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A Brief Study Of Blended Learning And The Uses Of Google Classroom

Dr. Shyamal Chandra Sarkar, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Pramathesh Barua College, Gauripur

Abstract

Blended courses are the classes which help us to replace a portion of the traditional face-to-face instruction by web-based online learning which is the model for an inclusive approach to the identification of challenges to blended learning as a means to identify educational accessibility issues is presented. It is the model which provides a starting point for the identification of challenges to learning from a socio-cultural perspectives rather than a medical or rehabilitation perspective. It has been described as learning 'that is facilitated by the effective combination of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning, and founded on transparent communication amongst all parties involved with a course'. SWAYAM, IGNOU, GYANKOSH, NPTEL are also the part of online blended learning.

Blended learning is something new in current educational thought for the educator. It is the process which combines online educational materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional place-based classroom methods. Comprehensive Learning Management System, Well-Defined Course Outline, Clear Learning Objectives, Consistent Aesthetics, Good Communication, A Well-Trained Teacher are different elements of blended learning. There are some advantages of blended learning, namely, Flexibility, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Cost-effectiveness, Personalization, Extended reach, Covers all learning styles. Google Classroom is a free-web service which help us creating, distributing and grading assignment in a paperless way.

Keynotes: Introduction of blended learning, background of blended learning, difference between online course and blended learning, advantages and disadvantages of blended learning, use of Google slides in online or blended classroom.

Introduction

Blended courses (also known as hybrid or mixed-mode courses) are classes where a portion of the traditional face-to-face instruction is replaced by web-based online learning. It is a model for an inclusive approach to the identification of challenges to blended learning as a means to identify educational accessibility issues is presented. By focusing on both the learner and teacher perspectives, the model encompasses a broad range of factors, including learner characteristics, learning and teaching environments, interactions and activities. The proposed model provides a starting point for the identification of challenges to learning from a socio-cultural perspectives rather than a medical or rehabilitation perspective. This holistic perspective is a key to moving 'thinking' towards a more inclusive learning approach that embraces the needs of all learners, regardless of a defined disability. Introduction of blended learning has been

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INFLUENCES OF MATHEMATICS IN MODERN LOGIC: A BRIEF STUDY

Dr. Shyamal Chandra Sarkar

(Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy P.B.College, Gauripur)

ABSTRACT

Mathematics is one of the studies which help us to gain knowledge. It also helps us to understand and solve various types of knowledge. Learning mathematics will help students to grow their problem-solving and logical reasoning skills. Our primary assumptions necessarily imply or entail the theorems which are deduced from them and ignore the question whether our conclusions as well as our axioms or postulates are in fact true in pure mathematics.

Aristotle introduced variables and symbols in logic. After that, G.W. Von Leibnitz, George Boole, C.S. Pierce, Augustus de Morgan, W.S. Jevons, Bertrand Russell, C.I. Lewis etc. broadly introduced symbols in logic which is purely formal science. The chief aim of symbolic logic is to distinguish between the validity and invalidity of arguments by determining the form of the argument through the application of symbols.

Symbolic logic is a modern development of classical deductive logic formulated by Aristotle and has emerged as a result of the use of the large amount of symbols in accordance with modern mathematical methods and principles. George Boole, and Augustus De Morgan, in the middle of the 19th century, presented a systematic mathematical way of regarding logic. The most important common type of symbols, used in symbolic logic, are logical constants and variables. These are ' \cdot ' (Conjunction), ' \vee ' (disjunction), ' \vee ' (alternation), ' \neg ' (negation), ' \supset ' (implication), and ' \equiv ' (equivalence).

A truth- table is used (I) to define truth-functional expression and (II) to test the validity of a good number of deductive arguments. In truth table, the capital letter 'T' or numerical '1' is used for 'True' and the capital letter 'F' or the numerical '0' is used for 'false'. Thus, 'T' or '1' and 'F' or '0' are the signs used for indicating values. In Symbolic logic, we can test the validity or invalidity of arguments by applying truth table methods, rules of inference and replacement Venn Diagram etc.

Key notes: introduction of mathematics and symbolic logic, brief history of symbolic logic, uses of symbols in logic, rules of Inference and Replacement, uses of Venn diagram in symbolic logic

Introduction:

Mathematics simply means to learn or to study or gain knowledge. The theories and concepts given in mathematics help us understand and solve various types of problems in academic as well as in real life situations. It is a subject of logic. Learning mathematics will help students to grow their problem-solving and logical reasoning skills. Solving mathematical problems is one of the best brain exercises.¹

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The Book Review Literary Trust thanks Tanil Kilachand, Trustee, Rama Charities, for sponsorship of the April 2021 issue of *The Book Review*.

tor, Seema Mustafa, describes how Shaheen Bagh for the 'first time in living history', Muslim women, long stereotyped as demure and caged, participate in direct political action, leading from the front. 》

ational Citizens Register (NRC). discipline, respect and dignity with the protestors not only conducted themselves but also gave to their opponent, a powerful state, has led many to liken the movement to an avatar of Gandhian Satyagraha.

In the end, the book asks, 'Who won?' The goal of the Shaheen Bagh protests was not achieved. Shaheen Bagh did not result in a roll back of the CAA-NPR-NRC. As Apoorvanand writes in the book, Shaheen Bagh exposed the majoritarian, monitory face of India wherein an entire social class (including opposition leaders and many Dalit and OBC leaders) never rallied around or took ownership of the political cause of Shaheen Bagh. Deep anxieties of the Muslims which Shaheen Bagh were ignored, misunderstood or worse vilified. However, the dissent as 'a civilized discourse on pending questions that need answers' (Ar, 2020), the Shaheen Bagh resistance marks a historic democratization of the space for Indians to question the secular and liberal credentials of the homogenizing, majoritarian Indian state. Today, as we see farmers agitation developing across India, the vocabulary of protest introduced by Shaheen Bagh has seeped into the national discourse and changed the optics of dissent. The powers that be stonewalled the CAA protests, that they are ready to negotiate with the protesting farmers is itself a result of the snowballing impact of protest movements like Shaheen-Bagh.

The book under review would be a read for general readers, students, academics and journalists alike, who are engaged in thinking through the how and why of protest movements like Shaheen Bagh and what they foretell for the nation.

Source: *Journal 2020, Voices of Dissent: An Essay. General Books.*

Understanding Post-Accord Politics of Assam

Parvin Sultana

ASSAM POLITICS IN POST-CONGRESS ERA: 1985 AND BEYOND VOLUME 4

By Sandhya Goswami

Sage Publications, 2020, pp. 188, ₹1095.00

The tripartite Assam Accord signed between the Indian government, the State Government of Assam and the All Assam Students Union (AASU) in 1985 marks a watershed moment in Assam's socio-political history. The Accord ushered in a new era of competitive politics. Assam has been mostly under Congress rule with the exception of the time of the Janata Government led by Golap Borbora (1978-79). Post 1985, the State witnessed the formation of new political parties as well as the fragmentation of the electorate.

Two important developments took place in Assam after 1985; firstly, there was a multiplication of the number of political parties and secondly, a politicization of multiple ethnic groups which gave a further push to the demand of ethnic homelands. Sandhya Goswami's *Assam Politics in Post-Congress Era: 1985 and Beyond* is a detailed study of the change that took place in Assam post 1985.

The book starts with a detailed account of historical issues like illegal immigration initiated by a colonial power and how it continues to shape the State's politics. Migration of farmers from erstwhile East Bengal was both a colonial project and a respite for farmers from an exploitative Permanent Settlement of Bengal to a relaxed Ryotwari system prevalent in Assam. However, Partition and Independence did not end this human movement and it puts an extra pressure on land. The author reiterates that land is a crucial component of the identity of a largely agrarian community and identity crisis of the people of Assam is due to this scarcity of land.

