## PREFACE

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 based multidisciplinary education become the basis for all higher education....... The notion of knowledge of many arts-i.e.what is called 'liberal arts' in modern times- must be brought back to Indian education, as it is exactly the kind of education that will be required for the 21st century’ (P207,208)

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## Resistance to formula

## Asha Sarangi

THE DRAFT NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP), 2019, was submitted to the government on May 31, 2019. This sizeable report of about 480 pages has been in the making since January 2015 when consultations on the NEP first began. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) had earlier constituted a Committee for Evolution of the New Education Policy, under the chairmanship of T.S.R. Subramanian, the former Cabinet Secretary, which submitted its report in May 2016. Based on this report, the Ministry prepared "Some inputs for the Draft National Education Policy, 2016". Subsequently, in June 2017, a committee was formed under the chairmanship of K. Kasturirangan, the eminent scientist and former Chairperson, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), to examine all suggestions and submit a draft policy by December 2018. The draft NEP was put in the public domain, seeking comments, suggestions and inputs from various stakeholders, until June 30,2019 . (This has since been extended by a month.) The policy is comprehensive and aims at covering several aspects and stages of school, college and university education. For school education, it has included children of the 3-18 age group instead of the existing 6-14 age group under the Right to Education Act (RTE).

A number of education commissions and committees have been set up since Independence to help formulate and implement various governmental policies and programmes. The first University Education Commission (194849), also known as the Radhakrishnan Commission, under the chairmanship of Dr S. Radhakrishnan, the second President of India, spelt out the objectives and functions of university education in detail. It was followed by the E.G. Kher Committee on Primary Education in 1951 whose recommendations were made part of the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), which was

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also known as the Mudaliyar Commission. Subsequently, the Official Language Commission, 1956, and the Education Commission (1964-66), the latter known as the Kothari Commission, were set up to achieve the ideals of democratic citizenship, economic and social mobility and cultural integration through a comprehensive education policy in India. What emerged from these commissions was the National Education Policy, 1968, which emphasised the domains of science and technology in the education system of the country. Thereafter, the National Policy on Education was presented in 1986 to integrate new domains and spheres in the realm of education; finally, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) outlined the broader framework for school education.

## SCOPE OF NEP 2019

The draft NEP is a vision document of education and its accessibility for the next two decades. It proposes that the education policy must have as its objectives access, equity, quality, affordability and accountability. It sets out that students must develop not merely cognitive skills relating to numeracy and literacy but also soft skills consisting of social and emotional skills with cultural competence, team work, perseverance and leadership, and so on (page 25). In other words, education must impart social and emotional competence, going beyond the recommendations and policy implementations of the earlier two education policies-the National Policy on Education, 1986, and its modification in 1992. The universalisation of school education provided through the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002, under Article 21-A of the Constitution, ensures free and compulsory education as a fundamental right as part of the RTE Act that came into force in April 2010.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is a novel concept in the draft with particular respect to the idea of cognitive growth and the questions relating to '’learning crisis". The questions of curricula design, pedagogical framework, creative activity-based education and innovative teaching tools

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have got significant attention in the draft. The idea of establishing National Tutors Programmes across the country is to enable high quality peer tutoring among students. Similarly, to increase communicative skills among children, the draft policy recommends the expansion of school and public libraries and encouraging the culture of reading. In order to minimise rote learning, it emphasises the transformation of both curriculum and pedagogy by the use of multilingualism and diverse communicative order in classroom teaching.

In its vision for universal access to education for the 3-1 age group) 20.30. the draft draws attention to the need for providing transport and hostel facilities and safety measures, monitoring of attendance and school status, and the role of social workers and counsellors. With regard to the administrative governance of schools, the draft indicates measures such as the organisation of schools into school complexes for institutional resources, and a comprehensive teacher development plan for regulation and accreditation of school education by setting up a State .School Regulatory Authority (SSRA) in every State as part of the extension of the RTE, 2009. Similarly, for higher education, the draft committee has suggested the setting up of a National Research Foundation (NRF) as a resource centre to provide a funding framework for higher education. A move has been proposed to regulate, control, and monitor education at the Central and State levels by setting up the Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (National Education Commission) to be headed by the Prime Minister and the Rajya Shiksha Aayog (State Education Commission) to be headed by the Chief Minister.

The draft policy emphasises language teaching as part of the school curricula. It recognises the power of languages in learning and in the dissemination of knowledge throughout the school years. However, in pursuit of acquiring learning and not necessarily interrogating ciritically or introspecting what and how to learn in schools through textbooks or set curricula, the draft

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gives languages more of an instrumental role to perform. The deeper relationship between language and education has not been worked out substantively.

Language as a medium of instruction and language as a subject oflearning are two distinctive domains. Where a particular language becomes a medium of instruction and not just a subject of acquiring knowledge about that particular language, it acquires more of an instrumental value and becomes a formal tool oflearning. It may not result in gaining substantive knowledge of that language. The committee members of the draft policy seem to be concerned about integrating the multilingual social ethos into school and university pedagogical domains. Therefore, it suggests that children between two and eight years of age have the capacity to learn multiple languages, giving them much-needed cognitive benefits.

