

# ASSAM'S CRISIS MYTH AND REALITY

**KANAK SEN DEKA**

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In this inimitable book, the author has analysed, in his own original style and with an amazing grasp of details, the various ills—economic, political, social, psychological and cultural—with which the Assamese society, particularly its youth, is afflicted. Specially for readers outside Assam, it is an eye-opener.

With the precision of an expert surgeon he anatomizes the ills of Assamese society and admonishes its youth who, instead of putting the blame on others for their backwardness, should do some soul-searching and find the true cause of their present plight. People from outside have come to enrich Assam through productive activities like trade and business while local inhabitants remain indifferent and shun hard work.

Is there really colonial exploitation in Assam? The Agitation during 1979-85 did much harm by creating division among the populace and thereby alienating many non-Assamese.

"Assimilation was the rule in the reign of Ahom kings but we are moving in the opposite direction," says the author and then advises the youth of Assam to try to exploit their own intellect and potentialities besides trying to exploit the natural resources which are in plenty in the State. Both in practice and precept, Assam has always shown the way to national integration in India.

A highly interesting and informative volume which throws a flood of light on present day Assam, it would be the cherished possession.

Rs. 150

Kanak Sen Deka (b. 1933) is the editor of the **Agradoot**, a pioneer of modern journalism in India. His views, objective and rational, have played pivotal role in shaping up the trends of public opinion in the society. An outstanding success was his recent book entitled "Youth in Turmoil: Assam" which passed through nine impressions within 15 months of its first publication. The said book has been translated into several languages, including Bengali, Hindi and English.

For him journalism is much more than a mere profession. It is a mission dedicated to the well-being of the society.

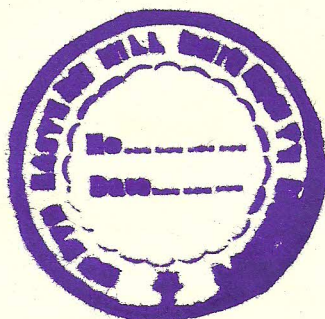
Shri Deka is also a prolific writer in the field of modern literature. Three novels, a collection of short stories, plays and three works on problems confronting the society bear a clear testimony to this.

ISBN 81-7099-473-X

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Myth & Reality



Kanak Sen Deka

**MITTAL PUBLICATIONS**

NEW DELHI-110059 (INDIA)

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First Edition 1993

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ISBN 81-7099-473-X

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Published by K. M. Rai Mittal for Mittal Publications,  
A-110, Mohan Garden, New Delhi-110059

Composed by S. K. Graphics, Delhi-110035

Printed in India at Navprabhat Printing Press, Delhi.

**To  
Those Indians  
Who are silently working for  
India's Unity.**

## Acknowledgements

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**T**he author acknowledges his indebtedness to Shri Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati, a veteran freedom fighter, who was also President, of INTUC and Minister of State, Govt. of India for writing the 'Introduction' of this volume. Also to D. Goswami and Dr. K.C. Sarma for their help and co-operation.

## Preface

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**T**oday, the world is facing a new crisis. Recent spurt in secessionism has almost destroyed the existing social order in many countries. The erstwhile Soviet Union and Yugoslavia are the best examples of it. In many places including Assam, all over the world, the public life has been threatened by the terrorist violence. Contrary to this, the people of Europe have shown a ray of hope through their on-going unity move. The 12 countries of Europe are striving to unite under one flag, which is a significant development to usher in global peace.

This collection of 20 articles is the outcome of a painstaking search in order to prove that these onsets on island of peace in our trouble-torn times. The attempt will be fruitful if it inspires some other researchers to conduct indepth study and analysis of our society in a broader perspective.