Post-Independence, the Assam electorate backed Congress to power again and again which was a catch-all party and initially responded to the concerns of the people of Assam. But with the 1960s and the language movement, fragmentations became prominent. The decade saw threats in the

ASSAM POLITICS IN POST-CONGRESS ERA

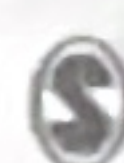
1985 AND BEYOND



SANDHYA GOSWAMI

SAGE SERIES ON POLITICS IN INDIAN STATES

VOLUME 4



Bengal originally allied with the Assamese speakers and identified Assamese as their mother-tongue. The author borrows from her work on language movement in Assam and points out how language played a central role in the State in the decade of the 60s.

The ultimate challenge to Congress dominance came in the form of the six year long Assam Agitation that lasted from 1979 to 1985. The decade of the 1980s saw unprecedented violence in the State. The conduct of elections in 1983 against the call for boycott further worsened the situation. The State was heavily polarized on communal lines. The Congress tried to assuage the Muslims with the appointment of Anowara Taimur as Chief Minister in 1983. An increased activity of RSS and Jamiat in the State further fragmented the State's social fabric and this culminated in the massacres in 1983. While Nellie is often cited as it saw more than two thousand Bengali Muslim women and children bludgeoned to death, many other places in Assam witnessed similar violence across communities.

The Assam Movement saw the assertion of the Assamese speakers which alienated the tribal population of the State. This period also saw the assertion of Bodos for a separate State. The movement culminated in the signing of the Assam Accord and on the political front, it saw the fresh entry of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). Riding on post-accord popular support, the AC

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 Languages In Translation

Assamese/অসমীয়া

 Bangla/বাংলা

 Gujarati/ગુજરાતી

 Hindi/हिंदी

 Kannada/ಕನ್ನಡ

 Malay/Melayu

Malayalam/മലയാളം

Marathi/मराठी

Odia/ଓଡ଼ିଆ

Punjabi/ਪੰਜਾਬੀ

Sanskrit/संस्कृतम्

Telugu/తెలుగు

 Tamil/தமிழ்

 Urdu/اُردو



Assamese/অসমীয়া

Bangla/বাংলা

Gujarati/ગુજરાતી

 Hindi/हिंदी



Kannada/ಕನ್ನಡ

Malayalam/മലയാളം



Malay/Melayu

Punjabi/ਪੰਜਾਬੀ

Marathi/मराठी

Odia/ଓଡ଼ିଆ

 Sanskrit/संस्कृतम्



Tamil/தமிழ்



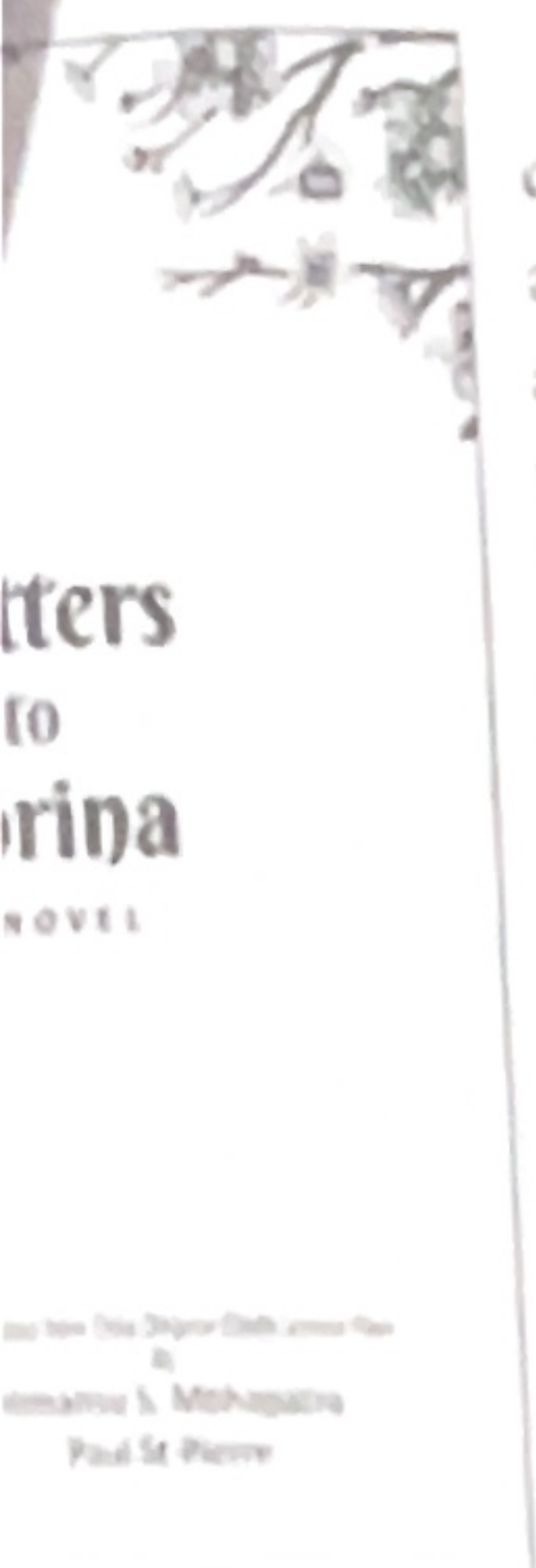
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Ravi Menon	<i>Duryodhan</i> by Kaka Vidhate, translated from the original Marathi by Vikrant Pande
Maya Pandit-Narkar	<i>Sambhaji</i> by Vishwas Patil, translated from the original Marathi by Vikrant Pande
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The Book Review Literary Trust is a charitable, non-profit Trust, set up in 1989. One of its chief ongoing projects is the publish of the review journal *The Book Review* which completed its 44th year in December 2020.

The Book Review was the first review journal in the English language in India and has been in continuous publication for the last years. In this time, it has promoted scholarly debate, Indian writing in all languages, South Asia studies, cultural studies, gender studies and many other aspects of writing and publishing, becoming the benchmark, across the world, for critical reviews of works published in South Asia. Globally, leading experts in fields as diverse as international relations, Gandhian studies, and Indian history, regularly contribute to the journal. Covering a very broad array of subjects, this pioneering venture has rendered a unique service to the literary and academic community and the reading public.

The Book Review is brought out in a print edition, as well as a digital edition accessible on its website: <http://thebookreviewindia.org>. The journal's primary revenue for ongoing operations is from advertising revenue and subscriptions. As the journal is in the 45th year of publication, and The Book Review Literary Trust has competed 31 years, the Trustees have in place an agenda for the continuance of its activities in the coming decades. The Trust now seeks large grants/endowment/goodwill advertisements/subscriptions to enable the Trust to undertake infrastructure development, to widen the scope of its activities on the



Letters
to
Jorina
NOVEL

By Himansu Mohapatra
Translated by Paul St Pierre

'My childhood and adolescence were spent in Jahanpur and by now I am sure it's clear to you why I am so drawn to the place. The house people are born in—even if

thatched and made of mud—is home. Later houses can never be as alive as that first dilapidated patch and mud' (Letter 9).
g out from a train in England the green or dusty-grey sprawl on of the tracks has often made me about spending the rest of my life cluded English village' (Letter 7).
Wendel Holmes's perceptive 'Where we love is home, home that may leave, but not our hearts...' will help us to reconcile these seemingly tory sentiments of Alok Das.
riter's efforts in these letters seem ected at reshaping the relationship the East and the West by making ole from two widely separated places gether on an isthmus of common y freed from colonial baggage.
not only if one is born in a country can belong to it. You have left the an and made England your home, how strongly infatuated I am with land that ruled my country for two d years. In the twentieth century arrow minded nationalist and h ideologies falling into ruin like old es' (Letter 7)

is a character that does not intend short at initiating an emotional tion between the East and the West. isions a bias-free relationship with the Since he has experienced England, his n the letters is to sensitize his friend to the culture of Odisha, especially his town Puri, which goes by the fictional of Jahanpur in the text.

eel Hinduism is a living religion; aracters of the Ramayana and the harat circulate among us. Every Jahanpur we observe the birthday achandra; we rejoice in the death

Srikrushna did in the remote past...' (Letter 9).

