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Contents

Editorial

The launching of the online version of The NEHU Journal, alongside the print version, has received considerable attention and appreciation. The number of submissions for publications has considerably increased. The journal encourages teachers and research scholars to send quality research papers and book reviews.

The present issue has five articles and five book reviews. The article by A.K. Nongkynrih titled, 'Social Science Research in northeast India: The Position of Sociology', discusses the development and challenges of social science research in northeast India. In the light of developments taking place in social science research at national level, the author examines how the growth of modern education and the establishment of different universities in the northeast have facilitated research in social sciences in general and Sociology in particular. Commenting on the quality and direction of research in the discipline of Sociology, the author identifies lack of inter-disciplinary approach, the poor quality of undergraduate education in the region, the policy of reservations practiced in the admission of students in the universities and non-filling of faculty positions at higher levels as important factors inhibiting the teaching and research in the universities. He argues that lack of knowledge about regional languages and linguistic and cultural practices of the people and reluctance to identify and undertake research on emerging issues are responsible for poor quality of research in Sociology. What Nongkynrih says about Sociology is probably true for other social science disciplines as well.

In his article, 'Social Exclusion and Ethnicity in northeast India', V. Bijukumar seeks to explain ethnic conflicts in the northeast by relating them to social exclusion experienced in the region. He attributes social exclusion in the region to a variety of factors, like the limitation of liberal idea of citizenship in accommodating the aspirations of smaller ethnic communities; the process of ethnification experienced by smaller ethnic groups in nations states; competition for resources; disjunction between the forces of modernity and traditions, adverse effects of market economy; growth of indigenous elite, birth of identity politics and influence of the

ideology and politics of ethnic and separatist movements. He calls for the need to address the specificities and material needs of the communities in the region and expects the state to adopt conciliatory path to bring in the alienated sections into the mainstream.

Based on the findings of National Family Health Survey 3 (NFHS 3), Phrangstone Khongji in his paper, 'Determinants and Trends of Ideal Family Size', shows that although the desire for high number of children has decreased compared to NFHS 2, ideal number of children (INC) is still high in Meghalaya. Khongji argues that factors like, place of residence, religion, educational status, standard of living, ethnicity and working status could be the determining factors affecting the ideal family size in the state. Although the data presented in the paper does not say, the author seems to believe that the women's choice of large family size, their aversion to family planning methods and their opposition to abortions can be attributed to traditional tribal belief system and also to the views of the dominant organizations and elites in the society. The author opines that in such transitional societies, one can effect change only through a decentralized, bottom-up, holistic policy approach that has built-in safeguards to protect the rights of individuals as well as of the community.

Barbara Sagma's paper, 'From Rituals to Stage: The Journey of *A-Chik* Folk Theatre', narrates the evolution of the *A-Chik* theatre from traditional ritual performances to contemporary stage plays. The author presents interesting accounts of the forms, meanings and essence of different traditional cultural performances of the community, and the changes that have taken place in *A-chik* theatre after coming in contact with Christianity. It seems the appearance of modern stage plays did not undermine the traditional forms of *A-Chik* theatre. Hope this study encourages similar studies on the evolution of theatre in other tribal communities in the region.

Ruth Lalsiemsang Buongpui in her paper, 'Gender Relations and the Web of Traditions in northeast India', argues that although apparently the women in northeast India are more liberated than their counterparts in other parts of India, in reality the traditions and customary practices inhibit the women from enjoying freedom and rights. The paper cites different phrases and sayings in different tribal oral traditions to argue that

there are taboos among the tribal communities in the region that justify the inferior status of women. Apart from quoting general theories on patriarchy, if the scholar had undertaken empirical study of the customary practices in different tribal societies now exposed to the forces modernity, then a better theorization of the status of women in transitional societies would have been possible.

Apart from the above mentioned articles, the volume contains book reviews by V.K. Shrotriya, T. Navin, A.K. Thakur, Suparna Bhattacharjee and Binayak Dutta. The books reviewed include Gurucharan Das' book, *India Grows at Night - A Liberal Case for a Strong State*, Gladson Dungdung's *Whose Country is it Anyway – Untold stories of the Indigenous Peoples of India*, Tage Tada, Jagat C. Dutta and Nabajit Deori's *Archeological Heritage of Arunachal Pradesh*, R.K. Satapathy's *United States and Central America: The US Involvement in Nicaragua, and* Sagar Boruah's edited volume, *Historical Studies in the Context of Globalization: Rationale for Restructuring Curriculum*.

The authors and publishers who seek to get their books reviewed in the journal may send a copy of their book to the Editor, The NEHU Journal. *The NEHU Journal* looks forward to your contributions, support and encouragement.

H. Srikanth
Editor, *The NEHU Journal*

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Social Science Research in Northeast India: The Position of Sociology

A.K. Nongkynrih*

Abstract

The present paper dealing with development of social science research at the national level, throws light on the development and challenges of social science research in general and sociology in particular in the context of northeast India. Apart from secondary sources, information is collected from teachers working in sociology departments of some of the colleges located in urban and rural areas and also from the post-graduate students in the department of sociology, NEHU, Shillong. It was observed that social science research in general and the discipline of sociology in particular have made some progress in the northeast. There have been some efforts to collect and analyze empirical data on some of the tribal societies. However, there are many tribal societies in the region which are yet to be scientifically studied. Further, the discipline of sociology is urban centric and majority of students pursuing post-graduate degree in sociology comes from urban areas.

Keywords: social science, sociology, under-graduate, research, teaching.

According to the report of the Fourth Review Committee of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), 'social science research is chiefly driven by two forces: (a) interest in knowledge about the functioning of society in its diverse social, cultural, political and economic aspects, and in understanding the factors that shape them; and (b) the practical needs of policy makers and managers in government, civil society and the private sector for reliable information and professional analysis'(2007:5).

In India the development of social science research is directly an outcome of the processes of modern education, the setting-up of

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universities and the academic interests of Indian intellectuals in writing issues concerning the people of the country during the colonial period. In the pre-independence phase social science research was mostly university-centric and after the independence of India many institutes of research came up which have also contributed towards the development of social science research. Mention may be made here of the Indian Statistical Institute at Calcutta; the National Council of Applied Economic Research and the Institute of Economic Growth at Delhi. However, one of the most important initiatives in the promotion and development of social science research was the creation of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) in 1969. Under ICSSR various programmes of research was undertaken and funded by the government of India. Over the years universities, research institutes, and other private research agencies have contributed to the establishment of the social science research in the country (Sharma 1992:2642-2643).

Today social science research in India has grown manifold and there are 567 universities with over 500 social science departments; 27 autonomous research bodies and 67 government training and research bodies. It also stated that the number of social science departments in universities has increased from 313 in 1971 to 516 in 2001 (ICSSR 2007:8). The establishment of social science research in India has not been an easy process because problems and challenges related with social science research continues even till date. According to Shamita Sharma (1992: 2643-2645), there are six such problems and broadly they can be put as follows:

i. The dominance of western intellectual tradition in the study of India. The influence is not only in applying western 'concepts, theories and methods of study but also topics of study'. As a result of which many issues concerning India's interest were not adequately studied.

ii. Majority of Indian social scientists are elites and thus research problems 'perceived by them are given priority over the problems of the masses'. There is lack of representation from the masses in social science research in India. The issue of representing women's issues and their problems in social science research is problematic.

iii. The high concentration of social science research in cities and the lack of it in the rural areas. The gap between social science research

and public policy. Economists are an exception because they are engaged in debates with the government on issues concerning policy matters. In the case of other disciplines in social science the same is yet to happen.

iv. The over emphasis on economic issues and the dominance of economists over other disciplines has created a gap in the development of social science research in India. Inter-disciplinary research continues to be a major issue because social science research continues to be discipline – specific. Social science research in India is mostly funded by government or international organisations. The dependence of social scientists on external support limits the scope of autonomy. By giving autonomy and freedom to the researchers, the ICSSR has contributed to the growth of social science research.

v. The braindrain of the highly educated from India in search of better opportunities such as employment, salaries and living conditions, and conducive academic environment, also affects social science research in India.

vi. Apart from the above, there are other problems which have been identified and are affecting social science research and particularly at the level of universities. Problems such as inadequate number of faculty in the social science disciplines; and the use of vernacular languages as the medium of instruction at the post-graduate level have also impacted social science research because from such centres of learning it is doubtful if 'serious research scholars will be produced'(Nair 2002: 4079; Chalam 2002:4080). Some other factors identified by ICSSR (2007:20-23) include lack of 'incisive and original analytical studies; poor quality of research proposals; and shortage of qualified researchers'. One can say that social science research in India has two dimensions: one, its implantation during the colonial period and subsequently its development to suit the Indian context; and the two, the take-off stage after 1950 and the challenges related with complex issues such as theoretical, methodological and the diversity of societies.

Taking into consideration the background and development of social science research at the national level, the paper focuses on the development

and challenges of social science research in the context of northeast India and examines the status of Sociology as one of the disciplines in social science. The paper discusses the subject-matter by making use of the secondary sources as well as the information gathered from the interactions with teachers of sociology from some of the colleges located in urban and rural areas and post-graduate students in the department of sociology, NEHU, Shillong; and the personal observations of the author as a teacher in sociology.

Development of Social Science in northeast India

One of the problems encountered while preparing the paper was limited information on the status of social science and social science research in northeast India. The only available information was few books and in the form of survey of literature. It seems that there has not been any comprehensive empirical study on the development and status of any disciplines under social science in northeast India or on social science. Due to limited information it is difficult for one to provide a holistic picture. However, the author has tried to address and overcome the problem by focusing on sociology and by utilising whatever information is available.

The development of social science research in northeast India can be said to be a product of three processes: the political integration of the region under the colonial administration; the entry of modern organisations such as the Christian missions (namely, the Presbyterian, the Catholic, the Baptist and other denominations), the Ramakrishna Mission and others; and the evolution of the modern state, that is, India from 1950 onwards. Under the colonial administration, the region was directly brought under the colonial authority and control. Depending on whether they live, various societies (tribes and non-tribes) residing in the region were divided into two broad categories - the plains and the hills. Different policies related with administration were formulated for the purpose of political regulation of such areas. Colonial administrators while working in the region, had also prepared reports and documented about the life of different societies in their areas of operation. Such records and documents provided first information or recorded text about tribes and other sections of the population, and those writings continue to be of academic relevance for scholars and others.

The beginning of modern education, that is, the starting of educational institutions from the primary school level to college education was the initiative and effort of modern organisations. Many educational institutions were set-up in many parts of the region by such organisations. In the initial phase, organisations opened primary schools and high schools. Although most of such schools were English medium, there were also schools that followed the vernacular medium. Most of the schools in the hill areas followed the English–medium. The colonial government did open some schools in the region and mostly in the district headquarters.

The beginnings of modern education in the region was also the period when Christian denominations working in the hill areas began to experiment with the Roman script and developed scripts for different tribal dialects. Such experiments in tribal societies became successful and the Bible and other texts were translated into vernacular languages. The introduction of Roman script among the tribes facilitated the emergence of local writers. Educated persons from the tribes began to write and produce literature about their own societies. Secondly, there were missionaries who had learnt tribal languages and they too began to write about tribes.

Literature in the vernacular languages provides raw material to social science enquiries. Most social scientists working in the region or conducting research in the region find it difficult to make use of literature in vernacular languages because of their inability to speak and read local languages and depend heavily on literature available in English. As a result majority of the social scientists have not been able to gather all available and relevant information about tribal societies in the northeast.

On higher education in the region, Guwahati and Kolkata used to be the only centres of university education. On account of high costs of higher education, only few had the capacity to pursue higher education. However, with opening of colleges in Shillong and in other hill stations students from the region had more access to college education (Downs 1992:196-207; Dutta 1983). Today, both in urban and rural areas of the region the number of colleges has increased manifold and such colleges are in the streams of Arts, Science and Commerce; engineering; medical; agriculture and veterinary (Table-1). It should be noted before 1948 colleges from the region were affiliated with Calcutta University.

