



Behind the Facade: Comprehensive Repercussions of Bangladesh's Protests

By Harshada Deshpande

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The situation has been rising in Bangladesh since last month. In recent days, it is very much awful that Sheikh Haseena resigned and fled to India, Military goes against her, the government collapses, millions get on road for protest, over 500 people killed in clashes because of that controversial 30 per cent quota in government jobs for those who fought in the 1971 India-Pakistan war, and other reasons like recession, increasing unemployment etc, but these are may be just superficial reasons. The Bangladesh parliament dissolved on Tuesday and Student protest coordinators had asked for the dissolution, pushing for the formation of a new interim government at the earliest. After the protest took over, the Bangladesh president ordered the release of Begum Khaleda Zia, the main political rival of Sheikh Haseena who was sentenced jail for 17 years for corruption accusations in 2018.

Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar said that they are in constant touch with the Indian community in Bangladesh amid the violence and political developments in the neighbouring country through diplomatic missions. Jaishankar's Statement came after Sheikh Haseena stepped down as the Bangladesh prime minister amid violence in her country.

This mess may end up in the worst situation for India as it is going to affect us from various quarters. Already the Maitree Express between Kolkata and Dhaka has been suspended. This will definitely affect the free flow of trade and passengers as well. Earlier governments headed by military dictators and the BNP have provided refuge and arms to Indian insurgent groups from the North-Eastern states, in the hope of leveraging policy to develop pressure on India. The freedom of Begum Khaleda Zia and anti-Haseena protest will give a shot to Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami to come to power. This will create a detrimental situation for India as Begum Khaleda Zia led government seems to be anti-India, if not pro-China, but in an entire Asia if not India, the strong support to Bangladesh is China. This situation is precisely not in favour of India. While Sino-Indian relations are arguably at an all-time low, China will never lose this occasion. In Sheikh Haseena's government, Bangladesh has maintained cordial ties with both countries, Bangladesh had been very cautious of Chinese soft influence in its territory and foreign relations, cancelling the Chinese intentions to the development of a deep seaport in Sonadia and instead went ahead developing Matarbari port with Japanese help. But this situation will no longer take place. Precisely China may uphold this opportunity to expand in the Indian Ocean Region and join Bangladesh into its String of Pearls strategy. Like other Indian Ocean littoral states such as Sri Lanka, Maldives, Pakistan and Djibouti, Bangladesh may end up similar.

In democracy, authentic protest against government is normal but, here seeing the pattern of protest like, celebration by the protesters of the fall of the Bangladesh government by burning a hotel and killing twenty-five plus people just for the sake of celebration, infiltrating into the PM's house, displaying clothes, disrespectfully eating food in residence, shows that there was no authenticity in the protest. From this format we can question what if there is a purposeful planning behind this protest and there is any sort of backhand of some foreign forces? If this is the case, the Indian government needs to be alert and be prepared to tackle a set of circumstances as this can be an intimidating conspiracy from our neighbourhood.

There are also chances of infiltration of people of Bangladesh in our bordering states like West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. Already Manipur has been suffering from foreign infiltration and ethnic disputes in their own state and precisely the addition of Bangladesh's people's infiltration into our states will add to the unrest.

The current situation in Bangladesh may affect the bilateral trade agreements, MoUs such as Bangladesh's decision to give access to India for Chittagong and Mongla port which is helping India to transport goods to its northeastern states. Bangladesh is among the 22 countries which are allowed to open Vostro accounts to trade in Indian currency for foreign trade. This is a major boost to the Indian rupee, which the government is pushing as a player in currencies of international trade. This should be continued even after the regime change. Development of further road, rail routes and water routes for freight and passenger service which is essential to bolster trade and commerce between both the countries may also be affected as India's biggest trade partner in South Asia is Bangladesh, while India is Bangladesh's second largest trade partner according to the report.