Alok explains that religious consciousness is not limited to the observance of many festivals, as is illustrated in Letter 5, but is something mystical. It is a matter of faith, of an unwavering trust in the superhuman power of the gods and goddesses we turn to in the time of acute distress. He moves on to narrate his miraculous escape in a serious road accident when his scooter, lurching down a bumpy, uneven road, slipped into a hole dug in the middle of the road by the municipality people. He accredits this escape to his 'devoutly religious' grandmother's unflinching faith in her god.

'A thought came to my mind', he writes, 'that I had perhaps escaped with my life due to the merit my late grandma had accrued... My feeling was that I had escaped such a close shave on account of my grandma's virtue... My belief is that it was my grandma who rescued me from that accident, that it was her weak hands that lifted me out of that death hole' (Letter 7).

Letters to Jorina, as Himansu Mohapatra observes in the Afterword, is about inter-cultural relationships. It projects a holistic sensibility based on the synthesis of the East and the West rather than on their oft-talked about antithesis. As Mohapatra points out, 'The West and the East, England and India, England and Odisha: Mishra made the equations and interactions between these entities and modes of life the subjects of his thinking and writing...' The letters show the author engaged in a fine balancing act, dwelling more on their affinity than on the contrast, and thus going beyond the binary understanding of the relationship between the East and the West.

Professor Ganeswar Mishra, an eminent Professor of English, has chosen Odia, the language of his homeland, the language in which he 'was known and loved' as Jhumpa Lahiri says in her non-fiction narrative *In Other Words*, to write the letters. But a work like this is in need of global visibility and the excellent translation of the text done by two eminent Professors, Himansu Mohapatra and Paul St Pierre has fulfilled the need. The translated version reads like an original work in English. If translation is believed to be an act of linguistic bridge-building for the sake of transformational cross-cultural journey, then *Letters to Jorina* is a fine example of such a bridge.

Snehaprava Das, Visiting Professor, Department of Engineering, Sri Sri University, Cuttack, Odisha is a translator and poet. She has five collections of

Insider/Outsider Conundrum in New Perspectives

Parvin Sultana

BLOSSOMS IN THE GRAVEYARD (*Kabor Aru Phool*)

By Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. Translated from the original Assamese by Mitra Phukan
Niyogi Books, 2016, pp. 192, ₹295.00

Blossoms in the Graveyard by Jnanpeeth Awardee Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is set around the Bangladesh War of Liberation of 1971. While books in Assamese have dealt with the question of migration of people from across erstwhile East Bengal (before Partition) and East Pakistan (after Partition), very few literary works have dealt with the war of liberation of this neighbouring country in which India played a very crucial role.

Rupaborir Polosh by Syed Abdul Malik, *Ismail Sheikhok Bisari* (In Search of Ismail Sheikh)—a short story by Homen Borgohain, *Rupali Balir Xopon* by Kashema Khatun and *Kahibunor Malita* by Rudranee Sharma are some of the few noted works that deal with Muslims of East Bengal origin who have entered Assam at different points of history. While these works look at migration of people since the colonial times and also situate them in the current context, they don't focus much on the 1971 war which accelerated this movement as they fled their war-torn country.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya's book written in 1972, just a year after the war, fills this void. The book is from the point of view of one Robin Babu, an Assamese who eventually got interested in what is happening across the border through the social activist Bagaitkar. They travel to Phulbari in Meghalaya which shares a border with Bangladesh. They plan to meet one

“Through the voice of Mehr,

Bhattacharyya has raised some larger questions. While introspecting, Mehr questions again and again the fate of women. She asks if liberation of her nation will mean liberation of women also. Her ruminations concern the predicament of livin

India Nepal Pakistan Bhutan

THE BOOK REVIEW

Sri Lanka

Maldives

Pakistan

Bhutan

Maldives

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South Asia – XXXVI

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In Search of A Shared Past and Plural Culture

Just like the challenges that confronted the world in the past, our present too is marked by cynicism and fear, glaring in widespread apathy towards the have-nots. The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have long-lasting consequences for social rights, and has once again directed the spotlight on to deep-rooted systemic inequities in the world we inhabit, for us in South Asia.

Issues such as endemic poverty, ill health, territorial conflagrations between neighbours, internal acrimony among so always been widespread all across the region. The differences among the member states have been singularly responsible region back from realizing its true potential. There is an increased need to confront these challenges head-on; the impera the matters that divide our societies has never been more urgent. At this juncture in human history we earnestly hope th Asia special issue of *The Book Review* provides us with an opportunity to pause and reflect on our current predicament.

The bouquet of book reviews carried in this issue encompasses genre, themes, and disciplines. Though most of our cl focus exclusively on a single country, there remains an overarching theme of our shared legacy which straddles regional boundaries. The books have been carefully selected to underline our shared past, and common sensibilities. The issues c from geopolitical development, domestic politics, aesthetic, religion, to South Asian fiction.

As we in India celebrate 75 years of Independence, this is also an opportune moment to acknowledge 50 years of Bar Independence. Once described as a 'basket-case' because of its appalling socio-economic indicators, today Bangladesh is case study of a successful economic transformation to the status of a middle-income country. However, the challenges of the country: religious violence, economic inequality, horrendous standards of press freedom, are identical to the ones for countries in South Asia. These common afflictions call for introspection and a concerted effort to mitigate these challenges any time in the past.

The return of the Taliban in Afghanistan, after nearly two decades of conflict, has once again directed the world's attention to the region. Taliban 2.0, for at least us in India, also has the potential to recalibrate South-Asian geopolitics to our disadvantage. It is naïve for regional stakeholders to trust outside powers to help put our house in order. The initiative has to come from within. Stability in Afghanistan benefits the entire region.

Therefore the geopolitics of the region, which has for long dominated our attention, remains an important theme in the special issue. However, continuing the traditions of *The Book Review*, we have also consciously tried to bring in the cultural and social aspects to the discussion. Our endeavour remains to focus on our common past and the rich legacy of a plural culture. The reviewers have tried to engage with the books by adding to the discourse their own perspectives and experiences. Yes, the old hostilities do cast a shadow over our present; however, one should also acknowledge the changes in the social and cultural realm. Together they hold the potential to enrich our worldview and open up new avenues for mutual comprehension and reconciliation, and perhaps offer solutions to our collective problems, which have always seemed insurmountable.