Table – 1

Number of Higher Educational Institutions (2003-2004)

Institution	Arunachal Pradesh	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Tripura
Arts/ Science & Commerce colleges	8	309	58	49	27	35	14
Engineering colleges	**1**	**3**	**1**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**1**
Agri-cultural colleges	**-**	**2**	**1**	**-**	**-**	**1**	**-**
Veterinary	**-**	**1**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**

Source: Basic Statistics of NER, North Eastern Council, 2006.

The development and transformation of higher education in the region started with the opening of the first university in the region at Guwahati in 1948, and in few decades many more universities were established and the universities are Dibrugarh (1966); North-Eastern Hill University (1973); Manipur University at Imphal (1980); Rajiv Gandhi University at Arunachal Pradesh (1985); Tripura University at Agartala (1994); Assam University at Silchar (1994); Nagaland University at Kohima (1994); Tezpur University at Tezpur (Assam) and Mizoram University at Aizawl. Most universities in the region started with the support of the central government of India. Today barring Guwahati and Dibrugarh universities, others are Central Universities under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. The post-graduate education and research programme in Master in Philosophy (M.Phil) and Doctoral degrees in social science disciplines are found in most universities of the region. Consequently social science research has gradually expanded and grown in size in recent decades (Table -2).

Table – 2

Enrolment by Stages/Classes (2003- 2004)

Stages/ Classes	Arunachal Pradesh	Assam	Manipur	Megha-laya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Tripura
Ph.D/ D.Phil	35	750	438	385	-	17	16
M.A	411	7504	408	1015	364	338	701
M.Sc	46	3976	351	279	-	97	200
M.Com	16	1085	80	66	-	27	88

Source: Basic Statistics of NER, North Eastern Council, 2006

One can point out that the history of modern education in general and higher education in particular in the context of the region has been the contribution of three factors, that is, colonial administration, modern organisations and the nation-state.

The opening of universities has brought about the development of learning in various social science disciplines and social science research in the region. B. Pakem (1988) rightly noted that the university system has contributed to discipline-centric and this could hamper inter-disciplinary studies. In the process, each discipline gets contented with its core issues and leaving out developments which do not fall within the disciplinary boundaries. He also underscored the fact that social science research cannot advance to its fullest intellectual capacity if we fail to take the vernacular language and the vernacular literature into account. These limitations affect the discipline of Sociology as well.

Development of Sociology in India and northeast India

Sociology has gained its place and is accepted as one of the social science disciplines in many universities in India. In the 1930s, Sociology was taught only in four universities: Bombay, Lucknow, Mysore and Hyderabad. In the last seventy to eighty years, Sociology in India has grown and today it is taught in many post-graduate departments. As a discipline it has built up a substantial body of information and knowledge. However, 'the quality of teaching and research in the universities today is highly uneven' (Srinivas 1994:9-10; Beteille 2002a:32). The development

of the discipline has also been due to the support of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) which promotes research in various fields including Sociology; and the formation of professional bodies such as the Indian Sociological Society and the starting of journals like *Sociological Bulletin* and *Contributions to Indian Sociology* have further enhanced the position and academic credibility of Sociology in India (Beteille 2002; Srinivas 1994; Singh 1996).

As a distinct discipline sociology covers wide range of sociological problems and sociologists working on Indian society have focused on sociological subjects such as caste, family, religion, polity, economy, health, gender, social development etc. The most distinctive has been the village studies. However, one of the basic problems of Indian Sociology is related with the aspect of theory and methodology. Beteille noted that Indian sociologists have not been able to be 'innovative both theoretically and methodologically because of their passive dependence on the work of western scholars' (2004b:43). This is one of the reasons Indian sociology has not been able to develop a theory and methodology of its own. Beteille's assertion may be true but it should be noted that the dimension of cumulative and substantive data is the basis of developing theory and methodology. Indian sociologists have been focusing on varied sociological issues and have conducted such works either at the village or regional levels. Most of such works do not provide sufficient data which could lead to generalisation or the basis of theoretical formulation. Another problem Indian sociologists' feel intellectually challenged is the issue of social change. Yogendra Singh (1996:10-13) pointed out that the processes of democratisation, secularisation and the market economy are affecting the Indian society. Such processes of change could affect the way we teach and research sociology in India.

Coming to Sociology in northeast India, the discipline can be said to be an extended family of the parent-universities located in the metropolis. In the opinion of Nikhlesh Kumar, (1998:93) the discipline of Sociology in the region started first in Assam at Dibrugarh University in the mid-1960s. This is the first University that taught post-graduate level course in Sociology in the region. The second department of Sociology started at the North-Eastern Hill University in 1976 at Shillong. Subsequently, with creation of universities in Nagaland, Silchar (Assam) and Tezpur (Assam), the number of post-graduate departments in Sociology offering PG courses

and research programmes has increased to five. Today these universities from the region are producing substantial number of post-graduates in Sociology every year.

With the opening of more departments in Sociology, students completing their under-graduate studies have a choice to opt for Sociology as a subject at the post-graduate level. Initially when the discipline started, it had to depend on students from other streams of social sciences, humanities or sciences to opt for Sociology. However, in the last two decades colleges both in urban and rural areas have started teaching Sociology at the under-graduate level, and the post-graduate departments are getting sufficient applicants for study. And such colleges have become the feeder-points of under-graduate students in Sociology to the post-graduate departments. The growth of the department of Sociology in North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) helps us to understand the matter further.

Earlier NEHU had three campuses - at Shillong (Meghalaya), Aizawl (Mizoram) and Kohima (Nagaland). Most of the colleges located in the three states were affiliated to NEHU. When the department of Sociology started in Shillong campus there was no undergraduate college in the hills that taught Sociology and the PG department had to look for students from other streams to opt sociology. It was only in 1982 the Pachchunga University College in Aizawl affiliated to NEHU started the under-graduate level course in Sociology. The author recollects that in 1986 when he joined the post-graduate programme in Sociology at NEHU there was only one student who had honours degree in Sociology and the rest of the students had honours degrees in other disciplines, like Khasi, Commerce, History, Political Science, Home Science, Zoology etc. Few years later, the under-graduate course in Sociology started in St. Edmund's College and St. Mary's College; and gradually, the Department of Sociology began to get students with honours degree in Sociology. In the last one decade more colleges have started Sociology and the number of students pursuing Sociology at the under-graduate level has increased and there has been a steady growth in the number of under-graduate students with honours degree in Sociology. Today, the department at NEHU admits only students with an honours degree in Sociology. The number of applications for PG course in Sociology far exceeds the number of seats prescribed. The increase in the number of applicants is also because many students

from other universities seek admission in NEHU. The demand that the students from affiliated colleges be given preference over the students coming from other universities led to a change in the policy of admission to the general post-graduate courses in NEHU. The policy of admission (NEHU 2007-2008a:6-9) that is followed by NEHU is as follows:

The distribution of seats in the Department of Sociology at NEHU is as follows:

i) Open category – 40%.

ii) Reserved for SC/ST – 50%. Other things being equal, preference will be given to domiciles of Meghalaya.

iii) Reserved for physically challenged – 3%. Such applicants will be examined by a medical board.

iv) University quota – 7%, earmarked for the following categories:

   a) Educationally backward areas - The level of backwardness shall be determined vis-à-vis national level of literacy (base 2001 census). The literacy rate at the block level would form the basis of award of added marks. Certificate in this regard should be issued by the BDO.

   b) Outstanding Sports women/men – Weightage shall be given as shown in the table below:

   c) NEHU employees their spouse and children – a weightage of 10 shall be added to the marks obtained in the qualifying examination. Certificate of employment should be issued by the office of the Registrar.

   d) Widows/wards of armed forces personnel killed/disabled in action or during peace time.

The admission policy also states that, *"in case of students who (a) graduated from colleges affiliated to or maintained by NEHU or (b) are permanent domiciles of Meghalaya (supported by SC/ST or Permanent Resident Certificate) graduating from other universities, the percentage of marks obtained in the subject concerned shall be raised by 10. In case of those candidates who have not offered the subject in the Honours no such*

weightage shall be given and their marks in the Honours subject without weightage shall be taken into account".

Like any other Central university, NEHU follows the reservation policy of the government of India. However, it has also given more leverage to students from colleges affiliated to it and to students who are permanent domiciles of Meghalaya. The outcome from such processes of admission has led to admitting more number of students from affiliated colleges under NEHU and residents of Meghalaya than those coming from outside. The example can be drawn from the PG departments under the School of Social Sciences NEHU (Table -3).

Table – 3

Number of Students Admitted at the Post-Graduate Level (Social Science)

Department	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribe	General	Male	Female	Megha-laya	Other States
History	0	50	0	21	29	27	23
Political Science	0	46	1	20	27	32	15
Sociology	1	39	5	15	30	25	20
BA.LLB	2	29	19	14	36	25	25
Total	3	164	25	70	122	109	83

Source: Thirty-third Annual Report, NEHU (183-211), 2006-2007, Shillong.

As a consequence of the new admission policy, more students from Meghalaya are able to get admission into different courses. However, the number of students coming from the rural areas of Meghalaya is marginal. The department of Sociology hardly receives applicants from students belonging to tribal communities such as Garo, Biate, Hajong. The reasons are because the few colleges in the rural areas that have started the under-graduate course in Sociology offer only the pass-course, not honours. In Garo hills there are no colleges that teach Sociology at the under-graduate level. Since the under-graduate honours degree in Sociology is offered only in urban areas like Shillong, most students pursuing post-graduate degree in Sociolgy happen to be city-dwellers. The geographical and ethnic composition of students entering PG is likely to have an impact on academic engagement and vibrancy of the department.

Teaching and Research in Sociology

In the preceding discussion the aspects of development of sociology in the region has been outlined. To gain more insight and understanding of the position of sociology in northeast India, five areas have been selected: teaching sociology at the under-graduate level; sociology at the post-graduate level; research degree in sociology; sociological literature and the future of sociological research in northeast India. The observations are general and based on the illustrations from NEHU.

Being fairly a new subject, Sociology is often equated with social work or perceived as relatively an easy subject or a subject that can provide solutions to social problems. Coming to the issue of Sociology at the under-graduate level, the affiliated colleges of NEHU can broadly be classified into two groups: colleges that taught Sociology as a subject both for pass-course and honours degree level; and colleges that taught Sociology only as a pass-course subject. Majority of the colleges in the former category are located in the city of Shillong and the latter are mostly located in the rural areas of the state. The city-based colleges are the ones that supply students with honours degree in Sociology to the post-graduate department at NEHU.

The quality of students, teaching and research at university level depend considerably on the experiences of students at undergraduate level. Most students never had any introductory background in Sociology. Consequently many students find it difficult to comprehend the basic concepts and theory. This is more so in the case of those students who are weak in the English language. Some undergraduate teachers teaching in urban as well as rural colleges admit that they had to explain sociological concepts to the students in the vernacular language (Khasi). Even though students could capture the meanings of such concepts, barring few students from elite English medium colleges, most students find it difficult to articulate them in English. Another issue is the access to the study materials. It is found that most of the textbooks prescribed in the syllabi are not easily available in the city of Shillong. In general students do not have access to good text books and classics and also because most cannot afford to buy good books available in the market, they fall beckon on guides like “Sociology Made-Easy”, a commercial publication which claims to teach everything about sociology. According to one vendor in

the city of Shillong, the demand for *Sociology Made-Easy* is high. When the author asked one under-graduate student in Sociology if he had read any standard text book, his answer was in the negative. Another student said that he did not refer to text books because classroom teaching is based on dictation of notes and he used the lecture notes as ready-made reading materials for examination. It seems to be the pattern that teaching Sociology at the under-graduate level in most cases is providing notes in the classroom to students. Such notes are used as the basic academic resource for information and knowledge by students. Notes driven lectures seems to serve the purpose of clearing the exams. Due to time constraints, very few teachers in undergraduate colleges adopt discussions in the classroom as method of teaching.

