several partner organisations of Brot für die Welt and an advisor and consultant. She was a friend, a feminist fellow traveler, a role model - as she has been for many people, especially women worldwide. She had cooperated with Brot für die Welt and its predecessor organisations EZE and EED since the 1970ies. Since then she kept enriching and challenging our debates on feminist perspectives in development cooperation, and we always looked for ways to join hands in struggles for women's rights. Brot für die Welt has learnt a lot from her and always felt encouraged by her to be part of global feminist networking.

Kamla Bhasin's relationship with Germany started with her studies in Sociology of Development at University in Münster – in the middle of the famous rebellious 1968s - and her later job in training German development experts on their way to different countries. With her amazing ability to acquire languages, she picked up German then and never forgot it – she would always love to



chat away in German language when given the opportunity.

She returned to India quickly as she strongly felt she was needed there - and became the inspiring South Asian feminist activist, leader, mobilizer and networker she is known and acclaimed for internationally.

Somehow, her connection to Germany never seized to exist. From the 1970s onwards, she met colleagues of Brot für die Welt and EZE. They were impressed by her feminist South Asian

work within Freedom from Hunger Campaign at FAO, where, along with Juhi Jain, she created a unique cell of South Asian activism. EZE went out of their way in order to support this cell even within FAO, impressed by her inspiration and creativity. And continued ever since supporting the South Asian Network of Gender Activists and Trainers, SANGAT, later hosted by Jagori, the women's resource centre Kamla Bhasin founded along with other activists in 1984, another partner organisation both of EZE and Brot für die Welt till today. Through Jagori and SANGAT, she touched thousands of lives of South Asian activists, who received training, orientation and created a network of likeminded activists across South

Asia and beyond.

Kamla Bhasin also linked Brot für die Welt to many other women activists and networks, like NEN, Nirantar, Asmita, ANKUR, ASR, just to name a few. She also worked with many of our other partner organisations in capacity building. Whoever at Brot für die Welt met her, even if only once, was inspired by her energy and creativity. She had an amazing ability to put complex issues into simple and easy-to-understand language. She would always involve men in the struggle against patriarchy and coined the slogan “men of quality are not afraid of equality!” She could mobilize masses, approach people from all walks of life, from a slum dweller to the German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development and make them friends.

Brot für die Welt’s partnership with Kamla Bhasin and the feminist movements in South Asia goes far beyond project cooperation. It is a collective journey for social change and justice as a shared vision and mission - transformative partnership at its best. Kamla Bhasin strongly believed, that we need to overcome all forms of colonial and hierarchical relationships— that a new world is possible, also in resource sharing relationships. She challenged donor tendencies towards bureaucratization and compartmentalisation and called for holistic approaches in partnership: towards a collective struggle for global solidarity and love, in which she simply took us along.

Brot für die Welt is celebrating her life. She leaves behind plenty of resources, 38 books, among them 8 children’s books, hundreds of songs in several languages, video talks, training modules, poems, and slogans for the struggle for justice to continue.

We remember her as a real “power house” on the way towards “Azaadi”, the word for freedom in several South Asian languages. As she put it:

FROM PATRIARCHY – AAZADI
FROM ALL HIERARCHY – AAZADI
FOR BREATHING FREELY – AAZADI
FOR MOVING FREELY – AAZADI
FOR SINGING LOUDLY – AAZADI
FOR DANCING MADLY – AAZADI
FOR SELF EXPRESSION – AAZADI
FOR CELEBRATION – AAZADI
WE NEED IT BADLY – AAZADI
WE LOVE IT MADLY – AAZADI
COME SAY IT LOUDLY – AAZADI

Our heartfelt condolences to her family and friends from Brot für die Welt, Germany

Dr. Dagmar Pruin, *President*

Petra Berner, *Director International Programmes*

Oliver Martin, *Head of Department Asia and Pacific*

Tina Kleiber, *Gender Advisor International Programmes*

Roswita Kupke, Edda Kirleis and Tatjana Haque, on behalf of all colleagues of *South Asia Unit*

“Words like ‘pati’ and ‘swami’ for husbands must go. These words mean ‘master’ or ‘owner’. In free India, an adult woman cannot — and should not — have an owner/master”

I really feel there is no other way than honest dialogue, talking about people’s real lives to them. First of all, we must explain to them that feminism is not anti-men, it’s not anti-culture and it’s not anti-religion. It’s only anti-inequality and injustice.

—Kamla Bhasin—

POETRY'S DREAM WORK

By CHRISTOPHER CAUDWELL



....Continued from previous issue

LET us examine the difference between the two forms of extraverted mental disturbance. The hysteric does not deny the world of external reality (taking external in the sense of "external to the body" He accepts this. The reality he distorts and desocialises is that of his body regarded subjectively. It is as if he does not dare to challenge social reality in that portion of it where society is most firmly entrenched, and he therefore selects his body as something in which he has a special proprietorial interest, and distorts that. Hence the famous hysteric-illnesses (hysteric dumbness, paralysis, blindness, hyper-aesthesia and anaesthesia) which are socially unreal in the sense that they are only functional and non-organic, and yet are real to the hysteric because he is, by definition, unconscious of their real cause.