The three-language formula (TLF) that the draft lays emphasis on is to be initiated from the foundational stages so that multilingual skills are internalised and retained as well. The draft stresses the fact that early childhood schooling should be in the students' own language, that textbooks should be written in the local languages, and that teachers should be taught the local languages too. In its recommendation to make the home language/mother tongue/local language as the medium of instruction at least until grade 5 or preferably until grade 8 , the draft reiterates the significance of mother tongue education throughout school life. The draft NEP 2019 has identified the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Survey to know the standard of language education in different schools of India.

A large number of Indian languages, which are not yet used in schools as medium of instruction, would need to have teachers, interpreters and translators who can provide the much-needed assistance for schoolchildren during the years of transition from local to regional language. Keeping this in

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mind, the draft also suggests setting up an Indian Translation and Interpretation Mission to introduce a "bilingual approach for those whose language is different from the primary medium of instruction to ensure the smooth transition from the home language to the medium of instruction". While accepting that "multilingualism is a necessity of India" (page 81) and that Indian languages are no less than English, the draft emphasises that "importance and prominence must be returned to Indian languages" and that "language teaching jobs must be created in schools and colleges across the country".

## THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA

The draft NEP 2019 states that all students from preschool and grade 1 onwards will be exposed to three or more languages to be able to recognise and read basic text by grade 3 . This reconfirms the continuity of the TLF which was first introduced in 1968 and has remained a subject of controversy since then. It clearly states that the TLF will be continued as recommended in 1968,1986/1992 and 2005 and implemented in its spirit throughout the country but it must he better implemented in some State, particularly in Hindi-speaking States for purpose of national Integration as schools in Hindi speaking States should also offer and teach Indian languages from other States.

The draft NEP 2019 has expanded the reach and access of the TLF by recommending that "States may enter [into] bilateral agreements to hire teachers in large numbers from each other, in order to satisfy the threelanguage formula in their respective States". There seems to be a call for some sort of linguistic federalism in this regard. For example, the call for nationwide recruitment of teachers to teach local languages, including retired teachers, is an innovative idea. Another important suggestion is that students whose medium of instruction is the local language will start learning science

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bilingually from grade 8 onwards so that by grade 10 they can understand a subject like science both in English and in their local language.

In order to make children multilingual, the draft recommends that every student take a "fun course" on "languages of India" during grades 6-8 and that excerpts from literature of other languages be included in the curriculum, The recommendations about the TLF further suggest that "students, who wish to change one of the three languages they are studying, may do so in grade 6 but there can't be any change in the teaching of three languages-Hindi-speaking States will have Hindi, English and one modern Indian language; non-Hindi speaking States will have Hindi, English and one of the regional languages" .

The draft clearly states that the TLF must be implemented, although the foreign language (French, German, Spanish, Japanese and Chinese) will be an elective at the secondary level. It is also suggested that Sanskrit be offered as an optional subject at all levels; that courses of all classical languages be made available at all levels and classical languages be taught for two years in grades 6-8. The draft, in chapter 22, on the promotion of Indian languages, suggests the setting up of a National Institute for Pali, Persian and Prakrit in order to encourage learning and teaching in these languages. Furthermore, the proposal to set up a National Research Foundation is aimed at ensuring the survival and stability of Indian languages through research about their historical genealogies, their literature and their capabilities to become the languages of education. In order to be able to navigate between different languages, there is a proposal to set up a Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology and one that says "all higher education institutions must recruit high faculty for at least three languages".

## Focus



Over the last 70 years, numerous commissions and committees have addressed the question of language in terms of the teaching of English, Hindi, mother tongues and other languages. For example, the first University Education Commission in 1948 recommended the re-placement of English by Indian languages as the medium of instruction at the university level after five years. It also recommended that one's mother tongue should be adopted as the medium of instruction at primary and secondary levels and that students should know at least three languages the regional language, Hindi and English, the latter two serving as link languages.

The Mudaliyar Commission (Secondary Education Commission, 1952) recommended the study of Hindi and English at the higher primary level too. Subsequently, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in 1957 suggested the TLF, which was adopted in 1961 at the Chief Ministers Conference, leading to the teaching of a regional language. Hindi in non-Hindi speaking areas and any other language in Hindi-speaking areas, and English or any modern European language. In December 2016, the CBSE put forth to the HRD Ministry a proposal concerning the TLF for secondary education, and it seems to have suggested that foreign languages be provided as a fourth or fifth option in the TLF given the fact that 18,000 schools affiliated to the CBSE allow students the option of studying three languages (mother tongue or Hindi, English and any other foreign language) until class 8. However, it is to be noted that languages under the TLF have to be chosen only from those listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

For minorities and minority language communities, the draft suggested the following measures. For the Scheduled Caste and Other Backward Classes (OBC) communities facing discrimination and disadvantages on account of social and linguistic inequalities, it suggested that teachers be recruited from these communities to provide translated learning material for

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the education of children from tribal communities while contextualising curriculum and incorporating tribal knowledge tradition. Furthermore, the draft says, curriculum and pedagogy should be connected to tribal language and culture with measures such as bilingual education to make the transition easy from home language to the language of instruction; modernisation of madrasas and other religious educational institutions; education for children from urban poor families; physical access to schools for children with special needs and their inclusion in school and provision for home-based education.