On the other side there is also an opportunity for India to get back its own textile industry market which was shifted to Bangladesh by our people because of low duty, tax benefits and many other reasons. Textile is the main source of market for Indian production and export as well. If we set up an appropriate environment and infrastructure for textile industries, then it will be economically beneficial for us. Also, even after the regime change in Bangladesh, the Indian government must try to cope up with the new government and go ahead with new possible opportunities, like we did with Myanmar two decades ago. Bangladesh is almost surrounded by Indian borders so that their major land trade routes goes through India. India can take advantage of it following its own national interests.

While coming to the conclusion, it seems that India is getting encircled by some unfriendly regimes from all sides. But even though this situation is looking menacing, it is definitely not impossible to go through and for this we have to fight by every possible means. The Indian government needs to tackle every coming situation very patiently without compromising on national security and also along with that we should also seek opportunities in this period of crisis

Balancing Opulence with Responsibility

By Uday Kumar Varma

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"We are not an endangered species ourselves yet, but this is not for lack of trying."

—Douglas Adams

A dinner invitation to a rooftop restaurant called 'Electric Lemon' in New York led to a delightful and privileged experience yet set me thinking about the millions entrapped in poverty, barely surviving while a few enjoy unconscionable luxury. Offering a stunning view of the Hudson River merging into the Atlantic from the 24th floor of the Equinox Hotel, Electric Lemon's sleek, expansive dining room and serene al fresco terrace epitomize luxury. Visitors, empowered by wealth, embrace this space whenever and however they'd like—a true nourishment for an exclusive community, delivered on their terms.

Advocating through its esoteric cuisine that soulful food starts with stellar ingredients, this seasonal American restaurant celebrates the passionate farmers, growers, and artisans of the Mid-Atlantic, transforming their pristine products into clean, conscious cuisine that puts flavour at the forefront. Electric Lemon exemplifies luxury, drawing the affluent with its promise of exceptional dining experiences.

The Ethical Dilemma of Extravagance

However, this experience, at some level and in some unmistakable way, hurt my conscience. The display of privilege earned from wealth and resources, may be self-earned, seemed to mock the millions struggling to make their ends meet. Amidst escalating resource scarcity and socio-economic disparities, a pertinent question arises: shouldn't such extravagance be curtailed to conserve resources for future generations? Can aspects of minimalism be reconciled with this opulent extravagance? And how can the wealthy be encouraged to indulge more responsibly?

The Consumption Patterns of the Affluent

Luxurious lifestyles often demand substantial resources, contributing to environmental degradation and exacerbating inequality. Establishments like Electric Lemon, with their lavish use of stellar ingredients and exclusive settings, leave a significant ecological footprint. From sourcing rare ingredients to maintaining high-end infrastructure, the environmental cost is undeniable.

That the wealthiest 1% of the world's population account for more than double the carbon emissions of the poorest 50% and in the US, the top 20% of income earners are responsible for nearly 70% of all greenhouse gas emissions may not legally indict the rich but the underlying ethical culpability is firmly established. Such stark disparities become one of the strongest arguments for the urgent need for change in consumption patterns among the affluent.

Wastage: An Ethical and Environmental Concern

An additional dimension to this painful paradox is the indifference with which the affluent create massive waste, much of which is avoidable. Nearly 40% of all food in US is discarded as waste that equals roughly 150 billion meals. "Waste is worse than loss. The time is coming when every person who lays claim to ability will keep the question of waste before him constantly. The scope of thrift is limitless," said Thomas A. Edison a century ago. Alas! sensible advice seldom, has few takers.

Voluntary Moderation: A Path Forward

The transformation must come from within, and the wealthy must realize the horrifying implications of their exclusive pursuits. Voluntary moderation among the wealthy is a compelling solution that needs to be discussed. By adopting a mindset that values sustainability over excess,

the affluent can lead by example, showcasing that true luxury lies in quality and longevity rather than quantity. This shift requires a cultural transformation where success is redefined not by opulence but by stewardship and ethical responsibility.