Classic examples of the solution of a conflict between the instincts and the environment by hysteric means are the hysteric soldier, whose fear of death takes the form of an hysteric paralysis, and the hysteric woman, whose unsatisfied love or fear of domination takes the form of an hysteric illness. Hence the term "organ-language" for hysteric symptoms.

But if the conflict is unresolvable by this means, then the extravert's ego, forced into unconsciousness, challenges the whole domain of social reality, including that outside his body, He becomes mad in

relation to his environment. Forces from he knows not where, irrupt into his environment and completely distort it. His ego, forced into the darkness of his soul, grimaces back at him from the environment, though he does not recognise it there.

The psychasthenic neurotic, however, is a man who challenges at first the social reality. Therefore, just as the conflict of the extravert is a conflict with an external reality (i.e. a perceived external reality) which is too hard for his unconscious ego, the conflict of the introvert is a conflict with a felt ego (conscious or morality) which is too hard for his unconscious environment. Hence the psychasthenic symptoms of lack of interest in external reality, in life – an inability to face up to its problems or to do anything about them. He invents such external realities as inimical men (paranoia) or objects (phobias) or processes (compulsions) in order to justify his desires. The psychasthenic neurotic does not deny the existence of the ego as a social individual, as an ego in touch with other egos, but claims to be excepted from the usual rules owing to its difficult environmental circumstances. Hence the endless martyrism and introspection of the psychasthenic neurotic which makes such remunerative and almost incurable customers of the psycho-analyst. Because of his "special difficulties," this type of neurotic is always trying to create a specially "easy" world. He solves his conflict by "blaming" the emotion caused by it on to other details of environmental reality. The emotion generated by some sexual crisis, for example, is attached to some trifling object. The emotion generated by a soldier's being

buried in a trench, or his fear of this, is in neurosis displaced to all dark objects or shut-in places.

Thus just as the hysteric does not deny external reality but adjusts it in the domain of his body considered as an object suffering from physical disease, so the psychasthenic neurotic does not deny his responsibilities as a social ego but adjusts them in his environment, which he distorts by elaborations, rationalisations and inventions. The slightest detail is seized on and twisted. The hysteric speaks an organ-language; the neurotic a feeling-language. One asks society to believe nothing he does not see (and manufactures the proof); the other nothing he does not feel (and manufactures the cause). Thus just as the hysteric is unconscious of the real cause of his paralysis, the neurotic is unconscious of the cause of his "difficult" circumstances. He avoids fear by avoiding closed places; he does not realise that what he is really avoiding by his claustrophobia is going to the trenches.

But if the conflict is insoluble by this means then the neurotic denies social reality completely and becomes unconscious of his self. This is schizophrenia. He still remains conscious of external reality. An example is the Korsakoff syndrome. The patient knows everything external that happens to him, but does not know it is happening as to him. He lacks what Claparède called "moïeté." To take an example given by MacCurdy: a patient was pricked by her physician with a pin concealed in his hand. Next time he went to touch her she shrank away. Asked why, she replied hazily: "Hands sometimes have pins in them." She could not be persuaded that she, as an ego, had been pricked, but merely that a pricking had happened in her field of perceptual consciousness. When occupied with phantasy this type is simply a receptacle for phantastic panoramas, whereas the cyclothymic is a phantastic Napoleon, a hero, an enormous "I."

Now we have already compared the mechanism of extraversion with that of science. We will go further and compare the mechanism of hysteria with the classificatory sciences and of cyclothymia with the evolutionary sciences.

The hysteric distorts his body to provide a reality consonant with a wished reality. In the same way the mathematician "imagines" an ego ordering, classifying, operating everywhere in external reality. But precisely because with the mathematician this external reality is social, real and therefore conscious, the ego which thus operates is unconscious, abstract, drained of any distorting or qualifying subjectivity.

The cyclothymic loses grip even on his ego to achieve an adjustment in accordance with his "difficulties." As a result his delusion looks out at him everywhere in his perceptual field. In the same way the biologist or sociologist imagines an ego passively observing, noting, feeling everywhere in the sphere of reality chosen. But because with the scientist this external reality is social, real and conscious, the ego which thus observes is bare of subjective or personal bias – is the all-observing neutral eye of concrete society which yet spreads the quality it is interested in everywhere.

In the same way, since we have compared the mechanism of introversion with that of art, we will go further, and compare that of psychasthenic neurosis with poetry and that of schizophrenia with the novel. The neurotic substitutes for the social environment a special personal environment which "accounts for" his subjective difficulties. He makes an unreal environment consistent with his desires. The poet, however, substitutes for the affects and "I" of his experience a still more real and social "I"; he forces his "I" completely to enter the social ego, and produces, but for the opposite reason, a mock "adjusted" external world. Hence all poetry, as we have seen, turns on the social "I."