## SURGE AND SPREAD OF HINDI

Two days after the draft policy was released, on June 2, an outburst of anger and anxiety from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra erupted against the imposition of Hindi as part of the TLF in non-Hindi-speaking States. On June 3, the Union government backtracked and assured people that the TLF would not be implemented in primary schools. This was done to avert the protests and agitations that had spread far and wide in the country. Subsequently, the clause "mandatory Hindi Lessons" was removed from the draft. Although this reassurance from the government quelled the tide of anger and protests, it nevertheless brought forth a number of questions relating to the role of the TLF in a linguistically diverse country such as India. For example, the old claim of Hindi being spoken or used by the largest number of people in the country is based more on assumption than on any serious and consistent census or any other enumerative methods. Languages such as Braj, Bhojpuri, Awadhi and Rajasthani are counted as variants of Hindi, increasing the numerical strength of Hindi in order to justify its claims of being the language spoken by the largest number of people.

What is perhaps needed is a new language census or proper language survey records as part of the decennial census exercise of 2021 to see the numerical status of various languages and dialects in the country. It is necessary

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that the Language Atlas published in 2004 is revised and counted with additions or deletions in the list of languages of the last 15 years. What is interesting is the sixfold increase in just about 10 years in the number of students learning Hindi through various courses offered by the Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha (DBHPS), a Hindi promotion society established by Mahatma Gandhi in 1918 "with the sole aim of propagating Hindi in Southern States". It is also noteworthy that despite several constitutional provisions favouring the promotion and propagation of Hindi in Central government offices and their associated organisations, Hindi is an official language in only about half of the States in the country. The DBHPS conducts eight levels of proficiency examinations, and 80 per cent of them are for school children.

There have been a number of official means and strategies followed since Independence by the Central government to accord official/national recognition to Hindi. With so many measures of state protection and promotion of Hindi by the government, it is obvious that the language has spread far and wide in the country. For example, in compliance with the Official Language Resolution, 1968, the Department of Official Language has prepared an annual programme which sets targets for Central Government office with regard to originating correspondence, telegrams, telex, and so on, in Hindi. A Quarterly Progress Report is called for from these offices regarding achievements vis-a-vis the targets. Eight Regional Implementation Offices have been established at Bengaluru, Kochi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Guwahati, Bhopal, Delhi and Ghaziabad to monitor the implementation of the Official Language Policy of the Union.

A Committee of Parliament on Official Language was constituted in 1976 under Section 4 of the Official Languages Act, 1963, to periodically review the progress in the use of Hindi as the official language of the Union and to submit a report to the President. The committee consists of 20 members of the

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Lok Sabha and 10 of the Rajya Sabha. The Kendriya Hindi Samiti constituted in 1967 and chaired by the Prime Minister is the apex policy making body which lays down guidelines for the propagation and progressive use of Hindi as official language of the Union. Under the directions of the Kendriya Hindi Samiti, Hindi Salahakar Samitis have been constituted in all Ministries/Departments under the chairmanship of the Ministers concerned. These Samitis periodically review the progress in the use of Hindi in their respective Ministries/Departments and offices /undertakings and suggest measures to promote its use.

Besides, the Central Official Language Implementation Committee (headed by the Secretary, Department of Official Language, and consisting of Joint Secretaries (in-charge Official Language) of all the ministries/Departments as exofficio members) reviews the status of use of Hindi for official purposes of the Union, training of its employees in Hindi and implementation of instructions issued from time to time by the Department of Official Language and suggests measures to remove the shortcomings and difficulties in implementing these instructions. Town Official Language Implementation Committees have been constituted in different towns having 10 or more Central government offices to review the progress made in the use of Hindi in their member offices and to exchange experiences. So far, 255 Town Official Language Implementation Committees have been constituted all over the country.

The draft should have taken into account a more detailed view on migrants' languages and the need to include them in the curricula of school education and in the list of dominant regional languages of the country. The anti - Hindi protests are indicative of linguistic identity as a significant form of recognition of people and communities whose language is older and enjoys the status of classical language in the country. The language of citizenship and its democratic enunciation should be the one having pedagogical effects in the realms of education.


The law and administration, too, should be made sense of in the language of the people. The language-education question is a deeply political one with implications for language planning in the multilingual social fabric of the country. Education is in the Concurrent List, any issues relating to it is determined by both the Centre and the State governments concerned. Therefore, the Central government cannot impose any language on any State in the sphere of education particularly, and the idea of the TLF would always be contested by the States concerned. Given the global network of trade, commerce, education, employment and migration, teaching of foreign languages must be made part of the school curriculum throughout the country. There is a need to make learning and teaching of languages integral to the educational and pedagogical ethos across the country.

## Frontline,

19 July 2019.

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## Chennai's thirst

## Ilangovan Rajasekaran

CHENNAI today is facing the predicament of "simply not enough". In fact, this coastal metropolis seven million people have never enjoyed the standard water supply of 150-200 litres per capita per day (lpcd) the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) prescribed in 1998.

Living in a state of perpetual deficiency is not new to Chennai. The city has no perennial water source and when the rains fail it can be traumatic for a large section of the citizenry that is used to piped water supply from the city corporation. For purposes other than drinking, the people survive solely on groundwater. Piped water supply, however, is between 50 and 70 Ipcd even at the best of times.