Teachers at the under-graduate level face different problems. A teacher has to take four to five classes per day and each class is of fifty minutes duration. It is a challenging task for the teacher to handle different topics in one day. As per rules, minimum number of teachers in colleges that teach Sociology should be two, whereas in colleges that teach both pass course and honours degree, there should be four teachers. It is often found that even in colleges that have four teachers and all share equal workload, the remuneration differs from teacher to teacher. While one teacher gets the UGC scale, two teaching positions are declared as are college sanctioned posts and fourth teacher is hired on part-time basis. In most colleges the teachers' monthly remuneration is approximately Rs.2000/- per month. In such adverse situation, retaining and motivating the teachers and expecting them to inspire the students to opt / study sociology is a difficult task.

At the post-graduate level, the admitted students are those with honours degree in sociology. Students have to adapt and adjust to the semester system and include 'internal tests and assignments'. Since PG teaching is lecture-driven and discussions and not note-driven lectures, students have not been able to cope well and particularly in the first two-semesters. When students are asked to share their views and opinions or raised questions hardly there is a response. The cause of the problem is not that students cannot speak but because they have been made to listen and copy notes and over the years this has affected their spirit of participation and the confidence to speak. Students informed that they fear to speak-out because they think that what they will say will be wrong

or raising questions means being disrespectful towards teachers. It is mindset-syndrome that students have been influenced right from school to the under-graduate level. A post–graduate level teacher has to make extra efforts to make them speak-up. On the issue of collecting and compiling of information students take time to learn and consult various text books or materials for any particular sociological subject-matter and have to spend time in library.

At the PG level, teaching of Sociology is at the advanced stage and teachers take for granted that honours degree students are well versed with the basic sociological concepts. It is found to be not so, a teacher has to provide explanation on basic sociological concepts and also link the discussion with the PG topic, this process takes lot of time and efforts. Such challenges at the post-graduate teaching raises some fundamental questions on how to teach the basic fundamentals of Sociology at the under-graduate level, enhance the level comprehension and self-expression of students or whether Sociology and teaching Sociology should be more course-oriented or student-oriented or compliment both the course and the student is an issue that deserves attention and discussion.

At the level of M.Phil and Doctoral Programme, the Department of Sociology has been admitting students and has produced positive results. However, in the last few years the research programme had undergone many challenges. When the department had more number of teachers who could supervise, the number of students admitted was more. At present, the department can only admit few students per session and the number of applicants has increased. The department cannot admit more students because the teachers on roll who can supervise are less in numbers. The reason is because of the failure to fill in the vacant teaching positions. Very few candidates apply for vacant teaching positions, especially at Associate Professors' and Professors' level. The lack of qualified teachers or the lack of mobility of teachers from other parts of the country and the lack of qualified teachers from the region impede teaching and research in the university. Considering these factors, one can say that the future of Sociology at NEHU or in northeast India or elsewhere in the country is not very promising.

Reviewing the sociological literature in northeast India, in his book, *Survey of Literature in Sociology and Social Anthropology in northeast India (1970-1990),* Nikhlesh Kumar (1999:46) has made some pertinent

observations. According to him, 'the number of empirical studies was less. The studies lack rigour in theory and methodology, and there is also an absence of empirical studies with a comparative perspective'. He pointed out that the sociological literature in the region focused on tribal ethnography; institutions in tribal societies; tribal beliefs system; land tenure systems; ethnic unrest and protest movements; status of women; change, development and impact of various developmental schemes. In the department of Sociology, NEHU, at M.Phil and Ph.D. level, studies have been undertaken on social structure of tribal societies; social movements; land and agrarian situations; village studies; women issues; unemployment; health etc. Most of the research thesis at the doctoral level are empirical, explorative and descriptive in nature. This is bound to happen because sociological research under the university system is at the inception stage and that there is hardly any comprehensive empirical data on any of the tribal societies in the region.

The future of sociological research in northeast India is compounded with many challenges. Nikhlesh Kumar (1999) identified language as one of the key barriers in conducting scientific field-based research. Different tribes have different languages and mere knowing of a language may not necessarily 'facilitate' fieldwork. On this aspect I would like to share my own experiences. As a researcher I can speak, write and understand the Khasi language with ease, and could manage to develop rapport with the villagers I was studying. By knowing the vernacular language I managed to distinguish kinship terminologies that are used in everyday life and what they mean to the residents of the village. For example, villagers in general would address and use the term 'Bah' (meaning brother) for adult males and 'Kong' (meaning sister) for adult females. Such terms are used as a respectful way of addressing adult members of the society. It is done so because, the Khasi society in general or the village in particular follows common social values and norms. Such terms do not suggest relations by consanguinity. When similar terms are used by siblings in the family the meanings signify real kin relations or consanguine relations. Thus merely knowing a language may not necessarily provide sociological understanding unless one is well–versed with terms and their meaning in the social discourse of any given society.

Another type of challenges that anyone conducting fieldwork encounters is the problem of interpretation. By and large the literature in

social sciences in general or Sociology in particular paid little attention this aspect. There are many cases where vernacular terms have been equated with some English words, or with acceptable terms used in social science literature. If the meanings of vernacular terms are not properly examined and contextually understood, one arrives at wrong conclusions. For example, which some social scientists working on the Khasi society have generally equated the Khasi term 'Bakhraw' with the English term lord or noblemen. It is misinterpretation of the actual meaning given by the Khasi society. When you equate such term with nobleman you are suggesting that the society is either feudal or aristocratic. If you examine closely with a scientific mind the Khasi society does not have any features or characteristics in its social structure that signify feudal or aristocratic social structure. When the Khasi use the term 'Bakhraw', the context is important and significant. This term is used while referring to persons of knowledge and wisdom or to persons who have done outstanding service to society or to persons of high esteem and whose life and works is above any normal persons or to those clan members who have played crucial role in the processes of chieftainship formation. Therefore, equating the term with nobleman or noblemen is sociologically incorrect in the case of the Khasi society. If anyone is studying tribal societies one will come across many terms and how such terms are translated or equated can provide either correct understanding or misinterpretation about the society. Social science research in northeast India requires not only proper application of theory and methodology, but also proper understanding of local languages.

Identifying the factors influencing social change in northeast India and understanding the emerging issues is another set of challenges for research in Sociology. Factors of change could be located in the social structure of the society or caused by external agencies or could be due to both factors. Emerging issues related to development policies and programmes, their impact on different sectors or different sections of the people, the issues concerning crimes, education, welfare, empowerment and democratization, etc., present immense challenges to research scholars and social scientists. Social science disciplines in general and sociology in particular are yet to collect sufficient and comprehensive empirical data on the tribal societies and on the other would also have to deal with emerging issues.

Conclusion

Establishment of different universities in northeast India has promoted the growth of social science disciplines, including Sociology. However, local-centric or state-centric nature of the universities has undermined the idea of university as a centre where students and faculty from diverse social backgrounds engage in learning and research. The quality of social science teaching and research is affected also by facilities and intellectual training that students receive at under-graduate level and the availability of qualified manpower at the university level.

Social science research in general and the discipline of Sociology in particular have made certain progress. By and large, the progress has been in gathering and compounding empirical data on some of the tribal societies. There are many tribal societies which are yet to be scientifically studied. Even in the case of those tribal societies which have been scientifically studied, the data available is sufficient enough to proceed to the next level of theoretisation. The other aspect linked with theoretical studies is having sufficient knowledge of the vernacular languages of the region. Majority of scholars are yet to acquire the knowledge of vernacular languages and discern the meanings of the vernacular terms and expressions. In this sense, the progress of social science research seems to be stymied by several factors.

Lastly, tribal societies of northeast India have been going through various processes of social transformation, giving rise to new issues. Absence of reliable data on these issues affects our understanding of the processes of change and the emerging issues in the region. The future of Sociology depends on how we overcome these challenges.

Thus, one can argue that the status of Sociology today and tomorrow would depend on how it can overcome these challenges.

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Social Exclusion and Ethnicity in Northeast India

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Abstract

Social exclusion is a multidimensional term that encompasses social, economic, political and cultural spheres. Exclusion is linked to the recognition of social identities, resource allocations and power relations. In most cases, both subjective consciousness and actual inequalities lead to ethnic assertions and extremist activities. Unlike other studies on ethnicity and extremism, the present article tries to understand ethnic assertions in northeast India in the context of rampant social exclusion taking place in the region.

Keywords: Social Exclusion, Ethnicity, Nation-Building, Tribal Community, Extremism.

Northeast India is known to other parts of India and world as the hotpot of ethnic violence, extremism and insurgency. The region witnessed the emergence of a number of extremist organizations challenging the sovereignty and integrity of the Indian state. These include United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), National Democratic Front of Bodoland, National Socialist Council of Nagalim, Kuki National Army, Garo Liberation Front, Bru National Liberation Front, National Liberation Front of Tripura, Hmar People's Convention (Democratic), Zomi Revolutionary Army, All Tripura Tigers Force, Liberation Tigers of Arunachal, National Liberation Army of Arunachal, United Liberation Tigers of Arunachal, Revolutionary Army of Arunachal Pradesh, etc. The demands of these extremist groups vary from autonomy to secessionism and sovereignty. Since independence, this region witnessed the emergence of number of movements which mobilized the people on ethnic lines. For instance, the Assam Movement of 1979-84 was against illegal migration and protection of Assamese identity, the Naga movement can be seen in the context of crisis of Naga identity and the Mizo movement was

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the outcome of the neglect of Central and state governments during the famine. Though India adopted liberal democracy with inherent institutional safeguards for the protection of the interest of various communities and groups, extremist tendencies based on ethnicity is taking roots in recent past. In this context, it is pertinent to ask the question as to why extremist trends are developing in a liberal democracy.

The ethnic mobilization often leads to virulent form of extremism and violence in a society. Extremism is a tactic adopted by a group or individual to achieve their goals which are not reflected or achieved through normal channels of liberal democracy. In the present world, no society is free from extremist challenges of one or the other forms. Ted Gurr views that violent or extremist acts pose a threat to the political system in two senses: "they challenge the monopoly of force imparted to the state in political theory; and, in functional terms, they are likely to interfere with and, if severe, to destroy normal political processes" (Gurr, 1970: 4).

Understanding Social Exclusion

Exclusion is a multidimensional process covering social, economic, cultural and political domains. Exclusion is linked to the recognition of social identities, resource allocations and power relations. Marshall Wolfe talks about various kinds of social exclusion – exclusion from livelihood, exclusion from social services, welfare and security networks, exclusion from political choice, exclusion from popular organization and solidarity, and exclusion from understanding of what is happening (Wolf, 1995: 81-101). Social exclusion refers to both individual exclusion and group exclusion from society, other groups or individuals. It results in the denial of access to opportunities, public goods, public offices and institutions and self respect in the public spheres. It is argued that "social exclusion is about the inability of our society to keep all groups and individuals within reach of what we expect as a society . . . or to release their full potentials" (Power and Wilson, 2000:27). The socially excluded is deprived of social recognition, self-respect and social values. The basis of exclusion can be race, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, region, or caste. Each form of exclusion has its nature and manifestation.

The issue of social exclusion is usually related to the problem of equal opportunity. Though modern liberal democracies formally recognize full citizenship, very often it create unequal citizenship in actual practice, as the structural accommodation through citizenship and affirmative action policies fail to bring about the desired change. Charles Taylor argues that there is an inbuilt tendency towards exclusion in liberal democratic states "arising from the fact that democracies work well when people know one another, trust one another, and feel a sense of commitment toward one another" (Taylor, 1998: 147). Human history is a history of struggle for equal share in public resources and equal opportunity for occupying public institutions. Social exclusion results in injustice to certain communities as it denies the access to public offices and primary goods. Rawls, for instance, in his celebrated theory of justice viewed that opening of institutions and distribution of primary goods as means to ensure social justice (Rawls, 1971).

