



By ALBERTINA ALMEIDA

More than the old 'where-are-you-from'...

In the context of Goa, 'where are you from?' is a simple sounding question that hides the many complexities. Because if you put surnames and the place from which you hail together, you can figure out where in the caste hierarchy a person belongs. Therefore, it is not obviously the innocuous question it is intended to be.

But profiling people was easier in the old days where both population and migration were limited, and the village was a close-knit unit, irrespective of whether it was so to bond or to suffocate. At least in Goa, almost everyone knew other people in their locality and also the various identities of the person.

But as the years have rolled by, we have a scenario where, compelled by globalization, people are forced to migrate, which is different from people migrating by choice for better prospects. The financial conditions are such that people find it difficult to make ends meet in their home towns and there is much internal migration within the country as well as outside of it. One would have thought that this would help remove profiling and the shackles of caste; because the social structure in another part of the world would be stratified differently. But that is not so.

There has even been a Goan parading his '*bamon-ness*' on his car in the United States. Apart from that the recent migrants to the US or UK are termed as immigrants and it is beginning to have a pejorative connotation. If people do not have all their documentation in order because of their desperate need to get somewhere for a job, or even to stay alive in the case of some refugees.

It is widely believed that the Gujarat genocide was inflicted on the Muslim minorities of Gujarat precisely with the aid of State databases coupled with foot soldier profiling of the right wing. So here you had a situation where the macro profiling scenario is transposed on a village scenario to strengthen data bases. This in a sense marks the nature of transition

where class and caste are solidified by modernity, not vanquished. The small all-recognising world of the village is not disappearing. One can see that the profiling is working at two levels - at the village level and at the level of State surveillance. More than the old 'where-are-you-from'...

Then in this century came the Stranger Rolls that the police have been required to maintain again, without any appropriate legal backing, where people who are tenanting premises or working for local people are required to be reported in the local police station. There was already a brazen incident where police were driven to target a madrasa at Vasco in 2008, on the pretext that they needed to verify if any strangers were residing there who had the potential to create terror. This is exactly the example of how terror can, in fact, be instigated by the State because of its pre-profiling of who is a terrorist or has the potential to be one. Thus the State itself is a party to the hate-mongering both by acts of commission and omission. The "stranger rolls" became an instrument in the hands of the State since they call for all kinds of intrusive details and are selectively imposed on certain communities and poorer sections of society.

The Aadhaar Card is only the latest weapon in this global profiling system. Even before the Aadhaar legislation came to be passed to give the Aadhaar Card a legal footing, a company called Swabhiman Distribution Services which created what was styled as TrustID had its ad reading as follows : India's first Aadhaar-based mobile app to verify your maid, driver, electrician, tutor, tenant and everyone else instantly.

One can see the direction this is taking and will come to soon haunt the 'middle class' who are complacent now, imagining that they have ways to track the antecedents of the persons who personally service them and their households, thanks to Aadhaar. Already tutors who are not in society's look-down lists have surfaced in this list. But of course, you don't find apps that promise to check the credentials of the likes of Vijay Mallya.

In Goa, the Aadhaar invasion began with those towering ads of Digambar Kamat urging people to make their Aadhaar cards. Years have flown by and this Aadhaar card, which is supposed to be an identity card, is in fact causing an identity crisis. Needless to say, the current ruling regime, which has a penchant for profiling has embraced it hook, line and

sinker. At the time this goes to the press, a 10-judge Constitutional bench of Supreme Court is seized with hearings on the matter.



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In the face of the limited regulations defining the use of biometrics and unique numbers, in the form of The Aadhaar (Sharing of Information) Rules, privacy is thrown open to corporate interests who spam you with their offers, thanks to the data bases that Aadhaar and related identity data bases are providing. These spammers almost shape what you eat, drink, and wear. Only aggravating a situation where we already have a State that is enforcing certain habits and creating a schizophrenic situation for the citizen, who is on the one hand implored to maintain her identity based on the Aadhaar Card database, and is, on the other hand, targeted through aggressive marketing by big companies to fit as their customer. Also, aggravating a situation where the State is already seen to be misusing surveillance. Remember the complaint of lynching of Zafar Hussein who was actually calling out the surveillance by Swachh Bharat Abhiyan voyeuring women who were relieving themselves in the absence of a proper toilet?

Today, with technological advances and the advent of big data technology which are nevertheless informed by the prejudices of their developers and managers, the Aadhaar data base provides the possibilities of bar codes and machine readable representation of data. Now the kind of data that can be available, courtesy Aadhaar linkages, goes beyond where-are-you-from, to what-do-you-eat, to what-medicines-you-take, to whether-you-eat-beef and can be lynched for it. It is like an invisible drone chasing you and luring and pushing you in directions that you just may not want to go, but are simply compelled because the big marketeers have carefully worked out even just how they can push you into it.

Already those who have not made an Aadhaar card, are being inundated with messages that their mobile connections will be disconnected and their bank accounts will be closed. In other words, you won't be able to exist without this identity document that sets out your whereabouts and the biometric attributes of your fingerprints and iris images, unless the Supreme Court comes to your aid. And when you make the card, you are up and vulnerable for data theft and profiling if you are a political dissenter or the 'other', that is, the one not fitting the image of a member of the Hindu Rashtra.

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