The rains have failed for two years consecutively, and the city now gets a supply of around 525 million litres per day (mId) against the normal supply of 830 mld . (The prescribed supply should be $1,584 \mathrm{mId}$.) Incidentally, that is the quantum Cape Town in South Africa distributed to its four million people during the "Day Zero" alert not long ago. Even a 13.5 per cent dip in the storage in its water sources made Cape Town declare an emergency.

In Chennai, the grim reality is that storage in the four major freshwater reservoirs that supply water to the city has plummeted to an alltime low of 27 million cubic feet (mcft) (on June 18) against the combined total capacity of $11,257 \mathrm{mcft}$, or about 0.24 per cent. The city, the sixth largest in India and 30th on the list of most populous urban agglomerations in the world (U.N. Mega Cities report. 2016), is fast running dry. A report by the NITI Aayog released last year says that 21 cities, including Chennai, will run out of groundwater by 2020. A staggering 600 million people will face high to extreme water stress, it warns.


Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswarni called the crisis "an exaggerated" one and promptly drew all-round criticism. He announced a contingency amount of Rs. 200 crore to mitigate the problem on a war footing. After rejecting the Kerala government's offer of 2 million litres by rail as "too little for the crisis", he asked his officials to source water from Jolarpet town in Vellore district, some 140 kilo metres from Chennai, by train.

The north-east monsoon, which supplies most of the city's water requirements, failed for two consecutive years. The Director of Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai, P. Balachandran, told Frontline that the rainfall deficit in Chennai in 2018 was steep. The total annual rainfall was 754.1 mm against the normal level of $1,324.2 \mathrm{~mm}$, a deficit of 570.1 mm and a departure percentage of minus 43 . Both the monsoons, south-west and north-east, were in deficit in 2018.

The uncertainty over water from the Cauvery river reaching the Veeranam tank, which supplies 25 per cent of Chennai's water needs, and the poor realisation of Krishna river water from Andhra Pradesh at the Poondi reservoir, another major water source for the city, are not unexpected. Karnataka has stubbornly refused to give Tamil Nadu's June share of 9.19 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft), and Andhra Pradesh cites drought as a reason for its inability to share Krishna water.

## Operational Inefficiency

Experts say that two major factors- groundwater depletion because of water sources drying up and a tardy distribution system by an apathetic statehave escalated the ever-prevalent shortage into a full-blown water crisis. Although there are many reasons-climate change, monsoon failure, population explosion and rampant urbanisation-for ground- water depletion, the primary cause is the failure of the State government to manage and maintain irrigation systems and water bodies. Hydrological experts call it "operational inefficiency".


Ironically, the government has spent crores of rupees over the last decade to supply water and assist agriculture. "It is the lack of vision and the absence of a holistic approach to overhaul the water management system in the State that have led to the crisis," says the water expert Prof. S. Janakarajan (see box). But even rainwater harvesting (RWH), a pet project of former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa introduced in 2003 after a similar spell of water stress, is no longer mandatory. RWH -structures were constructed in 8.28 lakh houses, 2,700 government buildings, and 27,600 commercial complexes, educational buildings and places of worship then. "The government has plans to bring it back in a big way. We are reviving the defunct structures and creating fresh ones wherever water can be harnessed," says an official.

The Chennai Metro Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB), which takes care of the water supply in the city's 34,173 streets in 200 wards, could distribute only 830 mld of water even during "non-crisis" periods, as against the mandated requirement of $1,584 \mathrm{mld}$. The Indian standard water requirement, finalised and adopted by the BIS, says that the lower income group (LIG) and economically weaker sections (EWS) require 135 lpcd, and for a population above 100,000, it is 150 to 200 lpcd. For citizens of Chennai, it still remains a dream.

## LONG DRY SPELL

For the first time in three decades, the city went without a drop of rain for nearly 200 days at a stretch (as on June 23),leading to a shrinking of storage and triggering panic. It, how-ever, rained heavily on June 25/26, breaking the dry spell. Many companies, particularly in the IT sector, have asked their employees to work from home. Educational institutions function for fewer hours than usual. Even commercial establishments and eateries struggle to stay open. Vital establishments such as hospitals are allowed to have normal water supply.


The increasing cost of water has become a huge drain on the purses of those who live in gated communities and high-rises and depend on private suppliers. Street taps remain crowded even at odd hours, with women, men and children struggling to fill a pot of water, which costs Rs. 10 in many areas. A major chunk of the suburban population, including about 13lakh IT employees and their families, depends on private tankers, which supply about 20,000 loads of 12,000 to 24,000 litres of water every day. The water, sourced from irrigation wells in the villages surrounding the city, fetches fancy prices. Around 20 million litres of packaged drinking water is sold in the city daily. The blame for this state of affairs falls squarely on the State government. The political instability in the State has seen priorities shifting and becoming more party-centric than people-specific.
"It is both a political and an administrative failure. The inability of the present political leadership and the inefficiency of the bureaucracy have accentuated the crisis. They, it seems, have made mistakes, believing that the no-rain spell would be a short-term one," said a city-based environmentalist who requested anonymity. He and other volunteers are engaged in desilting tanks in the city.
S.P. Velumani, Municipal Administration and Water Supply Minister, while participating in a review meeting on water supply on June 17, called the cries for water as mere "scare" created by political adversaries. He said that the State government had allotted Rs. 625 crore to augment water sources and for the supply of water through tanker lorries. Chennai Metro Water, he said, would maintain the present supply of 525 mld until November.