Conceptualizing Ethnicity

After having explained social exclusion, it is pertinent to understand the concept of ethnicity. Ethnicity is often identified with the ideas of primordialism based on descent, race, kinship, territory, language, history, etc. It is also related to the memory of a golden age which is closely linked to a sense of collective destiny. Ethnicity is defined as "the sense of collective belonging to a named community of common myths or origin and shared memories, associated with an historic homeland" (Smith, 1999: 262). Ethnicity also refers to some form of group identity related to a group of persons who accept and define themselves by a consciousness of common descent or origin, shared historical memories and connections (Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhall and Rothchild, 1988: 35). Ethnicity can be classified into two groups - instrumental ethnicity which emanates from material deprivation – and symbolic ethnicity based on one's anxiety to preserve one's cultural identity (Noyoo, 2000: 57).

Ethnicity entails a subjective belief in common ancestry. Ethnic membership is based on group identity and often identities would be invented or constructed. In certain cases, ethnic identity is intrinsically connected with language. Language is very often becomes a maker of cultural differences. Ethnicity is often considered as the outward expression of discrimination – discrimination in access to resources and opportunities.

Such "discrimination is built into the normal operating procedures of institutions" (Yinger, 1997: 169). T.K. Oommen identifies six reasons for the process of ethnification. First, a nation may continue to be in its ancestral or adopted homeland and yet it may be ethnified by the colonizing or native dominant collectivity. That is, the link between territory and culture should not be viewed merely as a physical phenomenon. Second, the denial of full-fledged participation in the economy and polity to an immigrant collectivity which had adopted a new land as its homeland. Thirdly, the tendency on the part of a settler collectivity to identify with its ancestral homeland even after several decades, sometimes even after centuries, of immigration. Fourthly, ethnification also occurs when a state attempts to 'integrate' and homogenize the different nations in its territory into a common people. Fifthly, if those who migrate to alien lands are denied basic human and citizenship rights even when they become eligible for them, they are ethnified in that they are treated as strangers and outsiders. Finally, even when immigrants are accepted as co-nationals by the host society, the former may not want that identity and might wish to return to their homeland (Oommen, 1997: 13-15). Thus, one can see that Oommen's analysis of ethnification is more related to the process of social exclusion.

Social Exclusion and Ethnic Identity Formation

Social exclusion, in many cases, leads to identity assertion which in turn causes conflict, sometimes violent. Social exclusion leads to crisis at individual level, societal level, national level and international level. Individual self cannot be located within the community which is facing some level of identity crisis. Identity crisis, in turn, problematize political boundary and national imagination of the nation state. Social exclusion is closely linked with material exclusion – exclusion from land, from other productive assets or from market for good. In his study on ethnicity Paul Brass identified that ethnic identity formation involves three processes. Firstly, "within the ethnic group itself for control over its material and symbolic resources", secondly, "between ethnic groups as a competition for rights, privileges, and available resources", and thirdly, "between the state and the groups that dominate it, on the one hand, and the populations that inhabit its territory on the other" (Brass, 1991: 247).

Social exclusion is a process and state that prevents groups from full participation in social, economic and political life and from asserting their rights. (Beall and Piron, 2005) It is viewed that "ethnicity or ethnic identity also involves, in addition to subjective self-consciousness, a claim to status and recognition, either as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups" (Brass, 1991: 19). The civic nationalism championed by modern nation state has bearing on the emergence of ethnic cleavages in a multicultural society. It is argued that "although not always as conflict prone as ethnic nationalism, civic nationalism may be discriminatory as well, if only in the sense that it does not acknowledge ethnic differences and thus potentially deprives members of ethnic communities other than a country's dominant group from opportunities to preserve, express, and develop their distinct identities" (Wolf, 2006: 32).

Amartya Sen says that sense of one's identity creates a sense of exclusion from mainstream and in "many cases carry with it the perception of distance and divergence from other groups" (Sen, 2006: 2) Constructing a national identity and in the process ignoring the specificities of smaller communities further creates exclusionary tendencies. In liberal democracies, governance diffuses tensions between the state and the people. Democratic institutions are not merely the instruments for running the affairs of the government, but are also the agents of mediating the interests between various social classes. Institutions are expected to respond to the democratic needs of the people.

Raphael Zariski while analyzing ethnic extremism among the ethno territorial minorities in Western Europe analyses three dimensions of ethnic extremism - willingness to resort to violence, ethnic exclusiveness and separatism. First dimension, according to him, was "the readiness of a political actor to resort to the use of violence to achieve proclaimed objectives, even when there are legal avenues available for pursuing these goals". The second dimension of ethnic extremism is cultural and political exclusiveness. According to Raphael, "members of some ethnic minorities are very reluctant to seek political support from other ethnic groups or to make any effort to admit willing recruits from such groups to their ranks". The third dimension is creating a feeling of separatism and leading to separatist movements (Zariski, 1989: 253-254).

The Case of Northeast India

The northeastern region of India is often described as the cultural mosaic of India consisting of diverse tribal communities, linguistic, and ethnic identities. Often these identities transcend the territorial and social boundaries drawn by the Indian state and the larger community respectively. The region, connected to the mainland India with the 22 k. m. long "Chicken-Neck Corridor", consists of eight states and has international border with neighbouring countries, namely Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, China, and Bhutan. In the international scene, it is a strategic location linked to South and South-East Asia. From internal security point of view, the region is known for the 'problem states', experiencing law and order problems, inter and intra tribal conflicts and human rights violations by the security forces.

The politics of northeast India is marked by ethnicity and extremism for a long time. The assertion of various ethnic identities and the attitude of the state in containing ethnic extremism make the region distinct from the rest of India. The root cause of ethnic assertion can be found in the identity crisis of various tribal communities who extend over the territorial boundaries drawn by the Indian nation state. Most of the ethnic assertions are due to ethnic groups' desperate attempts to protect their identity, culture and language. For instance, it is argued that "claims to ethno-nationalism of the Bodos can be interpreted as closely intertwined with issues of institutional and social exclusion based on language politics" (Saikia, 2011: 60). In other words, the basis of ethnic assertion can be seen in two contexts. Firstly, the tribal communities' subjective consciousness of being excluded, oppressed and marginalized. Secondly, the process of development failed to address the legitimate concerns of the people. Though after independence the Indian state tried to integrate and assimilate various ethnic communities in the mainstream national identity, the development process generated a feeling of alienation among them. Moreover, development led to the unequal distribution of resources across the communities and regions. Thus, both non-economic (subjective consciousness) and economic (material) factors created a sense of exclusion among the some ethnic communities.

In northeast India, the fear of exclusion started even before Independence. The Nagas foresaw the possibility of exclusion in postcolonial India in the event of their integration with Indian Union, and

started mobilizing Nagas for a separate nation free from the clutches of the Indian state. Moreover, they also felt that their community life and values would be threatened with the increasing number of the majority communities from other parts of India. The sense of social exclusion in the northeast was articulated with the emergence of new social forces – educated elite, students and youth groups, etc. The reasons for the emergence of social forces in the northeast include: the impact of Christianity on the socio-cultural life of the people, spread of education, etc. Oommen identified three major agents of change among the tribes of northeast India – the state, the civil society (of which the Church is the major element) and the market forces. (Oommen, 2009: 10). Ethnic identity provided the grouping ground for their mobilization. Like Dalit mobilization started among the educated sections of Mahars in Maharashtra, these social forces articulated the grievances of the communities. It is argues that the Youth who feel alienated from society and excluded from job opportunities and decision making may turn to ethnic mobilization. Karna argued that the process of ethnic identity formation in the northeast region was based on the idea of large group formation (Karna, 1991). Moreover, the social exclusion of ethnic communities has a dialectical link with psychological exclusion of the tribal communities of the region. These include exclusion from deliberative institutions due to their lack of cognitive orientation and the epistemological inequality due to lack of access to epistemological resources. The impersonization of their social, cultural, economic and political life by people from other communities or modern state further accelerated this process.

Ethnic Exclusion and Nation-Building Process

Among the various actors involved in the exclusionary practices, nation-states constitute the major instrument. In other words, the nation-state itself often creates exclusion of certain ethnic communities. This exclusionary strategy is best depicted by Andres Wimmer who argued that "in many cases, minorities are meant to remain permanently outside of the sphere of national imagination but inside the state's territory" (Wimmer, 2006: 339). While endorsing this view in a different context, Stefan Wolf states that neither ethnicity nor nationalism in itself causes ethnic conflict and, however, when state or government ignore the legitimate political, social, and economic grievances of disadvantaged ethnic groups contribute to ethnic conflict. (Wolf, 2006: 5).

In India, freedom from the British did not bring any solace to the communities of the region as the dominant nationality suppressed the smaller nationalities. The major factors that contributed to the social exclusion and subsequent emergence of ethnic mobilization are the pitfalls of nation-building process, the faulty modernization process, and the nature of the nation-state. The nation-building process undermined the specificities of ethnic minorities of the region generated fears among them. The modernization, especially the capitalist modernization weaned away the traditional values, norms and practices which are inherent in the tribal communities. Moreover, the modern nation state erected arbitrary territorial boundaries, in place of traditional ethnic boundaries.

After independence, India's constitutional democracy instead of adopting a confrontationist approach followed a policy of accommodation and assimilation. The Constitution of India provides institutional accommodation for tribal communities of northeast India through various measures like protective discrimination policies. In some states in the region, the interests of tribal communities are protected by invoking Inner Line Permit (for instance, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram) and special provisions. The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution gives special status to the traditional institutions and makes provisions for the creation of autonomous district councils. In spite of all these accommodations, the tribal communities are confronting with multiple kinds of exclusion. Moreover, all these institutional mechanisms proved to be futile when the State and its institutions indulge in human rights' violations.

In the process of nation-building some communities were left out either because of their low numerical strength or due to low bargaining power with the power structure. Though the postcolonial states initiated a number of policies to ensure 'inclusiveness' for the discontented communities, the efforts did not yield much result. Initially most of the discontent was manifested in a more peaceful manner and latter it assumed extremist posture. The Naga movement first began in 1947 as a peaceful movement and when the Indian state undertook counter insurgency activities, it took a violent turn affecting the life and property of the individual. In the western context, nation created state, while in India the states is in the process of constructing the nation and instilling national consciousness among the people. When the state with its all powerful authority constructs nation

and wider national identity it often meets with a problem. Sometimes in this process the state imposes its will and authority on the people. In other words, while the state is engaging in nation-building through the construction of national identity, smaller identities move in the opposite direction, when they feel that they are about to lose their identity. In this context, various ethnic groups are seeking larger space in state and are trying to protect their peculiar identity. The state initiative to integrate all communities and groups proved to be counter-productive. As Roy argues that the "formation of a rebel consciousness in the ethnic formation is an obvious corollary of this hegemonic goal of the Indian state. The 'rebel consciousness' has found articulation in the formation of 'nations from below' which, by nature, contests the state-centric Indian nation" (Roy, 2005: 2176).

The postcolonial development process tried to integrate and assimilate ethnic communities towards the mainstream development process while ignoring their cultural and economic specificities. The centralized planning and the capitalist modernization further lead to the exclusion of various tribal communities from mainstream. Biswas and Suklabaidya view that "the tribal life-world suffered heavily owing to the introduction of the state sponsored agencies to govern development" (Biswas and Suklabaidya, 2008: 124). It is argued that "the governmental machinery created only a top down administration within which the local self-governance and traditional institutions of various tribes could retain a nominal presence. Rather it gave rise to intense conflict between traditional institutions and state government leading to an unaccountable condition of development" (Ahmed and Biswas, 2004: 5). Though, not in largescale, the capitalist development strain the relationship between culture and nature. The indigenous way of development was disturbed by the penetration of the capitalist development leading to underdevelopment, displacement of communities from their settlement and livelihood and erosion of community life.

