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Violence and the Image of Assam

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Assam, the glorious state, is situated in the northeastern region of India along with other six sisters. In the past, the image of Assam outside of Assam within India and abroad was not so good as people used to think Assam as a place of *jungle* to the contrary of the fact that Assam is a place beautified with the abundant gift of nature. Trees, hills, rivers, wild animals, birds, lakes, landscapes contribute to make Assam naturally bewitching; one who travels once cannot forget for the entire life. Another exciting fact of Assam is that people from many ethnic tribes, religion, caste and creed are living together from the past: Bodo, Dimasa, Tiwa, Garo, Sonowal Kachari, Ahom, Mising, Santhal, Rajbangshi, Kachari, Nepali, Bengali, Miri, Karbi, Rabha, Kachari, Lalung, Barman in Cachar, Borokachar, Deori, Hajai, Mech, Dimasa, Hajong, Singhphho, Khampti and Garo, Biata, Khasi, Jaintia, Synteng, Pnar, War, Bhoi, Lyngngam, and Kuki, Chakma, Hmar, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jain, Buddhist, Shikh and people from many local religious beliefs. A perfect example of unity in diversity could be found here a few years back.

Although the image has changed in present day but not in a bright and positive direction; people think Assam as a place of terror in today's India and world. Every ethnic group wants a piece of land reserved for its cause. Since 1947, with increasing economic problems in the region, separatist groups began forming along ethnic lines, and demands for autonomy and sovereignty grew, resulting into fragmentation of Assam.[1] Assam was a bigger state at the time of Indian Independence as Nagaland and Meghalaya were also part of it. Pathetically, the leaders of Assamese and Assam Government could not hold the Naga and the Khasia abreast. As a result Nagaland and Meghalaya are two different states now, dividing Assam into a smaller state. Still there are many tribes who are struggling for a different state cutting down Assam into even smaller piece. We can cite example of Bodo and Karbi struggle to make a separate state for them on

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the basis of language. Even some tribes are agitating for their autonomy. Now the one million question is that whether violence is the only solution of all these struggle.

Let us peep into our independence history. Theoretically and practically India got independence because of the non-violence struggle laid by our Bapu Mahatma Gandhi. He has shown how effective, result oriented and glorious non-violence struggle is. Is there any movement in world history, which has earned glory by adopting the path of violence? The answer would be; I am sure, an emphatic “no”. Then why is violence? Human being has the consciousness to differentiate the good and the bad, the just and the unjust; then why do we behave as childish and at some point uncivilized? Indian constitution has given the right to fight any cause politically within the boundary of constitution. So why don't we take the advantage of it? Killing innocent people and terrorizing them are what kind of paths to fight any political cause?

Let me cite some example of the activity of violence that stroke Assam in recent past. On Monday, November 04, 2013, seven people were killed and many others seriously injured when militants fired on a group of people who were gambling on the occasion of Diwali in Assam's Goalpara district on Sunday night.[2] On 22nd August, 2013 at least five persons, three police personnel and two journalists were injured in a grenade blast by suspected ULFA militants inside the Mangaldoi police station in Darrang district.[3] On 15th August, 2013, the anti-talk NDFB (Sangbijit) faction triggered serial blasts in Assam on the Independence Day on Thursday injuring one person in Kokrajhar district where it exploded two grenades and another one in neighbouring Chirang district.[4] On 5th August, 2013, normal life was paralysed in lower Assam and Karbi Anglong with violence and disruption of train services marking the beginning of bandhs by different organisations demanding a separate Bodoland.[5] On 2nd August, 2013, with the Army on flag march in Assam, the rubber estate and a house of Cong MP were set ablaze.[6] On 31st July, 2013, violence erupted in Assam in support of a separate Karbi Anglong state in which houses of a Congress MP and MLA were attacked, prompting the police to fire in the air to quell them.[7] On 29th July, 2013, the ULFA led by Paresh Baruah blasted a granade at Paltan Bazar in the heart of the city that left 15 people injured.[8] On 9th January, 2013, three

school children were killed and another two injured in an explosion in Digboi in Assam.[9] On 28th October, 2008, One hundred people killed and several hundreds injured in the blast.[10]

In July 2012 violence in the Indian state of Assam broke out with riots between indigenous Bodos and Muslims. The first incident was reported to have taken place on 20th July, 2012. As of 8th August, 2012, 77 people had died and over 400,000 people were taking shelter in 270 relief camps, after being displaced from almost 400 villages. Eleven people have been reported missing.[11]

Above are some of the glimpse of violence activity of the recent years but the actual statistics are far more deadly and higher than this. From these above examples it is crystal clear that violent activity is a part of everyday life in Assam. After getting up in the morning, when you take the daily paper sitting on your luxury sofa and sipping your cup of tea forwarded by the caring hand of your wife, when you open the first page of the paper it will take you to some deadly activity of the past one day making your cozy sofa certainly uncomfortable. But by now the people has seen so many of this bloodshed that it has become natural to them and they do not feel surprised with this kind of activity. On the contrary, they feel surprised if nothing happens for a period of time.

Here I am not analyzing why this bloodshed is happening or who are responsible for this but because of these activities of bomb blast and violence all over Assam, how badly the image of Assam is deteriorating to worst from worse and the loss Assam and its people is bearing for that reason. The violence of July 2012 between Bodos and Muslims got circulated in the entire globe. As a result, some kinds of violent activities were committed in some other parts of India and outside India too. This proves that how fast the image of Assam is getting crooked in world scenario.

Economically Assam is a poor state. According to Wikipedia “The economy of Assam today represents a unique juxtaposition of backwardness amidst plenty. Despite its rich natural resources, and supplying of up to 25% of India's petroleum needs, Assam's growth rate has not kept pace with that of India; the difference has increased rapidly since the 1970s. The Indian economy grew at 6% per annum over the period of 1981 to 2000; the growth rate of Assam was only 3.3%. In the Sixth

Plan period, Assam experienced a negative growth rate of 3.78% when India's was positive at 6%. In the post-liberalized era (after 1991), the difference widened further.”[12] From a layman’s angle I think the economy of a land does not grow if the political environment of that land is not peaceful. There are many reasons but mainly; tourists either domestic or foreign would not visit your place, no industry will be put up by any company and manpower loss.

When we were child, used to see the pictures of battle stricken Palestine or Bosnia and Herzegovina which showed us the cruel reality of violence and what was the impact on the people. Now, we do not have to go far but if we go to the relief camps of 2012 July riot we can see the similar live picture of humanity. Or if you go through the Google search engine you can see the pictures of those poor people. So, it cannot be hidden from any corner of today’s global society.

In this world of super technology media has also gone super technological. Nothing can be hidden from reality. So to change the image of Assam within India and outside India we, the people of Assam, the political organizations, student unions, government, police, everyone have to come out together and curve a way out very soon to stop all kinds of violence. Most importantly the people who are responsible for those violent activities should think twice before becoming violent whether their doings are proven to justice or not and they know that killing innocent people are not anyhow proves to justice. They have to understand violence never bring happiness and development to any land or society. It only carries sorrow, tears to the eyes of the poor parents who lose their children and children who lose their parents. Stop violence and try to agitate any political issue within the boundary of Indian constitution. Government should also come forward and talk to them without any corrupt mind and game of politics to establish peach in Assam so that the image of Assam shine in the globe and we can proudly say ourselves as Assamese in entire India and abroad.

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