He detailed the various water augmentation and irrigation projects that were being taken up in Chennai and the rest of Tamil Nadu at a huge cost, which was reported in detail in the media. Projects to the tune of Rs.15,838

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crore were being implemented across the State in the past three years to upgrade the infrastructure. Works costing Rs.2,638 crore, he said, were being under- taken in Chennai city alone, while projects worth Rs.5,346 crore were being undertaken in the rest of Tamil Nadu. He claimed that 18 major water supply projects had been undertaken at a cost of Rs. 6,496 crore. If he is to be believed, the State should no longer have a water shortage problem. The overhauling of various irrigation structures and water sources at such a great cost should have ensured this. "When you take up projects below the soil and for water, no one would realise the outcome until a crisis of current magnitude strikes. These works have not mitigated the critical depletion of groundwater," said the environmentalist.

The State government has failed to monitor and standardise hundreds of water bodies, many of which once held copious surface water round the year which the city depended on. In fact, Chennai and its two suburban districts of Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur are known as the "cluster of lake districts". Unfortunately, haphazard urbanisation, population explosion and administrative indifference have destroyed most of the lakes.

A recent report in The Hindu quoting L. Elango, vice president of the Indian Association of Hydrologists (Indian Chapter), says that waterbodies in the city and its suburbs have shrunk from 12.6 sq km in 1893 to about 3.2 sqkm in 2017 because of urbanisation. A study done by the Department of Geology, Anna University, says the volume of surface water has also dipped from 1,335 mcft in 1893 to 339 mcft in 2017.

The systematic destruction of these tanks and lakes has a crucial bearing on the groundwater level. Between 80 and 85 per cent of the current requirement of water is being drawn from borewells. Metro Water supplies potable water for an hour or so through pipes every alternate day, which is grossly inadequate. As of now, it employs 900 water tankers of 9,000- and 12,000 litre capacities.

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They criss-cross the city round the clock, doing 9,100 trips a day to cater to a significant chunk of the city's population.

But supply through tankers is not without its problems. "Though we are asked to book water online in advance, we have to wait for at least a fortnight to get a tanker of 9,000 litres while VVIPs and other influential persons are ensured regular supply," says Rathnam, a resident in Kil pauk. Many consumers across the city accuse Metro Water of irregular water supply. "Some key areas, such as Greenways Road where Ministers live, have been prioritised. At the moment, we can distribute 30 to 40 litres a person a day. We should learn to live with that amount of water for another three months, or till the monsoon arrives," says a senior officer.

A rough estimate says that the three districts of Chennai, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram had once commanded a combined total of 6,000- odd reservoirs, tanks, lakes and ponds to keep recharging the groundwater on a sustainable basis. Today, hardly half of them survive. Chennai city alone has lost a hundred such waterbodies and its water carrying channels. Water harnessed from these lakes and tanks was estimated to be 80,000 mcft.

In Tamil Nadu, 95 per cent of the surface water has been utilised. "The State now has 37 lakh borewells," said an Executive Engineer of the Public Works Department (PWD). Chennai's acute groundwater depletion has left a debilitating scar on Its hydrology system. The seawater ingress deep inland escalates the problems. A recent groundwater resource assessment report of the Ground Water Division, State PWD, which maintains and manages major and medium irrigation and hydrological systems, paints a grim picture of the groundwater profile and points out that 175 out of the 385 blocks have been over-exploited, The critical blocks constitute 45.45 per cent. The safe blocks number 145.

Another report of the Ground Water Division says that the ground water level in 22 districts in Tamil Nadu, including Chennai's neighbouring districts (data for Chennai city are not available), have been recording a significant fall.

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The average groundwater level status report for May 2019 says that Tiruvallur has recorded a fall of 0.68 metres below ground level, from 5.79 m in 2018 to 6.47 m in 2019. Kancheepuram recorded a fall of 1.88 m , from 4.01 m in 2018 to 5.89 m in 2019. It has been a steady decline in the water table after May 2011, during which Tiruvallur recorded a rise of 1.68 m and Kancheepuram 0.27 m .

## AUGMENTING GROUNDWATER

Realising the urgent need to augment groundwater sources, the PWD had chalked up a master plan to recharge groundwater and to construct check dams, percolation ponds and recharge tube wells; to build RWH structures for aquifer activation; and to desilt tanks and lakes over a period of time. The estimated cost of the plan, to be rolled out in three phases in 2008-09, 2009~10 and 2010-2011, was Rs. 550 crore. It got the plan sanctioned in 2008 itself.

As for the projects that are said to have been executed so far, the Agricultural Engineering Department has constructed 4,753 check dams, 10,996 percolation ponds and 12,564 farm ponds since 1984 and the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board (TWAD), which is in charge of drinking water supply, has constructed 3,666 check dams since 2001. The Forest Department has chipped in with 25,600 check dams and 2,540 percolation ponds, helping groundwater register a substantial increase in local areas. Such a master plan was essential to augment the water level in critical blocks and prevent the semi-critical blocks becoming critical, says a senior official in the Water Resource Organisation (WRO) of the PWD.