The postcolonial modernization initiated by the newly independent India generated some kind of discontent among the communities leading towards violence. As Gurr observes, "if discontented people have or get constructive means to attain their social and material goals, few will resort to violence. Only men who are enraged are likely to prefer violence despite the availability of effective nonviolent means for satisfying their

expectations" (Gurr, 1970: 317). While analyzing ethnic unrest in Assam, Hiren Gohain identifies two possible factors responsible for the transition of ethnic movements to armed militancy. Firstly, "the naxalite theory in the late 1960s identified the Indian state as a 'prison-home of nationalities' and encouraged armed revolt among such oppressed tribal groups against the Indian state". Secondly, "as with the determined armed opposition of the state to the most overwhelming mass movements, tribal leaders came to the end of their tether" (Gohain, 1997: 391).

The Indian state and the governmental machinery often treat extremist activities as a mere law and order problem. The state, in this context, became more repressive often invoking the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958. The state government, under the provisions of the Act, can declare any areas as disturbed and give a free hand to the armed forces to arrest a person on the basis of mere suspicion. The state repression in the name of counter insurgency leads to human rights violations. When the state considers extremism a law and order problem, the response was the invocation of draconian laws on the innocent civilians who mostly belong to tribal communities. Apart from perceiving ethnicity and extremism as mere law and order problem and firmly deal with it through army, police and other paramilitary forces, at times the state also opens up the door for dialogue and negotiation with the extremists groups.

Insider vs Outsider Phenomenon

In some parts of the northeast, the issue of ethnic identity assertion is related to migration that resulted in a sense of exclusion. This region since Independence witnessed migration of Bangladeshis, Nepalese and migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The 'insider' and 'outsider' syndrome crippled the social, political, economic and cultural life of the tribal communities. In Tripura, the indigenous tribal population became landless and land alienation of tribal to Bengali migration. The tribal community was reduced to minority and the migrant Bengalis emerged as the dominant force. The threat to their survival due to illegal migration created further social exclusion. Apart from creating a feeling of 'us' and 'them', it led to the alienation of natural resources and cultural specificities of ethnic groups leading to identity crisis. As Fernandes argues that "given their symbiotic relationship with the land and the close link between natural resources and culture, the affected ethnic groups view the

land shortages also as an attack on their identity" (Fernandes, 2004:4610). The material existence of tribal communities was threatened by the influx of migration, occupation of key government jobs by non-tribals leading to their further exclusion. The phenomenon of ethnic extremism is further activated by declining jobs opportunities in the government sector.

Ethnic communities feel in terms of "us" and "them" in the process of generating ethnic consciousness. This feeling emerges out of one group or community realizes its relative deprivation in comparison with others. Ethnicity, in this context, is the "phenomenon of an ethnic group coming to self-awareness that enables it to reaffirm its identity and pursue its interests" (Heredia, 1997: 1011). The frustration of the unemployed youth was utilized by the extremist organizations to serve their interests. The demands of the extremist groups are varying from autonomy to secessionism. They often challenge the sovereignty and integrity of the nation-state. The assertion of ethnic identity and the accompanying extremist tendencies are related to the feeling of losing one's own identity, marginalization and exploitation by others.

Elite Formation and the Emergence of Middle Class

The problem of ethnicity and extremism is further aggregated by the regional consciousness aroused by elites, especially the middle class (Singh, 1998; Baruah, 1991; Sharma, 1990). Both in the western context and India in general, the middle class is viewed as the champion of liberal democracy promoting democratic values such as toleration, liberty, equality and justice. However, in the northeast, the middle class can be seen as the promoter of ethnic extremist movements. For instance, the Assam movement emerged as Assamese middle class movements whose interest was mostly affected by the migration of outsiders (Baruah, 1991).

Another dimension of the elite formation in the tribal communities is that the dominant communities allied with state power exclude certain groups from accessing resources, institutions and opportunities, generating a feeling of exclusion of other groups. In such situation, smaller ethnic communities assert for resources and opportunities. The assertion of marginalized identities and its extremist posture are giving a new direction to state politics. In this context, democratic politics is overshadowed by ethnic politics. The elite within the ethnic communities mobilize people in

ethnic manner to realize its goals. As Brass argues, "the cultural norms, values, and practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites in competition for political power and economic advantage" (Brass, 1991: 15). The assertion of Hmars in Mizoram against the domination of Mizos and the assertion of Garos against Khasis in Meghalaya is a self-evident factor to prove this argument.

From Ethnicity to Ethnic Politics

The ethnic demand for homeland created a number of smaller states in the northeast. For instance, the greater Assam was balkanized into Nagaland (1963), Meghalaya (1972), Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram (1987) to meet the demands of these ethnic groups. However, mere making of territorial boundary did not solve the problem; on the contrary, it further aggregated it. It is argued that the creation of separate state further fanned the fire when "various smaller and bigger communities started to demand establishment of more states; on the other hand, the state showed their inability to deliver the basic goods" (Madhab, 1999: 320). The denial of basic goods to various communities can be seen in the larger contest of denial of social justice for the communities. John Rawls, the contemporary American philosopher, in fact, states that the discrimination of primary goods such as basic rights and liberties and self-respect, income and wealth, etc. as the precondition for ensuring justice in a society (Rawls, 1971). In the context of India, Ambrose Pinto states that "the competition for power among different social and ethnic groups was legitimized on the premise that all social and ethnic groups will have equal space and opportunities. However, with the majoritarian groups or the dominant social group gradually aspiring for power; the attempt was to create a national culture. In the process the ethnic groups have felt marginalized and rejected. The culture of ethnic groups remains restricted to private expression within the group with no attempts to include it, in spite of the constitutional slogan of 'unity in diversity" (Pinto, 2000: 189). Moreover, it is viewed that, "when the state fails as the principal agent of socio-economic transformation and cannot ensure distributive justice to its citizens, it tends to become increasingly coercive" (Misra, 2002: 3784). Further, the creation of smaller territorial units acceding to the demands of the dominant ethnic community in a region often threaten the existence and survival of numerically less ethnic communities as the positions and

jobs and resources were monopolized the dominant ethnic group. The Hmar problem in Mizoram and the Garos disadvantageous positions in accessing resources and positions in Meghalaya are such examples forcing them to arouse ethnic feeling and violent mobilization. While the making of territorial boundary satisfied the dominant ethnic community, it created despair for the minority ethnic economic communities. As a result, the level of extremist activities percolated from one level to another.

The ethnic mobilization assumes an extremist posture when various ethnic movement arousing emotive issues to expand its mass base among the society. The Mizo National Famine Front formed under the leadership of Laldenga used the famine situation of 1959 to arouse ethnic consciousness and later turned it into an underground movement. The Assam Language Movement (1960-70) raised the issue of making the Assamiya language as the medium of instruction upto graduation level in addition to existing English language. As Srikanth argues, "by provoking national and ethnic identities, the Assam agitation has prepared the ground for the rise of militancy in Assam" (Srikanth, 2000: 4122). The emergence of ULFA as a militant extremist organization was a radical offshoot of the Assam movement. When Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) turned to a political party after the Assam Accord of 1985, ULFA continued its extremist path.

Another kind of social exclusion visible is in the area of language. The introduction of alien language over local language also created ethnic mobilization. The early movements in Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland is due to the domination of Assamese. The Assam Official Language Act 1960, had its repercussion on the Mizos, Khasis, Garos and Bodos, and it further rekindled the regional consciousness among the divergent ethnic groups in the United Assam. For instance, the people of Khasis Hills, Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills under the leadership of the All Party Hill Leaders Conference demanded separate state. There are criticisms against popularizing Hindi in Arunachal Pradesh.

Ethnicity to Ethnic Conflicts

In the debate on social exclusion and ethnicity it is pertinent to examine reasons behind the extremist positions taken by some extremist groups when they are moving away from normal democratic process provided by constitutions and other institutions. The multidimensional

manifestation of social exclusion is articulated by the emerging social forces leading to ethnic based conflict in a society. It is argued that:

> Social exclusion is a leading cause of conflict and insecurity in many parts of the world. Excluded groups that suffer multiple disadvantages may come together when they have unequal rights, are denied a voice in political processes and feel marginalized from the mainstream of their society. Peace may be the first step, such as marches, strikes and demonstrations. But if this has no effect, or if governments react violently to such protests, then groups are more likely to resort to violent conflict if they feel there is no alternative (Beall and Piron, 2005: 8)

According to Marshall Wolf, ethnicity is not the ultimate, irreducible source of violent conflict. In other words, violence does not spontaneously erupt between otherwise peacefully coexisting ethnic groups. Power and material gain can be equally strong motivations, for leaders and followers alike, to choose conflict over cooperation, violence over negotiations" (Wolf, 2006: 3). Most ethnic movements emerged initially within the Constitutional framework and peaceful manner. In course of time, they turned violent when the state used its repressive machinery and resorted violence while engaging in peace negotiations. The state viewed that it can suppress the ethnic mobilization by invoking force. The assertion of ethnic identity, in course of time, percolated to the realm of politics. The state often conveniently uses one group against another, at times extending patronage to one ethnic group, as in Naga-Kuki conflict in Manipur.

Conclusion

In NEI, social exclusion and ethnicity reinforce each other in many contexts. The prevailing exclusionary tendencies show that most of the institutional means of accommodation such as granting autonomy to particular ethnic groups in a particular region and even the formation of separate state for some communities would not yield desired results. The exclusionary tendencies created by both the state and the dominant community lead to the ethnic assertion of specific ethnic communities. However, such exclusionary practices cannot be tackled by mobilization of ethnic communities and identity politics but 'recognizing' the specificities and material needs of community through the mechanism of the state. The state needs to adopt more conciliatory path and bring the alienated sections into the mainstream.

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Determinants and Trends of Ideal Family Size in a Matrilineal Set-up

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Abstract

The state of Meghalaya which is located in northeast India is the homeland of three matrilineal tribes namely the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo, constituting 80% of the total population of the state. According to the latest National Family Health Survey 3 (NFHS 3) total fertility rate in the state is 3.8. Of the 29 states of the country, the state of Meghalaya ranks third in Total Fertility Rate (TFR) and also the mean ideal family size of women in the state.

The main objective of this paper is to investigate the determinants and trends of ideal number of children of women in a matrilineal state of Meghalaya, as it may give a broad picture about the future population trends. Ideal family size may be influenced by a host of factors such as social, economic, cultural, demographic and environmental factors. The Chi square analysis shows a significant association between ideal number of children with place of residence, religion, highest educational level, working status, standard of living index and more importantly the age of the respondents in the NFHS-3 survey. A stepwise regression analysis was incorporated to understand the nature and magnitude of association of various characteristics with ideal number of children.

Keywords: Ideal number of children, Children ever born, Matrilineal tribes, National Family Health Survey, Chi square and Stepwise regression analyses.

The state of Meghalaya which is located in northeast India is the homeland of three indigenous matrilineal tribes namely the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo, constituting 80 % of the total population of the

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state. The traditional matrilineal norms of the indigenous people of the state of Meghalaya do not support the use of any form of contraception to prevent births (or any conscious effort to prevent births). Abortion is considered to be a sin in this matrilineal society. While these norms are not unusual (as many other traditional societies do have similar norms), reinforcing these traditional norms in recent years is something that the local people are more concerned with. In the wake of their cultural revival, traditional people are more concerned with following these norms without any question. This has definitely induced the fertility rate to remain at a high level with the total fertility rate of 4.7 (NFHS-2, 1999) and 3.8 in (NFHS-3, 2006), while that of the country is 2.9 and 2.7 respectively with respect to the same survey. This apparent increase was in spite of the fact that tribal women in the state of Meghalaya, would appear to enjoy a higher level of autonomy under their traditional matrilineal kinship system than women in other communities under the patriarchal kinship system of the country.