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Parvin Sultana	<i>The Braided River: A Journey along the Brahmaputra</i> by Samrat Choudhury
Mohan Rao	<i>Medical Innovation and Disease Burden: Conflicting Priorities and the Social Divide in India</i> by Sobin George
Nyla Ali Khan	<i>Accidental Feminism: Gender Parity and Selective Mobility among India's Professional Elite</i> by Swetha S. Balakrishna
Krishna Menon	<i>Courting Desire: Litigating for Love in North India</i> by Rama Srinivasan
Azeemah Saleem	<i>Why Men Rape: An Indian Undercover Investigation</i> by Tara Kanwar
Simi Malhotra	<i>Shades of Black: Quilombolas' (Nuances du noir)</i> by Nathalie Ecker, translated from the original French by Anshu Gupta
Sohail Akbar	<i>Bangladesh: The Price of Freedom</i> by Raghu Rai
Aruna Roy	<i>Of Gifted Voice: The Life and Art of M.S. Subbulakshmi</i> by Kishor Deshpande
Ashwini Deshpande	<i>Musicophilia in Mumbai: Performing Subjects & the Metropolitan Unconscious</i> by Tapaswini Narasimhan
TCA Srinivasa-Raghavan	<i>The Light of Asia: The Poem that Defined the Buddha</i> by Jayaram Ramesh
Muneeza Shamsie	<i>Address Book: A Publishing Memoir in the Time of COVID</i> by Ratu Menon
Somdatta Mandal	<i>Rebati: Speaking in Tongues</i> by Fakir Mohan Senapati edited by Manu Dash
Sacharita Sengupta	<i>The Demoness: The Best Bangladeshi Stories, 1971-2021</i> selected and edited by Niaz Zaman
Jennifer Monaghan	<i>What We Know about Her</i> by Krupa Ge
Suman Bhattacharya	<i>Collegiality and Other Ballads: Feminist Poems by Male and Non-Binary Allies</i> introduced and edited by SI
Zeena R. Choudhury	<i>The Rana Cookbook: Recipes from the Palaces of Nepal</i> by Rohini Rana

is one of the
crises facing
ay, regardless of
boundaries.))

which along with other
man too evolved from
environment and in turn,
es of survival in order to
Interestingly, it is this
human life, namely, the
re to survive as a species
modern human being that
rent crises. In other words,
pursuit of 'good life' in
re define it that inevitably
condition of life in which
ust unfold. At stake, then,
al promise of modernity,
we pursue a path of progress
e aware that this collective
s the cause for a collective
ow understand as the crisis of
For, if histories of injustice
n the core of much of our
ught and action, as they must,
e must understand that such
io-spherical limits precisely
fundamental scalar clash of
ice.
standing this differential
al scalar nature of existence
both conceptually and
Chakrabarty explains in the
thropocene Time' and 'Toward
logical Clearing'. Often, we
ilt to grasp the vastness of
d scale of the planet's history
ause we tend to translate them
specifically, moral terms.
rm Anthropocene, which
the extent of human impact
et' (p. 156), 'could never be
separated from moral concerns'
ue to this translation, the debates
Anthropocene often took the
ating moral responsibility for
among others, this led the '...
Jason Moore, who recommended
a geological epoch be given a
esive of the more immediate
his opinion brought in about
p. 160). Yet, in collapsing
and some late human time as it
undoubtedly collapse the geological
part of the human, thus leading
the tendency to view the human
of the

a politics structured around the breaking
down of distinctions between the human
and the natural world, a task that is difficult
to do when we do not fully comprehend the
vastness and depth in which the geological
scale unfolds (p. 195-196).

Thus, for Chakrabarty, the way forward
must involve recognizing the 'alterity' of
the earth, where humans see themselves
not as the dominant reason for the planet
to exist but rather as a component of the
complex multi-cellular life systems that also
exist in the planet. Only such recognition
with perhaps an idea of reverence at its
core will help in confronting the unique
challenges that climate change poses (p.
198-199). While the book does not have a
formal conclusion, readers, however, will
find a further reiteration of many of the core
messages of the book in the postscript, which
creatively presents these ideas in a dialogic
format, a reproduction of a conversation
between the author and the French
philosopher, Bruno Latour.

In sum, *The Climate of History in a
Planetary Age* is a breathtaking book.
Chakrabarty challenges us to reimagine
the human from a planetary perspective, a
deep history—an infinite horizon of human
history—in order to come to terms with
the climate crisis that human actions have
precipitated. Simply put, for a long time,
the constitution and the well-being of the
human, the Anthropos has predominantly
been at the heart of our epistemology
and action. Chakrabarty suggests that the
present crisis of climate change calls for
'de-centring' the human (p. 203). The
conceptual and political implications of this
paradigm shift for disciplines in the social
sciences and humanities are indeed ground-
breaking.

Readers will of course arrive at their own
conclusion both about the diagnoses of the
problem and the various points of inflection
that Chakrabarty offers regarding debates
around diverse aspects of the Anthropocene.
There will be disagreements, of course.
But, at its heart, everyone must answer
the question that Chakrabarty poses, a
particular formulation that in many ways
the ancient Greek philosophers would have
immediately recognized—does the era of the
Anthropocene require us to fundamentally
reexamine the way we live? I submit that in
this case, it is quite challenging to choose the
road not taken.

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Blending Travel, Memoir and History

Parvin Sultana

THE BRAIDED RIVER: A JOURNEY ALONG THE
BRAHMAPUTRA

By Samrat Choudhury

HarperCollins, 2021, pp. 409, ₹599.00

The *Braided River* is an ambitious
project, an account of the journey
that the journalist took tracing the
river Brahmaputra from its Indian origin in
Arunachal to Bangladesh where it takes a
new name and merges with the Ganga.

Divided into three broad sections, the
book gives a detailed account of not only the
route that the longest river of India follows,
but also the lives it makes and breaks. The
first part largely deals with the river's origin
in India in the State of Arunachal Pradesh.
Choudhury starts with mythical accounts
of the river along with archaeological facts
about it. Such myths cut across countries
and religions indicating the significance of
the river.

The journey starts as the author starts
to trace the origin of the river—mainly
tracing the origin of its three main tributaries
namely Dibang, Siang and Lohit. The very
beginning shows the many administrative
obstacles that the region suffers from. People
from outside Arunachal Pradesh require an
Inner Line Permit and acquiring it puts one
through a tedious bureaucratic process. After
much hassle, the author and his friend could
acquire the required permit which is given
for a limited period of time.

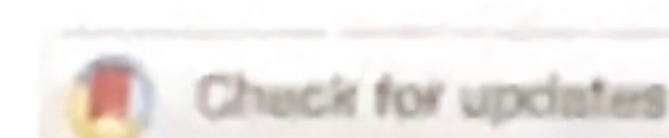
In Arunachal Pradesh, we get a glimpse
of a border State with scant population
and isolated villages. Owing to its strategic
importance, the State has both intelligence
bureau officials and a substantial number
of Border security and Army personnel. So
much so, that the author is stopped from
visiting villages closer to the border region.
Choudhury's experience sounds nothing less

“The book cuts across genres
and is not just a travelogue.

The *Braided River* will
familiarize readers from across
disciplines to this region
which is often denied an
adequate and rightful space



ARTICLE



<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00808-8>

OPEN

Stigma and fear during COVID-19: essentializing religion in an Indian context

Debajyoti Biswas¹✉, Sanjukta Chatterjee² & Parvin Sultana³

A cursory inquest into the effects of SARS-CoV-2 exposes how easily the ramification of the pandemic has moved over from the physio-social to the psychosocial state of humans all over the world. Derogatory nomenclatures such as 'Chinese-virus' or 'Corona-jihad' can be seen as a part of a disjunctive politics of 'representation' as opposed to 'representing' with a metonymic effect. Such politics violates the protocol on naming new human infectious diseases set by World Health Organization. It also insinuates a long-term socio-political impression on the mental state of an individual or a social group, which may have an emasculating effect on the global solidarity to fight the virus. This calls for a nuanced psychosocial investigation with a specific analysis of how the ensuing stigmatization and fear can aggravate the contagion. With specific reference to the Indian sub-continent, this paper explains the socio-political orientation behind the essentialisation of a religious group that has led to the indictment of the minority community. By using Wagner's theory of essentialisation and Critical Race Theory, this article shall endeavor to explore how media may play a crucial role in stigmatizing communities. Secondly, the paper also argues that the spiraling effect of such ostracisation leads to stigma and fear within the group which is not only dehumanizing but also detrimental to the concerted effort to contain the pandemic.