The WRO took up a special scheme to augment the water supply in Chennai in 2011-12. The formation of a new reservoir near Kannankottai and Thiruvaikandigai villages for storage of one tmc ft was done at a cost of ₹ 330 crore. An additional ₹ 130 crore was sanctioned for creating extra water storage capacity in the four tanks of Cholavaram, Porur, Nemam and Aynambakkam.

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The works included desilting, strengthening of bunds, and building of regulators and weirs. A proposal to restore and rejuvenate the waterbodies in Ambattur, Korattur and Madhavaram around Chennai for groundwater replenishment is to be taken up at a cost of Rs.106.49 crore. However, three rivers and a canal in the city-the Cooum, the Adayar, the Kosasthalaiyar and the Buckingham canal-remain cesspools even after spending crores of rupees.

The stakeholders are happy that the government is spending a huge sum on projects relating to water. But they say that the benefits from the projects should have been realised by now. "We have to suffer perpetual water stress, whether it rains or not. Agriculture is suffering. The entire irrigation system is leaking. After the tloods in 2015, the city is reeling under one calamity or the other," says a trader in T. Nagar, one of the worst-hit pockets. "Where will you store the excess rainwater that drains into the sea?" asked Janakarajan.

The State government, however, chooses to maintain a stony silence on these questions and blames monsoon failure whenever a crisis strikes. Metro Water, in its affidavit before the Madras High Court on June 17, which came down heavily on the State government on the water scarcity, maintained that deficit rainfall from 2017 and the consequent depletion in the storage capacity of reservoirs was the reason for the short supply in the city.

## EXISTING WATER SOURCES

The four fresh water reservoirs in the city- Red Hills, Cholavaram, Poondi and Chembarambakkam-have a combined storage of 11,257 mcft. The Red Hills reservoir ( $3,300 \mathrm{mcft}$ ) and Cholavaram ( $1,081 \mathrm{mcft}$ ) had zero storage as on June 16. The Chernbarambakkam reservoir, which has a capacity of $3,645 \mathrm{mcft}$, had a mere one mcft while the Poondi reservoir ( $3,231 \mathrm{mcft}$ ) had 26 mcft .


A PWD officer says that if the four reservoirs were desilted, an additional combined storage of 500 rncft of water could be obtained. An additional supply of 95 mId is ensured from irrigation wells located in the suburban Tamaraipakkam, Minjur and Poondi villages and borewells supply another 35 mld. The Retteri lake near Ambattur augments the supply with 10 mld . Stone quarries yield an additional 30 mId .

## VEERANAM PROJECT

The New Veeranam project supplies 180 mId from the Veeranarn lake, some 235 km away and near the Neyveli Lignite Corporation aquifer. As on June 16, Veeranam had a storge of 569 mcft against a capacity of $1,465 \mathrm{mcft}$. It was Jayalalithaa who commissioned the project as an additional source for the city in 2004. The lake water is treated at the Vadakuthu water treatment plant before getting pumped to the Chennai Porur water distribution station. In fact, water can be pumped to Chennai only when the reservoir retains a minimum water level of 39 ft .

## KRISHNA WATER

Andhra Pradesh has not released the stipulated quantum of Krishna water from the Kandaleru reservoir for this year. The agreement between the two governments guarantees 12 tmc ft of water in two spells every year. Andhra Pradesh should have released 4 tmc ft between January and April out of which only 1.8 tmc ft has been released so far. The rest should be given between July and October. In fact, Tamil Nadu has been receiving less than its share from Andhra Pradesh for a decade or so barring the receipt of 8.2 tmc ft in 2011-12.

## DESALINATION PLANT

The first seawater desalination plant was commissioned in July 2010 at Minjur with a capacity of 100 mld . The second plant of 100 mld was commissioned at Nemmeli in February 2013. The foundation stone for the

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third plant, near the Nemmeli plant, with a capacity of 150 mld was laid recently. A fourth plant will be constructed in Perur with a capacity of 400 mld . The latter two projects will cost the exchequer Rs.5,446 crore since these plants are expensive and energy-intensive.

A drought-like situation prevails elsewhere in the State. The TW AD Board operates 556 comprehensive water supply schemes in eight municipal corporations, 67 municipalities, 347 town panchayats and 48,948 village panchayats other than Chennai, covering 4.23 crore consumers and 2,146 mld of water. This drought situation in the districts, according to C. Vaiyapuri, founder-president of the United Farmers Association, is the result of a combination of free electricity connections and unchecked proliferation of borewells, leading to heavy drawal of groundwater. "Farmers have started raising water-intensive crops in rain-fed lands too," he says.

Chennai has been surviving on a fragile line that separates shortage from crisis. Now, the shortage is real. It is so bad that a few mosques in the city used sand instead of water for "wudu", the cleaning ritual during prayers, during the holy month of Ramzan.

People have realised that they are living in hard times. The State government has been failing them repeatedly. And everyone in Chennai today is praying for rains.

Frontline,
19 July 2019.