According to the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3, 2006), the mean ideal family size of adults in Meghalaya is three children or higher (*3.4 for women and 3.0 for men*). The survey depicts that among the currently married, the ideal family size for men and women is even higher at 3.5 - 3.6 children. Only about 3 in 10 adults age 15-49 (29% of women and 31% of men) consider two or fewer children to be the ideal number of children (INC).

At an all India level, NFHS 3 shows that more than two-thirds (69 percent) of women age 15-49 consider two or less to be the ideal number of children, and another 19 percent consider three to be ideal. Among men age 15-49, 73 percent consider two or less to be the ideal number of children, and 17 percent consider three to be ideal. Only 9 percent of women and 8 percent of men have an ideal number that is more than three children. Over time, there has been a substantial decrease in the proportion of ever-married women who consider three or more children to be ideal, from 50 percent in NFHS-1 to 42 percent in NFHS-2 and 33 percent in NFHS-3. Among all women who gave a numeric response in NFHS-3, the mean number of children considered ideal is 2.3. For both women and men age 15-49, the average number of children considered ideal ranges from 2.0 for those who have no children to 2.8 or more for those who have four or more children. For ever-married women, the mean

ideal number of children (MINC) decreased from 2.9 in NFHS-1 to 2.6 in NFHS-2 and 2.4 in NFHS-3 at the national level. It is evident that a large proportion of women in the country already have more children than they now consider ideal. This proportion may be taken as another indicator of surplus or unwanted fertility.

Review of Literature

The study conducted by Sharon Stash (1996) shows that in Nepal, measures of ideal family size mask an underlying preference for sons, making some people willing to have families larger than their ideal. The author suggests that men are likely to have stronger preferences for sons, compared to women. The research uses empirical evidence to examine the hypothesis that husbands are more willing than their wives to pursue the birth of sons at the cost of an increasingly large family size. The researcher developed a Multiple-Response Fertility Preference Scale to test these propositions among a sample of couples. The methodology was successful in demonstrating differential patterns of decision making between husbands and wives that are otherwise obscured by more simplistic, single-response measures (for example, ideal family size). The results indicate that husbands are consistently more willing than their wives to pursue the birth of sons at the expense of larger family sizes, and that the birth of daughters is not pursued to a similar degree by wives or husbands.

Cwako (1997) examines the obtaining trends in women's ideal family size preferences and family planning practices in rural Kenya. By using primary data collected from three samples drawn from the Abagusii, Abaluyia and Masai ethnic groups, the research findings suggest a declining trend in ideal family size references and increasing rates in the adoption of family planning methods. These research findings hold some important implications for the reversion of the recorded high population growth rates particularly among the Abagusii and Abaluyia of western Kenya.

Hagewen and Morgan (2005) showed that many low-fertility societies have childbearing intentions well above current fertility levels. In this article, they have focused on the United States, an important and interesting exception. Reported fertility intentions of American women approximate the country's contemporary period levels of fertility and

cohorts (groups of women) recently reaching the end of their childbearing years showed, both stable intentions across time and an ability to realize those intentions.

Dhillon and Singh (2010), while studying the determinants of desired family size, finds that women's parity is positively associated with desired family size. The actual number of children is a good predictor of the desired number of children. The authors also showed that sex composition of children surviving influences the desired family size. They also suggested that education, exposure to mass media, reproductive and child health service utilization from public or private sources, visited by family planning health worker and living in high standard of households are negatively associated with desired family size.

Need of Study

The NFHS 3 report reveals that at current fertility levels, a woman in Meghalaya will have an average of 3.8 children in her lifetime. Fertility in NFHS-3 is 0.8 children lower than that in NFHS-2, but is still at about the same level as in NFHS-1(1992). The same report (NFHS-3) shows that fertility in Meghalaya is higher than in all the other states in India, except Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. With this high level of fertility, the report shows that almost two in five (39%) of the births in the three years preceding the survey were of birth order four or higher. Fertility in rural areas of Meghalaya, at 4.4 children per woman, is about two children higher than in the urban areas (2.3). Similarly, the fertility of Hindu women, at 2.0 children per woman, is two children lower than the fertility of Christian women (4.1). There are also substantial differences in fertility by wealth and education. At current fertility rates, women in the second lowest wealth quintile will have almost five children more than women in the highest wealth quintile, in which fertility at 1.3 children is well below replacement level. Similarly, fertility rates decline sharply with women's education from over five children among women who have no education to less than two children among women with 10 or more years of education.

In the light of the NFHS reports in all the three surveys, regarding the fertility scenario in the state, it seems evident that fertility has not decrease significantly over the three periods of the survey. Though the

TFR has come down from 4.7 in NFHS-2 to 3.8 in NFHS-3, yet the state fertility is still high comparatively to other states of the country. In the light of the above discussion, it becomes important to study the attitude of the people in the state towards fertility. The present study is taken up to highlight the attitude of women towards an ideal number of children they would prefer. Though this attitude may not directly translate into actual fertility, but this study may give a broad picture about the determinants and future population trends, as the attitude of the women cohorts in the surveys are going to be important in determining the population of the state in the years to come.

Objectives

1. To study the determinants of ideal number of children in Meghalaya.

2. To study the trends of ideal number of children between NFHS-2 to NFHS-3 in the state.

Data and Methods

The 2005-06 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) is the third in the NFHS series of surveys. The first NFHS was conducted in 1992-93, and the second (NFHS-2) was conducted in 1998-99. All three NFHS surveys were conducted under the stewardship of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW), Government of India. The MOHFW designated the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai, as the nodal agency for the surveys. Funding for NFHS-3 was provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the Government of India. Technical assistance for NFHS-3 was provided by Macro International, Maryland, USA. The data collected at the NFHS compiled using the Integrated System for Survey Analysis (ISSA) software. These data can be obtained from IIPS and all qualitative and quantitative analysis can be carried out using these data. An important objective of the NFHS surveys has been to provide national and state estimates of fertility, family planning, infant and child mortality, reproductive and child health, nutrition of women and children, the quality of health and family welfare services, and socioeconomic conditions.

In Meghalaya, NFHS-3 is based on a sample of 1,900 households that is representative at the state level and within the state at the urban and rural levels. The survey interviewed 2,124 women age 15-49 from all the sample households and 720 men age 15-54 from a sub sample of households. In order to study the trends of the Ideal Number of Children in the state, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-2) data was also utilized. This survey (NFHS-2), was conducted in 1998–99 and it covers an overall sample size of 945 ever-married women in the age group 15–49 from all the sample households.

National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) also collect information from women, regarding, desire for the ideal number of children. To assess women's ideal number of children, NFHS-3 asked women age 15-49 and men age 15-54 the number of children they would like to have if they could start over again.

Ideal family size may be influenced by a host of factors such as social, economic, cultural, demographic and environmental factors. In this regard, the researcher has selected few indicators that can be considered as proxy variables to represent all the above factors. The Chi square analysis is performed to verify the association of the selected indicators with the attitude towards ideal family size *i.e.,,* Ideal number of children. A stepwise linear regression analysis is also incorporated in studying the *nature and magnitude* of association of the indicators with Ideal number of children considered as the depending variable.

Discussion on some of the Determinants of Ideal Number of Children

In the state of Meghalaya, Table 2 show that the mean number of children ever born (MCEB) is 2.7 where as the mean ideal number of children is 3.3. Ideal family size may not be consider to replicate actual fertility because the latter depends on various factors such as exposure to marriage, use and non use of contraception, induced abortion and determinants of natural fertility. Across age groups, table 2 depicts that the children ever born (CEB) increases from 0.07 at age group 15 – 19 to 4.7 for 45 – 49 age group. However, the same pattern is not followed for ideal number of children. The INC remains constant for age group 15 – 29, increases to 3.4 for age group 30 – 34 when CEB is 2.8. A point worth noting is that, for women ages beyond 35, the number of children

ever born is more than the ideal number of children. This shows that the additional children obtained after 35 years of age is not desire for some reasons or the other. The NFHS-3 shows that the TFR in the state is 3.8 and the ideal number of children as depicted in Table 2 shows that fertility in the state would continue to be high, and the rate at which it will decrease to replacement level will take time.

Table 2 also shows the mean ideal number of children to women of different age groups by place of residence. The MINC is 3.0 for urban and 3.6 for rural women. The mean ideal number of children in both the cases increases successively from lower to higher age groups. The Chi square analysis (Table 4) shows a strong association of ideal number of children with place of residence.

Table 2 shows that the MINC is 2.5 for Hindu women, 2.9 for Muslim and 3.5 for Christian women respectively. Since a high proportion of the population in the state is Christian, the above figure shows that their contribution to fertility in the state may still be dominant. Thus the above mention figures (Table 2) on MINC shows that fertility trends in the state can continue to be high. Again the Chi square analysis (Table 4) shows a strong association of ideal number of children with religion.

The church and the missionaries in the state may not be directly promoting or spread any pro-natalist ideology, but their firm stand against the use of modern contraceptive methods and abortion may have a noticeable impact on reproductive behavior. For most of the converted women, decisions regarding the use of modern contraceptive methods or abortion can be highly influenced by the anti contraception and anti-abortion stand of the church.

Table 2 shows the variation of mean ideal number of children with the level of educational status. The MINC is 3.7, 3.9, 3.2 and 2.6 for women with no education, with primary, secondary and higher secondary levels of education respectively. Thus the perception of INC decreases marginally with increases in the levels of education. Chi square analysis shows that there is a strong association of ideal number of children with educational level. According to the NFHS-3, the proportion of women in the above mentioned educational status is 25, 16, 48 and 10 percent respectively, it looks likely that the fertility trend will still continue to be

high as 90% of the women are below higher secondary level of education and as a consequent, longer time will be taken for the state to reach the replacement level of fertility.

As a proxy to measure the economical status of the women, an indicator was constructed in the NFHS called the standard of living index (SLI). This index was constructed taking into account the house type, toilet facility, main fuel for cooking, source of drinking water, separate room for cooking, ownership of house, land, livestock and durable goods. Table 2 shows that the MINC is 3.7 for women with low standard of living, 3.6 for medium standard of living and 3.0 for high standard of living respectively. The NFHS-3 shows that the proportion of women at the different levels of standard of living is 22, 40 and, 36 percent respectively. The two lower SLI groups of women may continue to play a major role in contributing significantly to the fertility in the state. The Chi square analysis shows a strong association of ideal number of children with standard of living index. Thus standard of living of the women can also play a vital role in determining the INC and consequently be one of the factors that will stands to determine the fertility of the population in the state.

The Chi square analysis shows a strong association of ideal number of children with ethnicity. Table 2 shows that the MINC is 2.5 for scheduled caste[3] women and 3.6 for women belonging to scheduled tribe[4]. Since almost 80% of the state population belonging to scheduled tribes and their perception of INC is high, it is likely that a high fertility rate in the state will persist. The perception of ideal number of children is almost the same for both working and non working women as depicted in Table 2. A point worth noting is that working women seems to want a little more number of children than their counterparts.

As mentioned earlier, ideal family size may be influenced by a host of factors such as social, economic, cultural, demographic and environmental factors. In this regard, the researcher has selected few indicators that can be considered as proxy variables to represent the above factors.