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Introduction

Social groups often define and redefine themselves vis-a-vis other groups owing to changing political, economic, and cultural situations (Stangor, 2014). While doing so, groups attribute characters to themselves, as well as to other groups, and believe that these characters are defining (ibid). While this may be seen as a part of socialization, it becomes problematic when negative characters are portrayed as essential attributes of certain groups. The negative portrayal is then used to dehumanize the groups by putting them in an inferior position. Essentialisation however goes on simultaneously at multiple levels according to Wagner and Semati (Holtz et al., 2009; Semati, 2010). Right-wing politics have essentialized such characters of the majority community and differentiated them from others by essentializing certain characters of the 'other' community (Holtz and Wagner, 2008). This differentiation has been reflected in political discourse as well. It has been internalized by certain social groups and also by the larger Indian society to some extent. Social cleavage, be it in lines of religion, caste, or gender, is not new in India. It stays dormant under normal circumstances but becomes prominent at times of social conflicts. During social conflicts, individuals identify themselves with groups they have their affinity with. For example language, religion, caste, and even gender may become a basis of their affinity. Although associations based on identity remains dormant during peacetime, it may take a violent form during the conflict of interest situations. It was witnessed in India during the religious riots, Babri Masjid demolition, Nellie Massacre, Kashmiri Pandit's exodus, and so forth. This fragmentation came to the forefront again during the COVID-19 crisis. Whereas viral diseases are not community-centric, it has been witnessed that by using majoritarian rhetoric, people belonging to lower-income groups, castes, and minority religions are either treated unequally or are implicated as super-spreader of the virus. This prejudice can be understood through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) which reads into the form of hierarchization that enables a hegemonic process to subjugate weaker citizens. Critical Race Theory (CRT) "holds that race and races are products of social thoughts and relations. Not objective, inherent or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2016). Although the phrase "race" is not concurrent in Indian discourse on religious discrimination¹, yet we can deconstruct the inter-community relations through CRT. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the social hierarchies once again, and it became more pronounced in the news aired by print and electronic media on one hand and the narrative generated by politicized groups on the other hand. The caste system (Varna), which was once encoded in the ancient Indian social system based on the vocation of the individual, has gradually become entrenched in the social life of present times. Although the Constitution of India safeguards an individual against all forms of discrimination theoretically, in everyday practice the discriminatory approaches betray its presence in the collective memory. Under such circumstances, the constitutional framework cannot help in changing the belief system that exists in one's mind. It will be interesting to see how that collective memory is revisited again and again through the essentialisation process in conjunction with the role played by the media houses in aggravating the same. India is a country where multiple races have mingled and multiple languages and religions have flourished. Therefore to have a majoritarian view in a democratic country is not only unsettling for the religious minorities but may also have long-term social ramifications.

The recent polarization in India has been supplemented by an assertive religiosity of Muslims, who comprise almost 14% of the population. Here religion became a defining marker of Muslims, who as a community is marked by internal and at times conflicting

differences. The negligence of a small group of Muslims, who came together for a religious congregation at New Delhi's Markaz during the last week of February 2020 (Yamunan, 2020; Biswas and Sultana, 2020), was misconstrued into a conspiracy theory. They have been accused of 'Corona-jihad', and as such were reprimanded for spreading the highly contagious disease among the Indians. The ignorance and religious conservatism of *Tablighi Jamaats*, who is also staunchly criticized by other Muslims, was conflated with conspiracy. As a result, the entire community was accused of plotting against the nation. As media continued stressing that the *Tablighis* comprised 30% of the cases at that level, the entire focus was shifted on criminalizing potentially sick persons. Therefore this paper argues that a nexus of a section of media and some political groups communalized the spread of COVID-19. As a result, crucial aspects of the crisis like medical management, economic relief, and migrant labourers' need were not given enough emphasis. The paper also looks at how media emphasized so much on the religious identity of infected persons that it created an atmosphere of stigma and fear and discouraged many people from disclosing their travel history to Markaz thereby aggravating the contagion further. This diversion, miscommunication, and mistrust amongst stakeholders have worsened the COVID-19 situation. Whereas the need of the hour was to show solidarity amongst nations and communities, there was instead a distrust, politicization, and vilification of communities at a micro and macro level. At a micro level, the inter-community relation within the country was strained, and on a macro level, the relationship between nations was affected. This analytical paper can help in understanding how social groups are essentialized during pandemics by the media and competing groups through news items published in print/electronic media. As essentialisation leads to the rise in stigma and fear among communities, a nuanced approach in deciphering the causes can help us in handling the crisis efficiently in the future. For this purpose, the paper engages theoretical concepts on essentialisation propounded by Wagner and Semati, and Critical Race Theory to analyze social relations and conflicts during the COVID-19 pandemic in India. Although substantial works on how caste and religious politics operate in a majoritarian state have been addressed in works like *On Nationalism* by Romila Thapar, A.G. Noorani and Sadanand Menon, *What the Nation Really Needs to Know: The JNU Nationalism Lectures* edited by Rohit Azad, Janaki Nair, Mohinder Singh, and Mallarika Sinha Roy, *Majoritarian State: How Hindu Nationalism is Changing India* edited by Angana P. Chatterjee, Thomas Blom Hansen and Christopher Jaffrelot, *The Doctor and the Saint* by Arundhati Roy, *Hindutva as Political Monotheism* by Anustup Basu to name a few, yet how the society and media respond to religious politics during pandemics in Indian society has not been addressed systematically. It would help researchers in understanding the function and responsible role of media during pandemics in India. When freedom of the press is extolled in every civilized society, an attempt to use media as an essentializing tool may prove disastrous. This paper takes a look at how media and political groups have used essence during COVID-19 Pandemics. However, the paper is limited to addressing only the news in electronic/Print media. Future researchers may look up how a similar process has taken place in social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter. The paper is divided into five sections: Introduction, Essentialisation of Social Groups, Role of Media in Essentialising Religion, Stigma and Fear during Pandemic, and Conclusion.

Essentialization of social groups

Essentialism is a philosophical premise that entails the theory of 'universals'. Based on Plato's notion of 'ousia', 'essentia' or essence

Identity, Indigeneity and the National Question in India's North East

PARVIN SULTANA

The north-eastern region of India, a construct of administrative convenience, is marked by internal diversity on linguistic, ethnic and cultural lines. Home to a myriad small "autochthonous" communities, the region has witnessed sharp conflicts along these very social cleavages. Even before India embarked on its journey to freedom, this region voiced unique concerns; demands for secession, autonomy, special status marked the region's history. The demand for a separate Naga nation goes back to the time when representatives from the communities submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission. Similar demands continue to reverberate across the region.

Of the many issues that have dominated both the academic and sociopolitical discourses around the region, immigration and rights of the indigenous population remain crucial to this day. Scholarship on the region has engaged with these issues from different perspectives. How is a "resource frontier" and a "settler frontier" managed? Resource frontiers do not exist in a vacuum. How the clashes between the new entrants and the existing people can be contained are issues that scholars have addressed through their works.