**K. S. DEKA**

## Introduction

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**I**f we look at the history of the different stages of human evolution, we will be convinced that to fulfil the ever increasing needs and desires of men the original thoughts and researches are of the utmost necessity and the most important of all endeavours. In some remote period of time when the human being, in a state of the nomadic life had been roaming about the forests and woods in quest of food, an expectant women, sheltering herself in a cave, had noticed the growth of a seedling from the seed of a fruit thrown away after consumption, got the enlightenment of cultivation. Gradually, after experiments and researches, the science of agriculture, was formulated, when the nomads acquired the knowledge of agriculture they were compelled to stay at a particular place making a house for themselves. For the safety and preservation of the agricultural products the youth were to be organized. The chief of the youth later came to be known as the king. It appeared thus that at the discovery of the science of agriculture, the agricultural economy was formulated and for that, the politics of the royal power began. It can therefore be understood that firstly the knowledge and science, secondly the economics and at the third stage only the process of political activities came into being. Till the 16th century the agrarian civilization held a permanent position for

some thousand years in the world. In India, China, Egypt, Mesopotemia and such other countries, the period of agrarian civilization was an era of great prosperity.

But suddenly when a few sailors from the West sailing their boats with the help of machines crossed the Atlantic ocean and reached the shores of some Eastern countries, which had so long remained unapproachable, then there began the 'Modern age'. Then after some time by the 17/18th centuries, when no modern facilities were at all available, in fact in the midst of great disadvantages and even in the situation of losing their lives, some particular persons in the West did such work of speculation in the sphere of science that, as a result, the discovery of a number of remarkable things became possible. Such discoveries made it possible to manufacture machineries which could bring about a revolutionary change in the field of production. It is however strange that such research works and discoveries did not take place in the eastern countries which were then known as the advanced countries. Such discoveries took place, one after another, in the comparatively backward western countries such as England where the former methods of agricultural production underwent a radical change. On that day the sun rose in the west and not in the east. Why it happened so, it is difficult to understand. It may be so the 'Renaissance' in Europe which took place since the 'Divine Comedy' of Dante in the 12th century till 'Hamlet' of Shakespeare in the 16th century had the general impact on the awakening of the intellect which revealed through the particular persons in a centralized way. Though apparently accidental, the new discoveries of science and technology were caused

in the west by the efforts of intellectual awakening of some centuries. There is a characteristic distinction between the agrarian civilization and the later civilization of the machine. In the era of the agrarian civilization there was the similar method of production in all the eastern and western countries of the world. There was a marked improvement in different stages of philosophy, literature, music, arts, sculpture and architecture during the agrarian civilization of several thousand years. But the character was one. Had Gautama the Buddha appeared in some place in India in the 16th century he would not have seen much difference in the movement. In the same way, had Jesus Christ come to England in the age of Queen Elizabeth (I) he would not have felt like coming to a strange land. But if they visit a place during the civilization of the machine, they will find immense difference in the matters of the conveyances and carriages etc.

As once the discovery of the cultivation made the nomads settle in villages and towns so also the discoveries of the machine and the electricity have provided the increased population of the world with the means of production of ample food-stuff and other necessary materials. These have brought about the radical changes to the lives of men. However, it is an altogether different question whether these could give men real happiness and peace. But there is no doubt that the monster machine could produce amplitude in every sphere. It is also a condition in the happiness and peace in the life of men, although we try in vain to diminish its value with our emotional and theoretical arguments.

It is unfortunate that when such an era with its immense probabilities knocked at our door, the eastern

lands like India did not turn their ears to it.

In India and in a number of eastern countries there was created such a situation by the slackness of the last phase of the middle period, the infights, autocracies, the life of luxury and lethargy of the high ups and the apathy of the hapless and helpless lower strata of the people that none could heed the dawn of immense affluence and resources heralded by the era of the machine. In such a situation, India and many eastern countries were fettered by the Western imperialism. After the World War II, India along with other Asiatic and African countries got released from the shackles of the western powers. Politically these countries achieved sovereign power, but failed to improve economically according to the demands of this age. And as such, there have been explosions of various dissatisfaction chiefly on the reasons of economic backwardness. We forget that economic progress is determined by the economic laws following the course of history. On the other hand, the determination of the economic progress is determined by the economic laws following the course of history. On the other hand, the determination of the economic laws also depends on the proper application of science and technology in conformity with the ages. We think that it is possible to build up economy with politics. We comprehend that for the fulfilment of all demands the only way is the political upheavals. In this way we have entered the maze, like Abhimanyu, but found no exit.