The stepwise linear regression analysis model described in the preceding section was applied to the ideal number of children data of the state incorporating women education, standard of living, religion and place

of residence in a stepwise manner to discover the nature and magnitude of the dependence of ideal number of children on to the characteristics considered in the present study. Stepwise regression is a model in which the choices of the predictive (independent) variables are tested and added one by one and including them if they are statistically significant. The result of the regression analysis is shown in Table 5. In addition to a random intercept, Model I considered women's highest educational level as an important characteristic for determining the ideal number of children and also reveals that women's highest educational level is inversely related to the depending variable. Another important characteristic considered by Model II is the women working status. Place of residence is the next characteristic considered important in Model III, in addition to the variables discussed in model II. This characteristic indicates the place of residence is an important indicator in determining the ideal number of children. Model specification standard of living is represented by Model IV which includes in addition women's highest educational level, women working status, place of residence as controlled variables. The model shows an inverse relationship of the SLI with the depending variable at 0.032 level of significance. Religion and ethnicity were not depicted in the regression model, as these characteristics may not be statistically significant.

Trends in Ideal Number of Children

The same exercise is carried out for evaluating the mean ideal number of children by utilizing National Family and Health Survey 2. The trends of ideal number of children between the two surveys can be studied by comparing Table 1 and Table 2. To understand the magnitude of the change in the trends of INC with respect to background characteristics, the average percentage change analysis is carried out on the ideal number of children against age groups and background characteristics which is shown in Table 3.

Table 1 and Table 2 show that the mean children ever born have decreased from 3.7 to 2.7 and this decrease is highlighted at every age group of both the surveys. The mean ideal number of children is also showing a declining trend from 4.8 in NFHS-2 to 3.3 in NFHS-3.

The two tables also show a comparative decrease in the trends of ideal number of children by place of residences between the two surveys.

It can be observed that there are no drastic differences in ideal number of children between women in urban and rural areas, although the attitude for the ideal number of children has decreases from NFHS-2 to NFHS-3 in both urban and rural areas. Table 3 depicts that the rate of decrease of INC is faster in urban population compared to the rural counterparts. In connection with religion, both the surveys, depicts that Christian women shows highest number of ideal number of children, followed by Muslim and Hindus respectively. The ideal number of children shows a declining trend by religion in all categories between the two surveys and the percentage analysis (Table 3) shows that the rate of decline is highest for Christian, followed by Hindus and then by the Muslim.

With the increase in educational status, mean ideal family size decreases in both the surveys as depicted in Tables 1 and 2. The rate at which this attitude decrease is almost the same for all the educational categories between NFHS-2 to NFHS-3. The two surveys also reveal that, the distribution of the proportion of women age 15 to 49 years in the different educational status from 'No education' to 'Higher education' is 37, 33, 25 and 5 percent in NFHS-2 and the same is 25, 16, 48 and 10 percent in NFHS-3. Thus there is an increase in the proportion of women in secondary and higher educational status in the latest NFHS survey. As mentioned above, NFHS-3 reveals that a significant proportion (48%) of the women is in the secondary status of education and Table 2 shows that their mean ideal number of children is 3.2, and consequently their contribution to fertility will be significant. Thus it looks likely that the fertility in the state will definitely decrease and the rate at which the state will reach replacement level of fertility will be comparatively slower.

The ideal number of children decreases with the increase in the standard of living as shown in both the surveys and depicted by Tables 1 and 2. The ideal number of children also shows a declining trend in all categories of SLI between the two surveys. A point worth noting as depicted in Table 3 is that the rate of decrease is marginal for the highest SLI groups of women and significantly high for the two lower groups. The proportion of women in the different levels of standard of living is 44, 49 and 7 percent at low, medium and high SLI in NFHS 2 and the same is 22, 40 and, 36 percent respectively in NFHS 3. With an increase in the proportion of women in the two higher SLI categories, in the latest survey, the trend of ideal number of children looks likely to decrease

at a faster rate in the years succeeding the survey. Working status does not necessarily make differences to ideal number of children. However ethnicity also plays an important role in determining the ideal number of children. Scheduled tribe women tend to prefer higher number of children as compared to scheduled caste. The former may have a strong cultural value attached to their reproductive decisions, especially the decision to have a large family.

Summary

The above discussion clearly shows the compounding factors that can have great influences on the perception of ideal family size among women in their reproductive ages. Tables 1 and 2 clearly shows how the place of residences, religion, educational status, standard of living, ethnicity and working status can be the determental factors in affecting the ideal family size. Though the researcher may have not obtained any literature about the translation of ideal family size to actual family size, but this study suggests that higher ideal number of children can still lead to higher family size in the future as being depicted in Table 1 which shows the INC of 4.8 where TFR in NFHS 2 is 4.6 and table 2 shows the INC of 3.3 where TFR in NFHS 3 is 3.8.

Table 1 and 2 depicts the INC by ethnicity. The scheduled tribe indigenous people of the state are showing comparatively high INC(3.43, NFHS 3 and 4.93, NFHS 2). Since almost 80% of the state population is constituted by these groups who are in favour of large family size, and though their desire for the high number of children has decreased from NFHS 2 to NFHS 3, INC is still high compared to an all India level of 2.6 and 2.4 between the two surveys.

Conclusion

Women in a matrilineal state of Meghalaya have a strong *cultural value* attached to their reproductive decisions, especially the decision to have a large family. These women expressed their strong support for the above mentioned belief system. This belief has encouraged them to produce children without much fear about the survival of the newborn. Family planning methods like vasectomy and tubectomy are considered anathema and this may explain the very low use of permanent methods

of family planning among them (Saikia, 2004 and NFHS-3 report,2009). Abortion is deemed equivalent to murder. It is a belief by the indigenous women that those, who for no great and weighty health reason indulge in abortion, will invite the fury, and curse of God. Hence the incidence of induced abortion is negligible among the local women community. According to the local traditional belief or thought, the intrinsic value of the family is considered not only in terms of possessions, wealth and well being, but also in the number of children born and reared. Most of the local women are strongly of the view that 'every child that comes into the world, comes with two hands and a bag of rice (Saikia, 2004). This traditional view means that God the Creator will always provide, and that a child will cater not only for his/her own needs, but also for the needs of the others around them. This view is still prevalent in most traditional societies and can be explained by the 'value of children' attached to it.

The present study discussed above clearly indicates the conscious choice of a large family size. In a matrilineal state a majority of the women emphasized their faith and respect for culture and this can be one of the main reasons for having a large family size (Narahari, 1997 and Das, 2001). It is important to mention here that an individual choice regarding reproduction is basically a reflection of the community's choice. In other words individual decisions were very much controlled or influenced by social institutions like the *dorbars*, student organizations, community and religious leaders (Marak, 2007). A higher preference for a girl child to continue with the matrilineal system was also found to be a highly motivating factor in their decision to go for a bigger family size.

The study incisively highlights that the fertility outcome in a tribal society can be a reflection of a complex reality - a reality which is very different from the mainstream society characterized by the dynamics of a conventional and straight forward demographic process. This clearly demonstrates the need for fresh approach in future demographic research on tribal communities. The study has also highlighted important policy implications and discussed these implications in the light of the recently adopted National Population Policy (NPP-2000) of India. The tribal communities in northeast India are still in a transitional phase - not just in terms of the demographic transition, but also in terms of a social transition. At the same time they are also facing a crisis of identity in the

wake of so called modernization in mainstream society. In such a situation any policy aimed at increasing the welfare of these vulnerable groups should focus on creating an environment where they can feel more secure. Such an environment can be achieved through a decentralized, bottom-up, holistic policy approach with the provision of built-in safeguards to protect the rights of individuals as well as of the community. These policy initiatives will be useful not only to Indian population policy makers but also to policy makers in other countries where indigenous communities are confronted with an identity crisis due to globalization. The study therefore, concludes that in order to understand the fertility dynamics in other transitional societies and hence in the formulation of appropriate population policies, it is necessary to explore the influence of culture and religion on reproductive decision-making process and reproductive behavior in tribal communities in the state of Meghalaya or northeast India as a whole.

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Table 1: The ideal number of children by age groups and selected background characteristics from NFHS - 2.

Background Characteristics	Age Groups							
	15 – 19	20 – 24	25 – 29	30 – 34	35 – 39	40 – 44	45 – 49	**MINC**
Residences								
Urban	3.0	3.4	3.5	3.7	4.7	4.7	5.7	**4.9**
Rural	4.8	4.6	4.5	5.4	5.2	4.9	4.6	**5.0**
Religion								
Hindu	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.2	3.0	4.3	4.2	**3.4**
Muslim	4.0	3.7	4.1	4.0	4.0	5.5	na	**3.6**
Christian	4.9	4.6	4.5	4.9	5.0	4.8	5.7	**4.9**
Highest Educational Level								
No Education	4.5	4.4	4.3	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.7	**4.9**
Primary	4.8	4.7	4.7	5.0	4.9	5.3	5.5	**5.0**
Secondary	4.5	4.1	4.3	5.0	5.0	3.6	5.3	**4.5**
Higher	na	5.0	3.1	3.4	4.4	3.4	5.8	**3.6**

Standard of Living								
Low	4.6	4.6	4.7	5.1	5.3	5.7	5.5	**5.1**
Medium	4.7	4.3	4.1	5.0	5.2	4.2	6.0	**4.8**
High	na	3.0	3.7	3.6	4.1	3.2	3.8	**3.1**
Ethnicity								
Scheduled Caste	na	5.0	3.4	2.5	3.6	5.5	4.0	**3.4**
Scheduled Tribe	4.8	4.6	4.4	5.0	5.1	4.8	5.8	**4.9**
Working Status								
Working	4.7	4.2	4.3	5.0	5.1	5.1	5.7	**4.8**
Not Working	4.5	4.6	4.3	4.9	4.9	4.4	5.4	**4.7**
CEB	0.9	1.8	3.0	4.3	4.8	5.8	5.3	**3.7**
							(MCEB)	
INC	4.6	4.5	4.3	4.9	5.0	4.8	5.6	**4.83**

***Source**:* Computed from NFHS , 1998-99 data file.
na: Not Available

Table 2: The ideal number of children by age groups and selected background characteristics from NFHS - 3.

Background Characteristics	**Age Groups**							
	15 – 19	20 – 24	25 – 29	30 – 34	35 – 39	40 – 44	45 – 49	**MINC**
Residences								
Urban	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	3.4	3.3	3.6	**3.0**
Rural	3.3	3.3	3.4	4.0	3.8	4.1	3.6	**3.6**
Religion								
Hindu	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.8	**2.5**
Muslim	2.8	2.6	3.1	2.6	3.6	3.0	2.4	**2.9**
Christian	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.4	3.8	4.2	4.1	**3.5**
Highest Educational Level								
No education	3.9	3.1	3.4	4.1	4.0	4.0	3.4	**3.7**

Primary	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.7	3.7	4.4	4.8	**3.9**
Secondary	2.8	3.0	3.0	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.6	**3.2**
Higher	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.6	3.0	2.4	3.2	**2.6**
Standard of Living								
Low	3.1	3.6	3.3	4.2	3.9	4.5	3.2	**3.7**
Medium	3.3	3.1	3.3	3.7	3.7	3.9	4.1	**3.6**
High	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	3.3	3.1	3.4	**3.0**
Ethnicity								
Scheduled Caste	2.2	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.3	3.0	**2.5**
Scheduled Tribe	3.2	3.1	3.2	3.6	3.9	4.2	3.8	**3.6**
Working Status								
Working	3.3	3.0	3.0	3.4	3.8	3.8	3.7	**3.4**
Not Working	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.5	**3.3**
CEB	0.07	0.7	1.8	2.8	4.0	4.6	4.7 (MCEB)	**2.7**
INC	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.6	**3.3**

***Source**:* Computed from NFHS , 2005 - 06 data file.

Table 3: The percentage change of the mean ideal number of children between NFHS 2 to NFHS 3.