## Identity and belonging

## (A Review of the Book 'Without a Country' by Ayse Kulin translated by Kenneth Dakan)

Sandhya Rao

A nine-year-old once told me the books she liked best were the ones that were about people like herself. Al- though set in Turkey, Without a Country is such a book. But first, it must be said that this is far from being a great novel. Although the author, Ayse Kulin, is described as "one of Turkey's most beloved", known-for her "captivating stories about human endurance", and although Without a Country is unerringly about the human condition, the lack of balance in the plot and an underlying prescriptive tone deflate a palpably powerful and relevant theme: cultural and religious integration or the absence of it.

Frankly, it needed to be a much fatter novel in order to do justice to the lives of the four generations it chronicles, beginning with the flight of Gerhard Schliemann and his wife, Elsa, from Nazi Germany to Istanbul in Turkey. While their story gets the detailed treatment it deserves, the stories of their child, grandchild and great grandchild get shorter and shorter shrift sufficient only to serve as pieces of information, not a story telling. The transformation of their daughter, Susy, from a sturdy German child to a Turkish Suzy Siliman (oddly spelled "iliman" in a chapter heading; surely a typo?) is reasonably filled out, although not satisfyingly so. Her daughter Sude's story is brief, and her daughter Esra's story is just a fullstop.

Despite this, it is a compelling read, thanks to the power of the theme. Cultural differences, dislocation from one's country, religious tensions, ideas of democracy, dictatorial regimes, riots, inter-faith and intercultural marriages,

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discrimination against certain communities (Jews, Armenians)..... All these are themes that persist as distressing realities to this day, and Ayse Kulin tackles them head on. The novel begins with Suzy, who has always thought of herself as Turkish, advising her grand daughter, Esra, to leave Turkey. She writes to Esra, recalling a time when foreigners were treated well and people did not dwell on religious differences. Then she goes on to say that "Turkey is your country, but the hatred and violence are too much ... bombs can explode and injustices are committed everywhere, but here, in a place where hate crimes go unpunished, you are no longer safe. These anti-Semites are filled with hate. At the very-least, they will break your heart. And a broken heart aches forever."

In spite of all the flaws in the book, Ayse Kulin manages to seamlessly situate human emotions in the context of Turkey's recent history in a smart and impactful fashion. She also intends the novel to be a sort of tribute to all those scientists who came and settled in Turkey for one reason or the other and who helped modernise the country.

In this instance, it is doctors and scientists from Germany who come together in a spirit of community and have to face the many challenges of living in a completely different cultural space.

In the course of their lives, the Schliemann family find themselves dealing with both assimilation and discrimination at the personal and professional levels. Gerhard encounters resentment from native-born Turks who feel their jobs are being snatched from them; Elsa misses the company of fellow Germans; Peter (Suzy's older brother) remains distant from the locals; while Suzy quickly takes to all things Turkish. She grows up to marry a Turk. The journey of their lives in a new country, dealing with a different culture, unfamiliar language and social mores is told with felicity and detail. In the process, we come to learn something about Turkish history and ways of life.

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A confounding translation of an article in Turkish about her seems to suggest that Ayse Kulin is of Ottoman ancestry. Her views are unambiguous and shine through the telling. But it soon becomes clear that the reason for writing this novel is to showcase the plurality of Turkey's history and show how that has changed in recent times.

When Sude's boyfriend Enver breaks up with her, she is distraught: "She'd been rejected, and it was because of what she was, not who she was .... Enver hadn't minded that she was German. He'd dumped her because she was Jewish. His father admired Hitler! Was that possible? How could anyone admire Hitler? Was it because he hated Jews?" Ayse Kulin’s political position could not be clearer and she misses no opportunity to spell it out.

This is a conversation she has with her Turkish grandfather Nazmi (whose son Demir marries Suzy):
"Would you have let your son marry a Jewish girl you didn’t know?’ she asks. 'Yes. As long as our grandchildren would be brought up as Muslims.' 'Grandpa, am I a Muslim?' 'Of course.' 'But I never pray or fast. And for that matter, neither do you or Grandma.' Nazmi Bey didn’t say anything for a moment. Then he looked his granddaughter in the eye and said, 'Look inside your heart, Sude. You're whatever it is you see there."

This is the level at which the novel resonates. Certainly for readers in India, it offers many insights and offers many moments of reflection, not just in terms of religious tolerance/intolerance, cultural assimilation and the strengths of tradition, but also about how to look at history and understand who we really are. The novel comes right down to the Gezi Park uprising of a couple of years ago and references the current thinking of the Turkish government in putting behind bars anyone who opposes it, including the record number of journalists jailed in that country.


Most importantly, though, it emphasises the ridiculousness of differences and discrimination and shines a light on the fact that essentially, everyone is a mix of many things. When Esra is a schoolgirl, she finds a piece of paper on her desk with the letter "Y" written large on it. She is puzzled. Boys' names?Yakut?Yusuf ? It is only later she discovers it stands for "Yahudi", Jew. She goes home and asks her grandparents: "But my great-grandparents are German. Aren't Germans Christians? And aren’t we Muslims?"

Grandma explains that a person can be German and Jewish, Turkish and Jewish. "Here in Turkey, most people are Muslim. You're Muslim too."
"But they called me a Jew in school today!" says Esra, "That must be because of me," her grand-mother explains. "My family is Jewish .... It's important to know your family history and your background, even if you were brought up Muslim."