Elvin Tofflar has written in his book 'Future Shock', "If agriculture is the first stage of development, and industrialisation is the second, we can now see that still another stage—third has suddenly been reached. And now opening before us super industrialisation." Notic-

ing it the British Government put down in a note in 1990. "In the increasingly competitive world of the 1990's there will be no prizes for those whose industrial relation, prices, productivity, skills, standards or commitment are second best".

This statement gives a hint at how much competitions we have to face if we want to take part in the international market in a befitting manner for the development of India. Looking at the needs of the present day what an enormous economic crisis may be created if we fail to achieve success in the international market as envisaged by the present economic distress which warns us once again.

The industrial activities are still very limited in India even today. It is why when the percentage of people dependent on agriculture in the development countries has come down to 6/15, in our country the same has risen to 70 irrespective of the fact whether the people are land-holders or not. Even in the agrarian civilization of the medieval age the percentage of agricultural people was not above 60 in India. In a good number of villages in Assam such as Soalkuchi, Sarthebari, Kamargaon, Kumargaon etc. the industrial activities were in vogue during that period.

But in this modern age of the machine the old industries have been bereft of profit and on the other hand, the new improved mechanized industries have also not developed according to the need.

The East India Company came to India with a purpose of purchasing the raw materials for the textile and other industries and to sell them in other European markets. But what an irony that after a few years when

the textiles machines were evolved in England, clothes worth crores of rupees were exported to India from that land. Although we have now become self-reliant on clothes and agricultural products such as rice, flour etc., there are innumerable industries where our position remains very weak. It is strange that at a time when industrialization has taken rapid strides then, as Dr. Ashok Mitra, the renowned Economist has enumerated, there have been 2 lakh ailing industrial establishments in India. Excepting tea and oil industries, the industrial activities in Assam are very few. Most of the industrial institutions which were newly started have now reached a state of closure or near-closure. There must be varied reasons for such a state. But at the top of these, the main reason is that we do not think of the promptness, skill and above all the reformation of work necessary for the success in the competition in the industrial fields today. We announce the strikes with the sole object of deriving certain political gains out of them. We do not think at all of the economic losses including from such strikes which finally make the common people the worst sufferers, and thwart the development of industries. In the same way, the government on their part spends a lot on different occasions whether for the benefit of the ruling party itself or for the purpose of gaining certain temporary political ends. It appears as if the budget problems could be solved by printing more paper-notes. The ABC of science of economics says that the real money is not produced in the mint. It is created by the agricultural goods at the cost of the labour of the cultivators and the hard labour of the workers imbued by the special contribution of knowledge of the experts plus the capital of the savings of some people which is initially invested in the well directed industrial establishment. Without

paying any heed to it the attempt at fulfilling the deficits of the budget with the printed notes in the mint leads to mere inflation and the rise of costs. This is what is happening in our country today. To close the doors to such destruction, a constructive revolution has become most necessary in India today. The fortune of a country nowadays depends on new improved machineries or the discovery of new methods of production. On necessity we may import the needed machines and tools and the scientific implements from outside, but at the same time, we can also think of improving our indigenous implements so that these can be used at length in our present condition. But about the improvement of the common plough which is the main equipment of our 70 percent cultivators in their agricultural production we think the least in this age of improved tools of productions. We can demand only for the supply of a tractor in its place. But we feel least about the necessity of time and the probability of success in the fulfilment of this demand on the practical ground. The root cause of our failure today lies hidden in this. When the constructive revolution awakes our mind we may find an open road to our development. The Government can and should help us in such endeavours. But a people full of vivacity cannot rely on the Government any time for amelioration of its lot. In fact, the mentality that seeks to rely on the Government in every respect has stood in the way of the development of the country.

It should primarily be understood that the changes that have taken place in the international political sphere recently have been made inevitably by the latest developments in science and technology. The United States of America and the erstwhile Soviet Union the two super powers have so long progressed on parallel

lines but in two opposite directions. Till the discovery of the 'Sputnik' Soviet Union was ahead of the U.S.A. in such matters. But after that, gradually Soviet Union had to face economic crisis. In course of time it will be said decidedly whether it was the communistic economic planning or the failure in administration of the communist political party that was responsible for its instability.