One of the latest works in this vein is Sanjib Baruah's *In the Name of the Nation: India and Its Northeast*. The author's earlier two books, *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality* (1999) and *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India* (2005), have raised similar concerns. His latest book builds upon this earlier scholarship, broadening the metrics of engagement and can be safely considered the third in the series. The author has always maintained that the North East is a construct which emerged out of necessity—first for the colonial power and then for the postcolonial Indian government. This

BOOK REVIEWS

In the Name of the Nation: India and Its Northeast by Sanjib Baruah, New Delhi: Navayana Publishing (by arrangement with Stanford Univ Press), 2021, pp xiii + 278, ₹599.

was no result of a long-drawn struggle based on shared history. In fact, struggles have pulled the region in different directions. The resource-rich region, however, found itself deeply embedded in the colonial power's economic plans.

Baruah's book situates the region in the larger context of issues of contested citizenship and nationhood. The entire region has faced the impact of migration, which started as a colonial project to use wastelands for resource generation and later accentuated by two partitions—first the India–Pakistan partition in 1947 and second with the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. However, Assam has never been administratively isolated through any special provision and had to bear the brunt of an added pressure of migrating refugees. This started in colonial times and continued in the post-independence period as well. Another reason for migrants entering Assam was that other hilly areas were partially excluded and out of bounds. Livelihood options were also better in Assam.

A region which witnessed multiple waves of migration faced the test of citizenship based on documentary proof of indigeneity, which is difficult to provide. But Assam's politics has been overdetermined by the question of unmitigated migration, which led to the locals fearing minoritisation. The state witnessed a six-year-long sociopolitical agitation, the birth of an insurgent group, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), and violent conflicts leading to loss of lives and livelihoods. As a measure of closure, the state decided to upgrade the 1951

register of citizens and the deciding factor was a cut-off date. The National Register of Citizens (NRC) was to be updated with the names of people who entered the state before 24 March 1971. However, the final list of the NRC left 1.9 million people in a state of limbo with their citizenship under question. Baruah's book becomes more relevant to understand the factors that led to this culmination.

The book, divided into six chapters along with an introductory chapter and a conclusion, deals with Assam's problems but also situates it in the larger regional politics, which raises some fundamental questions about the central government's "North East" policy. The introductory chapter introduces the reader to the draconian Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) and an atmosphere of impunity that has been put into place in the region. The region has witnessed the formation of hybrid political regimes bearing witness to a nexus between democratically elected governments and allegedly underground outfits. The successive union governments have not acknowledged that the region faces armed conflict and tended to have reduced insurgency to a mere law-and-order situation instead of being a political one. The introduction also touches upon how the armed personnel recruited from other parts of the country think and imagine the region to be. Baruah quotes a Border Security Force personnel regarding the region as *pardes* (a foreign land), showing a psychological distance between the region and other parts of the country (p 15).

Colonial Imagination of the Region

Chapter 1 places the north-eastern region in a critical moment of the 20th century. The region was imagined by the colonial government as being neatly divided into hills and plains. Retired Indian Civil Services officer Robert Reid believed that the excluded and partially excluded areas were very different from the plains and should be maintained as separate entities (p 27). He even went ahead to say that the British should have some stake in these areas after India gains independence. This view somewhat rigidified the differences

Assam Elections 2021

Understanding BJP's Return to Power

PARVIN SULTANA

Hyper-populism riding on welfare schemes along with a polarised campaign on religious lines paved the way for the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance's return to power in Assam. As the new government resumes office, it remains to be seen if it will continue its emphasis on polarising issues such as reverification of National Register of Citizens and ban or focus on larger issues like the COVID-19 pandemic, flood and erosion that continue to hamper the state's development.

The three-phase elections to the Assam legislative assembly returned the incumbent National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to power. The NDA comprising of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and a new partner—the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) formed by the ex-president of the All-Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) Pramod Bodo—won 75 seats and comfortably passed the majority number of 64 seats in the house consisting of 126 seats. The UPPL, which won six seats in the assembly elections, had succeeded in winning 12 out of 40 seats in the Bodo-land Territorial Council (BTC) elections held in December 2020 (*Sentinel Digital Desk* 2021).

In this election, the BJP faced challenges from two alliances. The first alliance—the *Mahajot* or Grand Alliance—was led by the Congress, along with the All-India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI(ML)) and the newly formed regional front Anchalik Gana Morcha. The Bodo-land People's Front (BPF) joined this alliance only a month before the elections. The second alliance that entered the election fray consisted of two regional parties, the Asom Jatiya Parishad (AJP) formed by ex-All Assam Students' Union (AASU) leader Lurinjoyti Gogoi and the Rajgor Dal formed by jailed leader of the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS), Akhil Gogoi. Both these regional parties were formed against the backdrop of an anti-CAA (Citizenship [Amendment] Act) agitation that rocked the state in 2019–20. The regional parties claimed to provide a third front to the voters of Assam. The *Mahajot* could manage 50 seats while the newly formed parties' performance was dismal. Only Rajgor Dal President Akhil Gogoi could win from the Sivsagar constituency.

COMMENTARY

This election, like past elections in Assam, was fought on issues that have been constant in Assam politics—the identity question and citizenship concerns. Along with these, some other factors were at play, which are discussed in the article.

The Number Game

The 2021 assembly elections witnessed AIUDF allying with the Congress for the first time. It should be noted that AIUDF's very emergence was in opposition to the Congress. Against the backdrop of the scrapping of Illegal Migration (Determination by Tribunal) (IMDT) Act in 2005, the party under the leadership of perfume baron Badruddin Ajmal was formed to provide an alternative to the Muslims of Assam, who comprise almost 34% of the population (Nath 2019). Largely perceived of as a party enjoying the support of the Muslims of East Bengal origin or Miya Muslims, the party succeeded in wrenching a sizeable fraction of the Muslim electorate from the Congress in the past elections.

The Ajmal-led AIUDF emerged as the main opposition party in 2011. But, in 2016, the party's strength reduced from 18 to 13, as the Congress ended at a dismal 26 after three successive terms in government. Death and defection brought the Congress tally down to 20 (*Hindu* 2021). However, in 2021, the two parties decided to stitch an alliance with an aim to ensure that the anti-BJP and anti-CAA vote does not split.

In 2016, the BJP won 60 seats while ally AGP won 14 and BPF won 12. Together their vote share was a little more than 40%. On the other hand, the Congress won 26 seats with a vote share of 30% and AIUDF won 13 seats with a vote share of 13%. In as many as 19 constituencies, the BJP could win because of the division of votes between AIUDF and Congress. A quick look at some of the constituencies shows that the combined votes of AIUDF and Congress surpassed the BJP's tally. In Batadrava, BJP's Angoorlata Deka won with 46,343 votes while the combined votes of Congress and AIUDF were 73,480. Similarly, the combined votes of AIUDF and Congress in Barkhetry were 70,860, in Bilasipara East 97,323 and in

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Women Education: Islamic Dogma

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Abstract:

Islam is popularly known as a religion. It is not only a religion but also a complete philosophy of life that is why it is called '*Deen*' (Qur'an, 3:19). Islam does not only talk about worshipping one God and offering prayers but it tells each and every thing related to life. The status of women in society is neither a new issue nor is it a fully settled one. For many people oppressed, inferior, and unequal, weak etc. are the words that first words that come to mind when thinking about women in Islam. These stereotypes confuse Islam with cultural practices and fail to recognize that Islam has empowered women with the most progressive rights since the 7th century. In Islam, women are not inferior or unequal to men. Islam places great stress on seeking knowledge and education. Generally speaking, one can't find the proper right path in this world without education; this is true in all times and places. In fact, Islam called upon seeking out knowledge on all the levels. The first word of the Qur'an, revealed by God to Prophet Muhammad was *Iqra* meaning 'read' (Qur'an, 96:1) which highlights the importance of science and learning. The second revelation talked about God who teaches the people by the 'pen' (Qur'an, 96:4). Qur'an encourages the pursuit of knowledge by all Muslims regardless of their sex. Prophet Muhammad said: whoever follows a path seeking knowledge, God will make his path to paradise easy. In either case no gender is advocated, the order is for everyone. Islam does not put any limit on the kind or field of education a woman may choose. This paper is intended to provide a brief and authentic exposition of what Islam stands for in this regard.