Wealth brings the capacity for significant positive impact. A mind set directed toward environmental causes, social equity, and resource conservation can offset the negative impacts of luxury consumption. By supporting businesses that prioritize sustainability, the affluent can influence trends, enjoying high-quality experiences while promoting environmental conservation.

Mindful Consumption and Minimalism

Minimalism advocates for mindful consumption—choosing fewer, higher-quality possessions and experiences that bring genuine satisfaction. The affluent can adopt this mindset, focusing on curated experiences that are both luxurious and sustainable. This approach conserves resources and enhances personal fulfilment by fostering deeper connections with what truly matters.

Creating a New Narrative

The narrative around success and wealth needs to change, massively and methodically. Celebrating figures who balance affluence with responsibility can redefine societal norms. Stories of those who lead sustainable lives can create a new aspirational standard, one that values ethical stewardship alongside financial success.

Addressing resource scarcity and inequality requires collaborative efforts. Wealthy individuals, governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders must come together to develop and implement innovative and impactful solutions. These collaborations can drive significant progress in areas such as renewable energy, conservation, and sustainable development.

A New Definition of Luxury

The luxurious experiences offered by establishments like Electric Lemon need not conflict with sustainability and minimalism. By embracing a philosophy of responsible luxury, the affluent can enjoy the fruits of their labour while ensuring that their consumption does not compromise the planet's future. Through mindful consumption, philanthropic engagement, advocacy, and a commitment to sustainable practices, the wealthy can lead a global movement toward a more equitable and environmentally conscious world. In doing so, they not only secure their legacy but also contribute to the well-being of future generations.

"The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed," observed Mahatma Gandhi. The disproportionate consumption of Earth's resources, howsoever legitimate, must qualify as greed. The abiding misfortune of this planet is the belief that many of us nurse—that someone else is going to save it. The moral imperative to address this aberration is strong, urging wealthier individuals and communities to adopt more responsible and equitable consumption patterns.

An Alarming Twist in the Gaza Tale

By Vappala Balachandran

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The assassination of Hamas' political chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran through an 'airborne guided projectile' and suspected Israeli involvement in the incident have changed the entire character of the Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah war. According to reports, Haniyeh had come to Tehran to attend the inauguration ceremony of Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian on July 30 and had met him the same day. He was staying in a special residence for military veterans in the north of Tehran as a guest of the Iranian Government. He was killed along with his bodyguard.

It is leant that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has forbidden official comments from his cabinet members on the matter. However, some far-right Israeli leaders have already expressed on X their happiness at the development.

Haniyeh had survived four assassination attempts. Hamas said in June that 10 members of his family were killed in an Israeli airstrike in northern Gaza's Shati refugee camp. Haniyeh had then said that more than 60 of his family members had been killed since the start of the war on October 7, 2023. In April, three of his sons — Hazem, Amir and Mohammad — died when their car was bombed in the Shati camp. Four of Haniyeh's grandchildren, three girls and a boy, were also killed in the attack, according to Hamas.

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said "avenging Haniyeh's killing" through harsh punishment was Tehran's duty. President Pezeshkian also warned of retaliatory action. It was only on July 28 that Tehran had warned Israel that any new military 'adventures' in Lebanon could lead to 'unforeseen consequences.' This was after Hezbollah had attacked Druze town of Majdal Shams in Israel, killing 12 children on July 27.

After the Majdal Shams incident, Netanyahu reportedly cut short his US trip and returned to attend a meeting of the Israeli security cabinet in Tel Aviv. According to Axios, America was very worried that such a trigger which "we have been worried about and tried to avoid for 10 months" had happened. The US was commenting on the Hezbollah bombing. While the world was expecting Israeli retaliation in Lebanon, the unexpected action in Tehran has come as a shock.