Nevertheless, the the States that succeeded the erstwhile Soviet Union as well as China have been stepping forward in the direction of market-economy of the capitalist countries as an alternative to the former economic schemes of the totalitarian central planning. In the World War I, although strong in forces, Germany had to submit to defeat at the 'Kitchen warfare.' Although not in the same manner, it is doubtless that the present states of former Soviet Union have to ask for aids from the Western countries on account of their weak economic condition apart from food shortage. It is also to be noted that these states have not hesitated to undergo necessary changes under the present circumstances without adhering to their old systems and customs.

It is a good omen for world peace and international harmony that US is proceeding today towards establishment of the status of most favoured nations with the states which formed Soviet Union which was previously its main rival. It is remarkable that among the developed nations today the desire of co-operation in their activities has become strong only because of the compulsion of the most modern economic process. The European nations which fought among themselves for centuries, have now united to work in trade and commerce like

one nation. Even many of the nations of Latin America have planned to work unitedly. Japan and a few other developed Asian nations, although yet to associate with the efforts of unification of Europe and America have not stayed away from the same. Such efforts of the developed nations will be factually beneficial and successful if they expand their schemes for covering the developing nations. The answer to this is the new international economic discipline. But the Developing nations have remained totally separated from it. The reason is that they could not yet rise to the status of the developed nations. That the developing nations, particularly a large country like India, could not ameliorate their position conforming with the present day circumstances is very sad and unfortunate. The people of India, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi succeeded in the battle for freedom of the mother land against the British imperialism, following the principle of non-violence by the method of Stayagraha. But only a few years after Independence we have forgotten the principles and ideals of Mahatmaji. It is unfortunate for the race of men that the great men are thus forgotten.

There is yet another aspect despite great prosperity of the developed nations like United States as a result of the practice of the most modern science and technology. Even there is the reason for dissatisfaction in the midst of plenty. They have yet to remove the cause of maldistribution. The basic principle of economy planned by Mahatma Gandhi has been decentralization. But it is unrealistic to think that needs and desires of today can be fulfilled with the implements and methods of decentralization of the yester years. A new civilization will dawn in the world if the implements of equal standard

for production of centralized industries fit for decentralization of industries, are discovered to replace the specially improved technology, machineries and skills which are now used in centralized industries. It is possible since the last word of the discovery of science, technology and techno-crafts definitely remains to be unuttered. The defects and faults of the present discoveries have yet to be removed to make room for new and improved ones. The problem of maldistribution will automatically be solved when improved mechanisms for decentralized production are evolved. It is because the question of stocking the products of a big mechanized factory at one place and piling the entire proceeds with one person or company will no more be there. Not to speak of the capitalist countries, even in the so called communist countries the question of distribution is not yet fully settled. It is possible to remove the faults of distribution by the Gandhian ideal and the improved mechanism of decentralization.

The Gandhian philosophy of life can work as a complement of decentralized economy. And only then the race of men can be saved from the dangers of suicidal use of weapons and violent acts. While discussing the above, Assam has appeared in my mind. In my view, the disease is the same and there is no other way of recovery.

We should keep in mind that when the international planning had become indispensable today it can be said that anything will be a success without taking our land as a whole. First the international, then national, then state, then district and lastly a region or a village are only the aspects of the same picture. By eliminating one, the picture will not be a complete one. In order to implement the schemes of the United States, it is much important to

amend the Constitution today. There should be proper distribution of power and responsibility at the three levels of Centre, State and district.

I have something special to say as regards Assam. Looking at the constitution of the people of Assam, much emphasis should be laid on the unity of different units. Whatever may be the agitation or revolution in Assam, it should be with the assimilation of all the residents of different stocks, castes, tribes, communities or languages. Not separating the Assamese alone, but taking all the permanent residents of Assam together for creating a feeling of unity is the only way to make the social life of Assam a strong one. Again it should be on the basis of national life of India enriched by the international outlook.

I have not particularly referred here to the articles compiled in this volume by Sri Kanak Sen Deka. As a background to them I have written these few lines. I have no doubt that the irrefutable arguments put forth here with his rational, natural and lucid style of writing will provide food for thought to all the readers for finding the solution of the particular problems of Assam. I believe, the book will specially contribute to the solution of the problems of Assam. For this, I express my gratefulness to Sri Deka.

New Delhi.

—Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati.

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