Key words: Islam, Education, Men, Women, Qur'an

Introduction:

What is Islam? Islam is an Arabic word comes from the word '*Salm*' which means peace. The literally meaning of Islam is 'surrender of one's own will to God's will. In short, Islam means peace acquired by submitting one's will to God. Islam is popularly known as a religion. It is not only a religion but also a complete way of life that is why it is called '*Deen*' (Qur'an, 3:19). Islam does not only talk about worshipping one God and offering prayers but it tells each and every thing related to life.

It is misconception that Islam is a new religion that was formulated 1400 years ago in Arab and Prophet Muhammad was the founder of Islam. However, we may clarify that Islam is not the name of some

unique religion presented for the first time by Prophet Muhammad who should, on that account be called the founder of Islam. The Qur'an states that Islam--- the complete submission of man before his one and only Creator---is the one and only faith and way of life consistently revealed by God to humankind from the very beginning. Noah, Solomon, David, Abraham, Moses, Isaac and Jesus who appeared at different times and places, all propagated the same faith and conveyed the same message of God. And Prophet Muhammad was the last messenger of God and God revived through him the same genuine faith which had been conveyed by all His Prophets. Thus, the religion of all prophets was 'total submission of God's will' and one word for that in the Arabic is called Islam.

As an egalitarian belief system, it introduced the concepts of universal brotherhood and non-discrimination among Muslims on the ground of sex or race. Islam gave the fundamental rights and championed all movements to improve the status of women at a time when societies were overtly traditional and socially underdeveloped.

Area of Research:

The area of this paper is to highlight the status and specially women education in Islam on which the common followers of Islam are still ignorant or unenlightened.

Objective:

The paper would focus on following objectives:

- To discuss the status of women in Islam
- To highlight the importance of Education in Islam and
- To reflect the women right to education in Islam

Methodology:

The paper is based on primary and secondary sources and the methodology is based on descriptive and analytical mode, so that the subject matter of the paper could be easily understandable for common readers.

Discussion:

In order to get achieve a better insight of the status of women in Islam, it is worthwhile to preview how women were treated in previous civilizations and religions that precede Islam:

India:

During the era of the Aryan civilization (2500 BC), women were accorded almost the same status as men. Women were educated, had a say in their marriage decisions and own their own properties. Even prostitutes were admired for their expertise in the art of music and dance and widows were allowed to remarry. This trend took a nose-diving turn with the start of the medieval era (1500 BC) and unfortunately resulted in practices like Sati (dying with the husband at the funeral pyre), *Jauhar* (wives immolating themselves when they realized that their husbands were going to die in enemy hands) and child marriages.

Describing the status of the woman in India, Encyclopedia Britannica (11th ed. 1911, Vol. 28, p. 782) states: “In India, subjection was a cardinal principle. Day and night must women be held by their protectors in a state of dependence says Manu. The rule of inheritance was agnatic, that is descent traced through males to the exclusion of females”.

Rome:

Rome was a typically male dominated society; so much so that in the Roman Republic a man could legally kill his wife or daughter if they questioned his authority. Women were also kept out of positions of power. They were not allowed to be senators, governors, lawyers, judges or any of the other official positions involved in running the Roman Empire. Women were also not allowed to vote in elections.

Ellen, E. A. was described about a Roman wife in his famous book ‘History of Civilization’ (Vol. III, p. 550) as “a babe, a minor, a ward, a person incapable of doing or acting anything according to her own individual taste, a person continually under the tutelage and guardianship of her husband”.

Athens:

In the 5th century women in ancient Athenian societies were given no legal rights and were allowed to leave the house only for short distances with a chaperone. It was a common belief that women were emotional creatures who were dangerous to themselves and needed to be taken care of by men. Although women might own some personal items and have charge of a slave or two, they could not own property or enter into contracts. In Athens, women were not better off than either the Indian. “Athenian women were always minors; subject to some male- to their father, to their brother, or to some of their male kin (Ibid., p. 444). Her consent in marriage was not generally thought to be necessary and “she was obliged to submit to the wishes of her parents, and receive from them her husband and her lord, even though he were stranger to her” (Ibid., p. 443).

The status of women in society is neither a new issue and still nor is it a fully settled one. But in today’s day and age, there is a general perception that women rights reached its momentum with the start of the Women Liberation Movement of the 20th century, specifically between the 1970s-1980s. However, from the Islamic point of view, women’s liberation was not started by some radical political groups of the West, but was revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad in as long ago as the 7th century. The Qur'an and the Traditions (Hadis and Sunnah) of the Prophet guarantee every Muslim woman certain right and duty.

Not only family or a society but the whole of mankind is treated by Islam on an ethical basis. Differentiation in gender is neither a credit nor a drawback for the genders. Therefore, when we talk about status of woman in Islam it should not lead us to think that Islam has no specific guidelines, limitations, responsibilities and obligations for men. According to Islam, one what makes one valuable and respectable in the eyes of Creator is neither one’s prosperity, position, intelligence, physical strength nor beauty, but only one’s God-consciousness and awareness.

In the time of the darkness that engulfed the world and at that time when female children were buried alive in Arabia and women were considered transferable property, Islam honored women in society by elevating them and protecting them with unprecedented rights. Islam gave women the right to education, to marry someone of their choice, to retain their identity after marriage, to divorce, to work,

to own and sell property, to seek protection by the law, to vote, and to participate in civic and political engagement. God began to reveal the message of Islam to Prophet Muhammad, in Mecca. Prophet Muhammad called people towards the belief in one God and encouraged them to be just and merciful to one another. In reforming the pagan Arab society, he particularly transformed their mindset regarding the treatment of women. Islam abolished the practice of killing female children and raised the stature of women in society to one of dignity, esteem, and privilege. God devotes an entire chapter of the Qur'an (Qur'an:4), to women that mentioned the high status of women. In addition, God directly addresses women repeatedly throughout the Quran. Islam proclaims that all human beings, men and women, are born in a pure state. The goal of every Muslim is to preserve this purity by shunning evil tendencies and beautifying their inner being with virtuous traits.

Islam further confirms that both men and women are equal in the sight of God. In the Quran, God declares, "...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you..." (49:13) At another place in the Quran, God clearly states that all humans are equal: "To whoever, male or female, does good deeds and has faith, we shall give a good life and reward them according to the best of their actions." (16:97). In the Qur'an God frequently addresses both the man and the woman- "For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women who are patient, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast, for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in God's praise - For them all has God prepared forgiveness and great reward." (Quran, 33:35). The Qur'an also declares, "Women shall have the same rights over men as men have over them". In Islam, women are the counterparts of men. Every Islamic injunction addressed to man is also addressed to woman. The Islamic law is gender neutral. God says: 'and their Lord hath heard them (and He saith): Lo! I suffer not the work of any worker, male or female, to be lost....')Qur'an, 3:195). Likewise, numerous verses in various chapters of the Qur'an speak of the higher status of women. As per instances: chapter-2. The Cow (Bakra): verses 49, 221, 222, 228, 231, 232, 235, 236, 241, 282, Chapter-3. The Family of Imran (Al-Imran): verses 14, 41, 61, Chapter-5. The Food (Maida): verses 5, 6, Chapter-7. The Elevated Places (Araf): verses 127, 141, Chapter-9. Repentance (Towba): verses 67, 68, 71, 72, Chapter-12. Yusuf (Name of a Prophet): verses 28, 30, 50, Chapter-14. Ibrahim (Name of Prophet): verse 6, Chapter-24. The Light (Noor): verses 4, 12, 23, 26, 31, 60, and etc.