China was quick to condemn the assassination. Lin Jian, spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry, said Beijing was "deeply concerned that this incident might lead to further instability in the regional situation". It was on July 23 that China had upstaged the carefully choreographed US visit by Netanyahu by managing to release a 'Beijing Declaration' after hosting 14 Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Fatah, for three days in the Chinese capital. Hamas was represented by Mousa Abu Marzouk.

Mao Ning, another spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, had said on July 23 that Palestinian leaders had unanimously agreed to sink their differences, hold an international conference under the UN auspices on Palestine, form a 'new Palestinian national council' under the existing basic law of Palestine, establish an interim national reconciliation government, carry out reconstruction in Gaza and prepare to hold a general election.

China Daily published a picture of Foreign Minister Wang Yi with the representatives of Palestinian factions, who signed the declaration at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on July 24, the day Netanyahu delivered his address to a joint session of the US Congress.

His fourth address to the Congress, surpassing even Winston Churchill's record of three orations, was marred by sharp attacks on him by leading US Congressmen. The Times of Israel said on July 24 that his "visit was barely registering among American officials amid dramatic developments in the US presidential race".

It said US President Joe Biden's 'abrupt' announcement on July 21 that he would address the nation on July 24, "just hours after Netanyahu's speech", and the absence of Vice-President Kamala Harris "due to scheduling" would "likely further divert attention from the Israeli leader".

The Times of Israel also quoted senior US Congressmen like Senator Bernie Sanders, who called Netanyahu a 'a war criminal' and Senator Chris van Hollen of Maryland, "a prominent critic of the Biden administration's Israel policies", who refused to be 'a political prop' for Netanyahu. It further said Rep Jerrold Nadler, "a Democratic leader and the highest-ranking Jewish congressman", would attend the speech but called Netanyahu "the worst leader in Jewish history since the Maccabean king who invited the Romans into Jerusalem over 2,100 years ago".

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Xi's Economic, Political Headaches

By Srikant Kondapalli

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Yet, Xi's hold over the party will become increasingly tenuous if he does not address China's mounting economic problems. It is not without reason that Xi has had the names of his predecessors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao erased from the party document. This has been recent practice, one intended to ensure that Xi, and Xi alone, is glorified.

The just-concluded Third Plenum of the Communist Party of China was viewed as a "landmark event" by the party, with China's media depicting it as "pivotal" and "epochmaking". But others depicted it as a damp squib as the pressing problems of the Chinese people were not addressed.

The Third Plenum, held July 15-18 at Beijing, was attended by 364 Communist Party Central Committee and alternate members. The meeting deliberated on the report of party General Secretary Xi Jinping and an "Outline" and a "Resolution" were released at the end of the session that identified 300 reform measures to be undertaken. A new ambitious target of completing these reforms has been set for 2029, the 80th anniversary of the People's Republic and two years after the next party congress in 2027.

The main task of the Plenum was "further deepening reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernisation". This has become urgent due to sagging economic growth, the real estate crisis, the stock exchange meltdown that wiped out \$6 trillion, mounting local debt, ageing of the society, stagnant domestic consumption, widespread domestic political protests, geopolitical pressures through US and European Union sanctions and ongoing technological disruptions.

China's economic growth rate has been falling, especially after the debilitating lockdowns during the Covid pandemic and restrictive policies on the private sector. While China maintained impressive growth rates averaging about 9% after the reform programme began in 1978, in recent years, the country has been losing steam with 3-5% growth rates mentioned officially. However, the Rhodium Group estimates that China is actually growing at about 1.5%.

If China does not lift its sagging economic outlook, the first consequence is that it will be stuck in the "middle income trap", besides popular discontent and ensuing instability. Last year, China stated that its per capita income reached more than \$12,000, approaching the World Bank figure of \$13,845 to become a "developed" country. It could get stuck below the latter figure, a fate that has befallen many other economies.