Without a Country has been much reviewed and not entirely favourably, which is a fair assessment. However, its impact is what is more important, and it is for this reason that it deserves to be read. With the kind of intolerance, parochialism, extremism, vi- olence and hatred prevailing all over the world, Ayse Kulin reminds us that we can create a better environment for our children. For Indian readers, particularly, the novel hits bang in the solar plexus: everything said and implied is relevant in our context. And that is a big one to score.

Frontline,
19 July 2019.


## RESUME OF BUSINESS TRANSACTED

## DURING THE $5^{\mathrm{TH}}$ SESSION OF THE $13{ }^{\text {TH }}$ HIMACHAL PRADESH

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The fifth Session of the thirteenth Himachal Pradesh Vidhan Sabha which lasted for 13 days. The main business transacted includes the address by Acharya Devvrat, the Hon’ble Governor of Himachal Pradesh, presentation, consideration \& passing of supplementary Budget (First and Final Batch) for the year 2018-19 and also the Budget for the financial year 2019-20.

It being the first sitting of the year and also the beginning of Budget Session, the Hon’ble Governor of Himachal Pradesh addressed the House on 4th February, 2019 at 02.00 PM. After an obligatory break, the House paid tributes and made obituary references on the sad demise of its 3 former Members Sarvshri Jagat Singh Negi, Shonkia Ram Kashyap and K.D. Dharmani who passed away in between the period of last session and this one. Then the discussions on the motion of thanks on the address by the Governor look place for 3 consecutive days and the motion was passed with the reply of the Hon’ble Chief Minister.

On $9^{\text {th }}$ February, 2019, Shri Jai Ram Thakur, the Hon’ble Chief Minister presented the Budget Estimates for the financial year 2019-2020. The general discussion on Budget was held for 3 days. 36 Members participated in the debate. The Honble Chief Minister replied the points raised by Members on 13th February, 2019.

The discussions and voting on Demands were held for 2 days and the Budget Estimates for the financial year 2019-2020 were passed by the House on $18^{\text {th }}$ February. 2019. Two Appropriation Bills were also introduced, considered and passed.


On $15^{\text {th }}$ February, the House also paid rich tributes and made obituary reference in reverence of those brave hearts who lost their lives in the terror attack at Pulwama in Jammu \& Kashmir. The Hon’ble Speaker also expressed his deep condolences and made obituary references in respect of the martyr soldiers.

The Question Hour, as usual, remained lively throughout the Session. The Government provided answers to 444 notices of Starred Questions and 197 notices of Unstarred Questions. It also apprised the House of the latest position on 6 matters of Special Mention under Rule-324. Six Private Members' resolutions were discussed out of which four were withdrawn by the concerned Members; one resolution was passed and the another moved in the House will be taken-up for discussion in the next Session.

During the Session, documents relating to Annual Administrative Reports, Annual Accounts/ Audit Reports etc. of various autonomous bodies/ Corporations of the State Government, Recruitment \& Promotion Rules of various Departments and 35 Reports of the House Committees were also presented and laid on the Table of the House.

A copy each of the Bills passed by the House during the Fourth Session of the Thirteenth Vidhan Sabha and assented to by the Hon’ble President/ Governor of Himachal Pradesh were laid on the Table of the House by the Secretary, H.P. Legislative Assembly.

Transacting important Legislative Business, the following Bills were introduced, considered and passed by the Legislative Assembly during this Session -

1. The Himachal Pradesh Appropriation Bill, 2019 (Bill No. 1 of 2019);
2. The Himachal Pradesh Appropriation (No.2)Bill, 2019(Bill No.3 of 2019);
3. The Himachal Pradesh Official Language (Amendment) Bill, 2019 (Bill No. 4 of 2019);

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4. The Himachal Pradesh University of Health Sciences (Amendment) Bill, 2019 (Bill No. 5 of 2019);
5. The Himachal Pradesh Appropriation Acts (Repeal) Bill, 2019 (Bill No. 6 of 2019); and
6. The Himachal Pradesh Bovine Breeding Bill, 2019 (Bill No. 7 of 2019).

In order to keep the House informed, the Hon 'ble Chief Minister and other Ministers made suo motu statements on various issues of urgent public importance in the House. The Opposition staged short walkouts on various issues and then joined the course of debates without much loss of time.

On the concluding day of the Budget Session, delivering his Valedictory Address, the Hon’ble Speaker Dr. Rajeev Bindal, inter alia observed:
".... I extend my greetings to the Hon’ble Chief Minister who replied all notices and questions with resilience, to the Leader of Opposition for his role in making the matters more conducive \& conclusive, to Parliamentary Affairs Minister, to Ministers and to Members for their cooperation in the smooth conduct of the Business of the House .
.....It is being said that this was a small Session, but the Business transacted during the Session is as large as in longer Sessions ....

I mean to say that the Business as transacted during the Budget Sessions heretofore has also been carried out in full during this brief Budget session for which I congratulate all the Hon'ble Members ....
......The terror attack at Pulwama was discussed in detail. Both Treasury and Opposition benches deplored the evil designs of the forces behind this incident and all stood with the Government of India to confront them ... "


The House was adjourned sine-die by the Hon’ble Speaker Dr. Rajeev Bindal on $18^{\text {th }}$ February" 2019 and prorogued by the Governor of Himachal Pradesh on $20^{\text {th }}$ February, 2019.

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