We can see in these verses of the chapters that the Qur'an clearly establishes equality between men and women although God created them with some unique physiological and psychological attributes. In Islam, these differences are embraced as vital components to a healthy family and community structure with each individual contributing their own distinctive talents to society. Normally, the man, who is stronger, works outside the house and the woman, in accordance with human nature, is primarily concerned with managing the household. Each sex complements the other; basically, there may be differences between man and woman by nature but both are equivalent in status. Both the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions elevated the status of women and gave them human, civil, social, and economic rights never previously given to women. The Muslim woman has an independent personality, equal to man in religious duties, in the right to education, in reward for her deeds as well as in defending her beliefs. She has complete independence and total control over her possessions. Islam gives the woman equal legal capacity with the trade and commerce. This means that she has the ability to enter all kinds

of contractual arrangements and to conduct business on her own without the need for her husband's consent.

The rights, roles, and responsibilities of women are evenly balanced with those of men but are not necessarily the same. As Islam has granted individual identities to men and women, a constant comparison between the two is futile. Each plays a unique role to mutually uphold social morality and societal balance.

Education in Islam:

The term 'education' in Islam is understood and comprehended in totally different manner to what is understood within the western societies. As scholars explored, the general understanding of an educated individual within western societies is someone who possesses critical faculties and is perspective an educated individual might possess as being autonomous with aesthetic sensitivity. From an Islamic perspective an educated individual might possess similar attributes; however, the necessary component that is required is belief and knowledge of how to worship God and how to live life in accordance to the Islamic laws. There is no one word that describes 'education' within the Arabic language; however, scholars generally tend to use three different words---*Tarbiyah*, *Ta'dib* and *T'alim*. *Tarbiyah* comes from the root word *raba* which means-- to grow, to increase, to rear, spiritual nurturing, which implies a state of ethical and spiritual nurturing in developing the individual's potential and guidance of the child to the state of complete maturity. *Ta'dib* is derived from the root word *aduba* which suggests the social aspects of a human being including the process of character development and good social behaviour. *Ta'lim* comes from the root word of *alima* which means to know, to be informed, to perceive, to learn, to discern, this refers to knowledge, the imparting and receiving of it through instruction and teaching.

Islam places great stress on seeking knowledge and education. Generally speaking, one can't find the proper right path in this world; this is true in all times and places. The very first ayah (verses) revealed in the Qur'an Chapter No 96 is:

"Read – in the name of thy Sustainer, who has
created man out of a germ-cell,

Read – for thy Sustainer is the Most Bountiful One
who has taught (man) the use of the pen
taught man he did not know!"

The first word of the Qur'an, revealed by God to prophet Muhammad was 'read' (iqra) which highlights the importance of science and learning. The second revelation talked about God who teaches the people by the 'pen'. Qur'an encourages the pursuit of knowledge by all Muslims.

Hazarat Muhammad was an ardent advocate of the pursuit of knowledge and education. He always encouraged the Muslims to acquire knowledge. To encourage education he declared, "The ink of a learned man is purer than the blood of a martyr". After his migration to Madinah, educational institutions were established there under his initiative. Thereafter literacy and education began to

spread rapidly among the Madinities. Madinah became the centre of religion and education. The prophet Muhammad said: seeking knowledge is a compulsory on every Muslim. He also said: whoever follows a path seeking knowledge, God will make his path to paradise easy. In Islam, education process derives its pillars from Holy Quran and Prophetic Traditions, and sayings of Companions, Followers and the opinions of pedagogy scholars. From this balanced blend, the Islamic education derived its objectives, elements, means and methods, in the context of integrated system organized by Islamic teachings. Education process in Islam is a process of building and directing individuals to reach its maturity. For this aim, messages were revealed and messengers were sent to build individuals spiritually, mentally and physically, in the light of balanced system that enables them to perform his duties. Muhammad commanded that: it is the duty of every Muslims (man and woman) to pursue knowledge throughout life, even if it should lead the seeker to China.

Woman education in Islam:

Women and girls have been victims of ruthless power struggles for centuries in all societies and cultures around the world. This hegemony over women has been exercised in different forms. Sadly, but truly, many societies including some Muslim societies continue to exercise this patriarchy in different forms such as the denial to education, unequal salaries compared to men in workplaces and forced marriages among many others. Prophet Muhammad came at a time when the Arab society, like so many patriarchal societies at that time, was rife with abhorrent practices against girls. He preached Islam, liberating women and girls in every walk of life, education being a prime aspect.

The verses first revealed in the Qur'an (96:1-5) encourage the pursuit of knowledge by all Muslims regardless of their sex. In a Qur'anic society, there can never be a restriction of this knowledge to one sex. It is the duty of every Muslims (man and woman) to pursue knowledge throughout life, even if it should lead the seeker to China. The Prophet even commanded that the slave girls be educated. Lectures of the Prophet were attended by audiences of both men and women; and by the time of the Prophet's death, there were many women scholars.

Conclusion:

In the conclusion it can be said that despite the low status of woman in Muslim society, many scholars argue that Islamic law considerably improved the position of women. The distinction between the sexes is based on natural law and is justified in the Qur'an by the fact that the physical, biological and psychological make-up of men and women is different. Hence, God's rules apply to both genders, but in diverse ways. For example, God commanded women to cover certain parts of their body, including their hair, to preserve their modesty. Men are also required to cover parts of their body out of modesty, but not in the same way as women. Therefore, God commanded both men and women to be modest; yet, the manner in which they observe may be different.

Knowledge is very important for human activity. In fact, Islam called upon seeking out knowledge on all the levels. Education is an essential element of the empowerment of women. A good quality education, designed on the basis of women's immediate and strategic needs, builds women's capacities and prepares them to seize opportunities in the public and private domains. The empowerment of women is therefore linked to the development of the nations and the societies. It plays a vital role in the prosperity and development of the nations. Striving to empower women to make them contributing

members of the society, women should have equal opportunities to be educated, to participate in governance, to achieve economic self-sufficiency and to be protected from violence and discrimination. Islam considers women as an integral part of the society. Without education and empowerment of women, a nation cannot develop and progress in a real way. The importance of education is clear. It can be safely said that a human being is not in the proper sense till he is educated. When the Qur'an was revealed, the first word of its first verse was *Iqra* meaning read. Education is thus the starting point of every human activity.

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EARLY TRADE CONTACTS OF RUSSIA AND PORTUGAL WITH PENINSULAR INDIA: 1469-1499 C.E.

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Abstract

This paper may be a path-finding one in the field of comparative history incorporating Russia, Portugal and India in general, and the inland and maritime trade by the Russians and the Portuguese in Peninsular India in particular, during the times of Afanasy Nikitin and Vasco da Gama. From the point of trade, Gama's first voyage is more important, since it opened the spice route from Europe to Asia (India: Kerala) and expanded global multiculturalism. As such, this paper has concentrated mainly on his first voyage, although occasional references to the second and the third voyages will be Covered on slightly.

This paper firstly, attempts to have a comparative outlook on the maritime and inland trade undertaken