China intends to make the steep climb it confronts by "promoting high-quality development", by increasing total factor productivity, stressing efficiency and utilising "new quality productive forces" like automation, AI, IoT, new energy, aerospace, new materials, quantum computing and others. The current total factor productivity of China is just above 1% and it needs to scale this up for higher growth rates by bringing in "revolutionary breakthroughs in technology" and "innovation in key generic technologies, cutting-edge technologies, modern engineering technologies, and disruptive technologies", revamping the market mechanism and enhancing educational standards. China wants to complete this arduous task by 2029.

The 2029 deadline is interesting as the 21st party congress is due in 2027, which is likely to be politically stormy for Xi Jinping not only because of the economic problems but also because of political headwinds. At the 20th party congress in 2022, Xi decimated rival political factions, including the formidable Communist Youth League, whose leader Hu Jintao was shown the door. Other factions like the military have been contained through Xi's anti-corruption drive.

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India Narrowly Escapes Fiscal Catastrophe

By Uttam Gupta

The writer is a policy analyst.

After the Lok Sabha elections 2024 on June 4, the Centre narrowly escaped plunging into a state of 'fiscal catastrophe'. Even as Modi--led BJP failed to secure an absolute majority on its own, it garnered the support of 293 MPs including 53 from its allies under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and formed the Government.

On the other hand, the I.N.D.I.A bloc led by the grand old party (GOP) namely Congress cobbled up a total of 234 MPs. A swing of just 38 from NDA to I.N.D.I.A bloc could have enabled the latter to catapult itself to the seat of power. In that scenario, the GOP would have to redeem the promises/guarantees made in its manifesto "Nyay Patra" released in April 2024. These entail mammoth fiscal costs.

Look at an annual grant of Rs 100,000/- to every poor Indian household (HH) under the 'Mahalakshmi' scheme. The amount - like unconditional income support - will be directly transferred to the bank account of the oldest woman of the HH. If the HH doesn't have a woman, then the amount will be transferred to the account of the oldest member of the HH. Meanwhile, at a poll rally, Gandhi announced "Initially, we will give you Rs 100,000/- annually, and later we may increase it to Rs 200,000/-".

There are around 400 million households in India. Even if we take a conservative estimate of only 10 per cent of the households or 40 million being poor, the Scheme will cost the exchequer Rs 400,000 crore annually. In case, the grant is increased to Rs 200,000/-, the cost would be Rs 800,000 crore per annum.

Aware of the huge impact on the budget, the manifesto puts two caveats on the Scheme. First, "the poor will be identified among the HHs in the bottom of the income pyramid". Second, "the Scheme will be rolled out in stages and reviewed every year to assess the number of beneficiaries HHs and its impact on alleviating poverty". The way these conditions have been crafted shows that, to begin with, not all 40 million families will be covered. Further, the party could also drop some beneficiaries in due course to rein in the outflow.

However, given the massive appeal of the grant amount promised under the Scheme, not a single poor household would like to be left out and a beneficiary HH once included wouldn't like to get excluded. Any attempt to do so could trigger socioeconomic tensions between those who get it and others who don't. So, all 40 million poor HHs will have to be given Rs 200,000/- each.

The other guarantee is a Youth Apprenticeship Scheme (YAS) for diploma holders under which an unemployed youth will be given Rs 100,000/- every year. Taking a total of 260 million persons in the 15-29 years age bracket and an unemployment rate of 10 per cent, giving Rs 100,000/- to each of the 26 million unemployed would cost the exchequer Rs 260,000 crore annually.

An apprenticeship is an arrangement under which a person works for an agreed period to learn a new skill that enables him to get a suitable job. During this period, he gets a fixed amount as a stipend. Under such an arrangement logically it is expected that at the end of the training period, there won't be any need to give the stipend.

But the GOP hasn't alluded to any blueprint for training and occupations/businesses where the apprentices - on completion of the training - would get absorbed. In such a scenario, persons getting Rs 100,000/- will continue to get it year after year. As a result, the Centre will be saddled with a recurring liability of Rs 260,000 crore.