The catatonic, however, does not even make his world a real world of exceptionally difficult circumstances. The real world vanishes from society altogether; and the catatonic's world becomes coincident with a world of "I-organised" environmental contents, an ego-created bundle of remembered percepts. The novelist, however, makes his "I" coincide not merely with a generalised human "I" (which is the way the poet lifts his "I" from an "I" in specially difficult circumstances) an "I" in all human circumstances) but with the concrete "I"s developed by the individuation of society. Hence the novel is not seen with all its contents oriented round one "I," as in poetry, but it becomes an objective world, a world apparently like a selection of society surveyed from without, just as the catatonic's "I" is extended to become a world of apparently objective percepts.

Why is the hysteric and the cyclothymic (according to the experience of anthropologists) far more common in primitive societies? Because, in their primitive undifferentiated state, the environment or objective reality is far more likely to be the cause of acute mental tension and require the "healing" phantasy than is the ego or subjective reality. Primitives are held firmly to the demands of the simple social environment. Conscience is clear and imperative. The development of ideology, and the cleavage of conscience due to the rise of class antagonisms, produces the torn egos and suppressed selves of modern society. Psychasthenic neurosis is a characteristic bourgeois disease. In the war, hysteria was, according to Rivers, commonest in the ranks; psychasthenic neurosis more usual among the officers. It is the disease of a class thrown by the cleavage of society away from external reality on to the consciousness, just as hysteria is the disease of a class thrown away from consciousness on to external reality. It required the development of a class society to develop

consciousness by its separation, but it requires the reappearance of a classless society to synthesise what has now grown pathologically far apart – thinking and being, theory and practice. Schizophrenia is the disease of philosophy and idealism.

Thus, although there is a correspondence between artistic and schizophrenic solutions, and between scientific and cyclothymic mechanisms, because there is a resolution of social conflict by similar roads, the goal is in fact the opposite. As compared with existing normality, the mad road leads to greater illusion unconsciousness and privacy, the scientific or artistic road to greater reality, consciousness and publicity, Hence in catatonia the affects are repressed and in art they abundantly conscious; in cyclothymia the ego is "wild"; in science it is conscious of necessity.

For what it amounted to was this. Faced with a conflict between social consciousness and real life experience, the mentally-deranged chose to solve it by eliminating what was conflicting in consciousness, by making consciousness less true and social, and more private and illusory; whereas the scientist or artist chose to solve it by the opposite route, by dragging the new in experience up into social consciousness, by making consciousness more true and social, less private and illusory. They meet a similar obstacle but go in opposite directions. Science and art are "divine madness" in this sense, that a contradiction in experience drives the madman to private error and drives scientist and artist to public truth. They are more sane than the "sane," who because they experience no conflict or contradiction in their lives, are not faced with the possibility of resolving it creatively. The only difference between artist and scientist is that one is interested in the subjective and the other in the objective component of consciousness and life. The only difference between poet and

mathematician on the one hand, and the novelist and evolutionary scientist on the other, is that one is interested in generalisation, in integration, in a human essence and an abstract reality, and the other in specialisation, in differentiation, in human individuality and concrete reality.

Although the artist and the scientist in the problems they resolve go the opposite road to madness it does not follow that they are wholly sane. For they can only resolve those problems, which are socially real problems and have a general meaning for society as a whole. The artist has subjective problems, the scientist objective problems, which are not susceptible of a social solution, just as with other men. And of course the artist faced with objective problems is like the scientist faced with subjective problems, both are at least as helpless as ordinary men. This is only to say that science and art, because they are social reality in abstraction, in the most generalised and essential form, cannot exactly coincide with concrete living which generates them, but can only continually enrich and develop it.

Psycho-analysis, and psychology generally, is unable to make any clear distinction between the psychology of pathology and genius, and between the process of mental creation and mental delusion because it is unable to show any causal distinction between conscious and unconscious phantasy. The difference is social difference, but psychology, being bourgeois psychology, cannot rise beyond the

conception of an "individual in civil society"; it cannot separate and distinguish the biological environment from the social environment, and consciousness is product of the social environment. We have already discussed the difficulties to which this gives rise in the Freudian philosophy.

The very cleavage of phantasy types due to the fact that in dream, when the inactive body is released from concrete living, distortion from reality can take place on two planes – internal and external. This is not possible when dream is injected into waking life; hence the special types of madness.

At the same time, once madness has set in, the theoretical possibility arises of a return to sleep of a deeper character, in which adjustment takes place on a double plane once but in a more penetrating way. In fact MacCurdy and Hoch's work on benign stupors has revealed the clinical importance of a special prolonged, deep form of sleep (stupor) as a prognosis of approaching cure in psychoses. Evidently, then, sleep and dream play an important part in the solution of private conflicts which arise during the day and are "solved" privately at night. Hence, too, no doubt the significance of the sleeplessness which is so well recognised as a symptom of approaching madness, and hence, too, the curative importance of bromides and sleep-inducing drugs.

to be continued...

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