Congress promised a legal guarantee for the MSP (minimum support price). The farmers would want it for all 23 crops for which MSP is currently fixed.

Eventually, this will have to cover all crops, the entire agricultural produce. The government can't force private entities to buy at the MSP. So, it should be prepared to pick up the whole of it. This will cost about Rs 33,00,000 crore annually.

It promised 3 million government jobs. Taking an average salary of say Rs 50,000 per month, this would entail an additional cost of Rs 180,000 crore annually. A hike in the wage under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act (MNREGA) to Rs 400 per day would cost around Rs 80,000 crore. Further, the GOP has promised a one-time student loan waiver to cost around Rs 120,000 crore.

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Cheap Thrills, Costly Spills: The Real Price of Made-in-China

By N. C. Bipindra

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China dreams of turning the People's Liberation Army, or PLA, into a "world-class" military by the end of 2049.

Two out of every ten and seven of the top twenty-five of the world's largest defense companies are from China. But does high volume necessarily mean a better and more potent armed force?

Military weapons are an important tool for projecting a country's influence around the world. China has marketed and exported weapons to more than 48 countries during the last six years. In addition to weapons, China has exported private security contractors (PSCs) to protect and serve its interests, such as mining facilities, ports, and Infrastructure projects.

However, over the past few years, China's arms exports have seemed to decline.

Between 2019 and 2023, Chinese arms exports accounted for 5.8% of total global arms exports. While this statistic looks good, China's arms exports decreased by about 5.3% from 2014 to 18. China's market share has also shrunk from 5.6% to 5.2% globally.

Now, most Chinese arms exports (85%) went to states in Asia and Oceania, followed by states in Africa (9.9%). China delivered major arms to 40 states in 2019–23, but well over half of its arms exports (61%) went to just one state—Pakistan.

Spectacular Flops – Major Problems with Made-in-China

China attracts customers for its military equipment and cut-rate pricing and financing, but hidden charges and costs are so profound when the equipment malfunctions.

Myanmar – Low accuracy of radars on Chinese jets

Nigeria – Maintenance issues of F-7 Jets (7 out of 9)

Pakistan – F22 P Frigate facing engine degradation, faulty sensors, Inability of Missile systems to lock onto target

Bangladesh: Technical issues related to Fighter Jet F-7, short-range air defence systems, and spare parts for K-8 trainers and MBT 200 tanks.

J-10 Fighter Jet – The J-10, once hailed as a potential game-changer, has failed to impress on multiple fronts. Issues range from engine failures to avionics glitches, leading several countries to abandon deals in favour of more reliable Western aircraft (SIPRI).

Type 99 Tank – Billed as a competitor to the American M1 Abrams and the Russian T-90, the Type 99 has struggled with mechanical reliability and battlefield effectiveness. Reports of frequent breakdowns have tarnished its reputation, making it a hard sell on the international market.

Y-8 Transport Aircraft – The Y-8 has been plagued by problems with its avionics and engines. Potential buyers have often found it lacking compared to Western transport aircraft like the C-130 Hercules, which offers better performance and reliability.

Drones – China’s efforts to produce advanced drones have been unsuccessful. Chinese UAVs often suffer from mechanical issues and operational failures, falling short of the performance standards their American and Israeli counterparts set.

Findings, as per the SIPRI report of April 2024, raise concern about the reliability of Chinese Military Hardware. Key findings of this report include the poor performance of Chinese technology in combat, with a nearly 99% failure rate. These findings suggest many vulnerabilities in China’s Defence sector. Its declining reputation for its weaponry could hinder its efforts and rush to expand its influence. It also decisively causes a dent in its push to be a ‘world-class military.’

But technological inferiority is not the only problem hindering China’s military exports!

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India is Proud of: Palwankar Baloo, India’s First Dalit Cricketer



He was born in 1876 in Pune, Baloo grew up watching British soldiers play cricket. His father worked in the arms factory in Pune. Young Baloo would sit near the field, picking up balls that came his way and throwing them back onto the field. He used to collect discarded balls from the trash and bring them home, attempting to play with his younger brother Shivram.

He began his career as a groundskeeper at a cricket club in Pune. However, his remarkable talent soon shone through, leading to his selection for the prestigious Hindu Gymkhana team in 1896. It marked the beginning of his illustrious cricket career.

As the two brothers grew older, their father made them discontinue their education because of financial constraints. Baloo began working at a cricket club run by Parsis, where he would clean and maintain the pitch.

Sometimes, he would also bowl to the players practicing in the nets. He earned Rs 3 every month for this job.

In 1892, Baloo left the Parsi Cricket Club and secured a job at the Pune Cricket Club run by Britishers. He was appointed there for a monthly salary of Rs 4.

His responsibilities included pitch maintenance, setting up targets and preparing the nets for practice.

One day, there was no bowler available at the club, and Mr. Tross — a British batsman — needed to practice. He called Baloo, who was standing outside the field and asked him to bowl. Baloo bowled six balls, out of which three were difficult for Tross to hit with his bat. He was bowled out twice. He could only manage to hit one ball properly.

Facing Baloo's swinging deliveries, the British batsmen found it difficult to protect their stumps. The next day, Baloo's name was on everyone's lips in the team. The team recognized him as a regular practice bowler. He got training under the mentorship of famous British fast bowler Barton — who taught him new techniques and variations in his bowling.

Noted English batsman JJ Gregg was visiting Pune. He had several centuries to his name. Aware of his potential, he told Baloo that for every time he got him out in net practice, he would receive eight annas. If Baloo could dismiss Gregg even once a week, his salary would double for the month.

Baloo practiced for hours at the Pune club's nets, but British players never let him bat because, much like in England, in India, batting was considered the domain of the upper class. Baloo, being a Dalit, was excluded. However, his deliveries started to gain a formidable bounce. His spin had a unique quality.

At that time, there was a Hindu club in Pune that played matches against Europeans in the city. Baloo's reputation reached this club as well. They were in need of a good bowler, and he caught their attention.

Since Baloo was a Dalit, and all the members of the Hindu club's team belonged to "higher castes". Now the question arose as to how to play with a Dalit. This question divided the cricket club into two factions. But in the end, Baloo was included in the team.

However, he faced unfair treatment within the team as he was a Dalit. During tea breaks, Baloo would be served tea outside the pavilion, while other players would enjoy tea inside.

In 1911, the Indian cricket team was scheduled to tour England. For the first time, the United Kingdom sent a team, which included Parsis as well as Hindus. However, due to internal conflicts within the team, it consistently lost matches.

Despite playing 14 matches against the British county teams, the Indian team only managed to win two matches — with two ending in draws. However, amidst these defeats, there was one player who shone brightly. He was a bowler whose deliveries were unplayable for the English team. His balls were like thunderbolts, shooting like arrows. The trajectory of his deliveries was unpredictable, leaving the batsmen clueless. He set a record during the tour by taking 114 wickets, a record that remains unbroken to this day.

However, since cricket is a team sport, the team couldn't capitalize on his individual brilliance — resulting in overall defeat.

On September 15, 1911, when Baloo returned from England, he was accorded a grand welcome in India. By then, he had become a hero and an inspiration to countless Dalits through his extraordinary performances on the cricket field.

Among those inspired was Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, who was just 20 years old at that time. It is said that Dr Ambedkar himself authored the commendation letter given to Baloo at a felicitation ceremony upon his return from England.

The country's first Dalit cricketer, Palwankar Baloo, is in the spotlight these days. Film producer Preeti Sinha has brought him into discussion, announcing a biopic on his life. Actor Ajay Devgn will play the cricketer's character on the silver screen. Sinha made the announcement on May 29, 2024, on X (formerly Twitter).

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