Background Characteristics	**NFHS – 2** (1998 – 1999)	**NFHS – 3** (2005 – 2006)	**Percentage Change**
Residences			
Urban	4.9	3.0	**-38.8**
Rural	5.0	3.6	**-27.1**
Religion			
Hindu	3.4	2.5	**-27.7**
Muslim	3.6	2.9	**-20.8**
Christian	4.9	3.5	**-28.6**
Highest educational level			
No education	4.9	3.7	**-24.7**
Primary	5.0	3.9	**-22.8**

Secondary	4.5	3.2	**-28.6**
Higher	3.6	2.6	**-26.9**
Standard of living			
Low	5.1	3.7	**-27.1**
Medium	4.8	3.6	**-25.1**
High	3.1	3.0	**-3.3**
Ethnicity			
Scheduled Caste	3.4	2.5	**-27.1**
Scheduled Tribe	4.9	3.6	**-27.4**
Working status			
Working	4.8	3.4	**-29.1**
Not Working	4.7	3.3	**-30.4**

***Source**:* Computed from NFHS , 1998 – 1999, 2005 - 06 data file.

Table 4: Chi square test of the ideal number of children against background characteristics.

Background Characteristics	**Chi square**	
	Value	Asymptotic significance
Residences	253.3	0.0
Religion	383.1	0.0
Highest educational level	340.6	0.0
Standard of living	272.1	0.0
Ethnicity	288.9	0.0
Working women	76.4	0.0
Age groups	197.2	0.0

***Source**:* Computed from NFHS , 2005 - 06 data file.

Table 5: Stepwise regression on the ideal number of children.

Background Characteristics	*Regression coefficients*			
	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
Intercept	24.5	21.8	10.2	14.7
Highest educational level	-5.8	-5.5	- 4.3	-3.6
Working status	-	6.8	6.7	6.5
Place of residence	-	-	6.3	5.5
Standard of living	-	-	-	-1.9

***Source**:* Computed from NFHS , 2005 - 06 data file.

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From Rituals to Stage: The Journey of *A·chik* Folk Theatre

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Abstract

The *A·chiks* are one of the major tribes of Meghalaya and is basically an oral community. Though the *A·chiks* are not aware of the concept of theatre, the elements of folk theatre are to be found in their various performances, from rituals to the present day stage plays. The rituals associated with traditional religion of the *A·chiks,* that is *Songsarek* comprise sacrifices of animals, libation and chanting of prayers and myths. They also have a rich repository of epic narrations known as *Katta Agana* and folk songs of various kinds. Dance, comprising ritual dances, warrior dances and community dances form part of rituals and festivals of the *A·chik* community. Today majority of *A·chiks* have become Christians and it is seen that theatrical elements have made inroads into Christian devotion in the forms of *kirtans*, *songkristans,* etc. In addition to these, folk plays were performed by the community as early as 1937-38. The seasonal plays have allowed themselves to grow and be influenced by the performances of neighbouring states and communities. Today *A·chik* theatre has arrived in the true sense in the forms of stage-plays like *A·chik A·song and Du·kon.*

Keywords: *A·chik,* oral performance, dance, *kirtan*, plays.

The *A·chiks* or the *Garos* are one of the three major indigenous tribes of Meghalaya. The tribe is distributed in the five districts of Garo Hills - North, East, South, West and South West - that lie in the West of the state of Meghalaya, bordering Assam and Bangladesh. *A·chik* (Garo) population is also found in certain pockets of Assam – in Darrang, Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Karbi Anglong districts and in the areas around Guwahati along the north and south banks of the Brahmaputra, at Dimapur in Nagaland, and in North Bengal, Tripura and Bangladesh.

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A·chiks and Oral Tradition

The *A·chik* community is basically an oral community. William Carey in his *The Garo Jungle Book* writes that it can be said of the *A·chiks* that "Their language is their history". This oral tradition is a veritable vehicle for passing on historical accounts, myths, tales told both in prose and verse, folk songs, incantations, epic narrations, lamentations, lullabies, sayings, riddles, proverbs, raillery, games, etc. to succeeding generations.

The oral tradition, along with rituals, ceremonies and festivals, has always attracted people's participation. Llewellyn R. Marak, a noted *A·chik* author, in the *Aganchengani* (Prologue) to his play *Metongbolni Gittim*, recalls the old story-telling days. There was a time when *A·chiks* in the villages had to travel days to reach the weekly markets. They used to set up temporary sheds, cook and spend the long evenings telling stories. Stories were also narrated while in the *jhum*-fields, on the joyous occasions of house-warming and when keeping watch over the dead. L.R. Marak says that he had sat among people on such occasions and picked up the strands of his stories directly from the mouth of the people. Here it is appropriate to refer to what Zarrili and others wrote with reference to 'Oral Performance' in *Theatre Histories: An Introduction:*

> Primary oral cultures are "episodic" locations of listening, hearing, and voicing where "mythic" worlds are created. The hearer does not attempt to analyse, understand or interpret what is heard, but experiences and absorbs the musicality of the voice – its timbre, tone, amplitude, pitch, resonance, vibration, and shape as the voice moves between sounding and silence(s) – the pauses of varying lengths that help mark, set off, and/or accentuate what is voiced. Reception is perception, not "meaning" (21).

Thus in primary oral cultures, the perceptions and actions fundamental to early human survival remain central to things that are known and how they are known. What is known is learned through direct participation or apprenticeship rather than through abstract study. In primary oral cultures human beings are the only potential repository for traditional oral narratives, myths, tales, proverbs, classificatory names and information on how to perform a ritual, tell or sing a monumental epic story.

Viola S. B. Sangma, in her essay "Garo Folk Literature" in *Hill Societies: Their Modernisation* (Milton S. Sangma ed. 1995: 156), has

stated that the rich oral tradition of the *Garos* passed on from generation to generation. Narrations of myths, legends, songs and secular chanting were done by a select few who used to perform for groups in various informal and formal gatherings.

A·chiks in general are not aware of the concept of theatre. For many of them theatre stands for well-structured auditoriums where dramas are staged. Hence it may come as a surprise to many *A·chiks* to realize that they are living in the midst of theatre. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o stated that "Theatre is not a building. People make theatre. Their life is the very stuff of drama." Today a good number of *A·chiks* are Christians. However, the age-old indigenous religion, that is *Songsarek*, is still practiced by a large number of those who are non-Christians and the rituals associated with farming and cultivation of crops are, therefore, still prevalent. Thus the *A·chik* Folk Theatre is associated with their old religion that still exists.

In his book *Folk Theatre: Beyond Boundaries* Bharat Bhusan Mohanty says that the folk theatre of Odisha can be divided into three different types. They are: (i) Song-specific, (ii) Dance-specific and (iii) Combination of both song and dance along with dialogues and acting. He also wrote that the folk theatre of Assam can be broadly divided into three different types: (i) Dance and Song Specific, (ii) Quasi-theatre, and (iii) Yatra. Similarly, *A·chik* theatre can be divided into (i) Prayer and incantations-oriented, (ii) Song-oriented, (iii) Narration-oriented, (iv) Dirge-oriented, (v) Dance-oriented, (vi) Combination of both song and dance along with dialogues and acting and (vii) Christian Devotional forms.

(i) Prayer-Oriented A·chik Theatre

Prayer-oriented *A·chik* theatre comprises various forms of songs and prayers connected with various occasions. This category constitutes incantations and hymns connected with *jhum* cultivation, prayers chanted during other rituals, hymn at the time of inaugurating a house, etc. Incantations and prayers are passed on orally by the *A·chiks*. *A·chik* priests employ particular gestures, tone of voice, style of language, speed of delivery for incantations. This is what makes the hearers distinguish incantations from other utterances.

(ii) Song-oriented *A·chik* Theatre

The *A·chik* folk songs are light-hearted lyrics, sung to tease each other during festivals and other gatherings. They comprise of a large number of songs such as *Ahaoea, Ajea, Araowaka, Boel Ring·a, Chera Sola, Dimdimdimchong, Dime Ring·a, Doroa* or *Doro Ra·a, Gonda Doka, Gosai Ring·a, Harara, Him Angai!, Howa Sul* or *Ring·a, Kore Doka* or *Kore Ring·a, Ku·rama Sala, Nanggorere Goserong, Ohomai Ring·a, Rere Ring·a, Serejing, Sonatchi Sul, Tantanni Sul,* and *Bi·sa Mumua/Dingdinga* or Lullabies. Two of the most popular folk songs among the *A·chiks* are *Dimdim dimchong* and *Nanggorere Goserong*. They are sung on many occasions with a lot of improvisations in the stanzas. A few of the stanzas are shown below:

Dimdim Dimchong Dadichong

A·chikku (*Garo* language)	English
Dimdim dimchong dadichong *Dama dokato* *Nomil pante mesaa* *An·ching wangalao.* *Dama bangsi sikana* *An·ching mesana.*	*Dimdim Dimchong Dadichong* (Sound of drum beats) When thus drum beats start Maidens and young men dance In our *Wangala* festival To the beat of drums and tune of flutes Let us dance heartily.
Kotip gital ra·ako kae nipana *Bilsi gisep changsasan an·senge nina.*	Let me try the new *pagri* on my head And dance at least once during the year.
Matchu chara milako jengo gatako, *Cha·e mesa an·sengna an·ching wangalao.* [7]	We shall have a feast of the fattened ox And dance and make merry in our *Wangala.*

Nanggorere Goserong

A·chikku (*Garo* language)	English
Nanggorere Goserong!	It is so, oh yes it is so!

O·e nanggo Goserong!	It is truly so!
Pante: A·baoni jalikko, maina minchichotata, *Nomil nambegipako da·nang mikchi ong·ata.*	Boy: Why do you allow the chilly in the jhum-field to over ripe? Alas, you have allowed the lovely damsel to shed tears.
Metra: Me·gong baljok an·sengjok, a·rak sokjok an·sengjok.	Girl: *Me·gong* has blossomed, dry season has come and brought cheer,
Chame nang·ko nikoa, aiao ka·a tim·timjok. [8]	The moment I beheld you darling, my heart began to flutter.

(iii) Narration-oriented *A·chik* Theatre

Epic story narration is known as *Katta Agana* or *Katta Doka* and among the *A·chik*s the narrator is known as *Katta Agangipa*. It is not a prosaic narration but a poetic chanting of the mighty deeds and grand life lived by heroes like *Dikki*, *Bandi,* and heroines like *Giting* and *Sore*. *Katta Agana* is of different types and each type is marked by a specific tone and voice modulation. Different varieties of *Katta Agana* are: *Dokkotchua, Ring·badria, Katchi Doka* or *Katchi Ring·a, Dokmandea* or *A·beng Katta, Ruga Katta, A·we Katta, Saling Ring·a* or *Chisak Katta* and *Ring·dikgila.* Referring to the epic songs above, Dewansing Rongmitu states in his book *The Epic Lore of the Garos*:

> All these A·chik folk songs, which are by no means composed extempore, but have been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation, with their simple tunes, reveal much of the true spirit of A·chik land.

In the *Katta Agana or* epic lore*,* the land of *matchadus* or tigermen is described thus:

A·chikku (*Garo* language)	English
Meredik Songkima, *Bildomit Kalengpat,* *Helbrim Ronggilsim* *Niondim Songchamil,*	It is the land of Meredik Songkima, It is the land of Bildomit Kalengpat, It is the land of Helbrim the dark adamantine rocks,

Songkalu Songkalang, *Acharu Miksipeng,* *Songmatcha Sawilging,* *Chikilling Borechong* *Ranggera Domisal Asong;* *Eruchel Gittimjok,* *Racha Rekong Adingjok,* *Chisimak Ronggalmakjok;* *Dram Anoksikae,* *Chisam Samnatikae,* *Chiring Ronggrimae,* *Bima bolgrimae* (Rongmitu *ELG* 28).	It is the land of Songchamil, The valley seen from the heights, It is the land of Songkalu Songkalang, And of Acharu Miksipeng, Sawilgong, the Tigerland, Borechong, home to deep pools, It's the land of Ranggera Domisal; It's the village of Eruchel, That's the hillock of Racha Rekong, That's the stream where flow black waters, Steep gorges form the corners, And greenery sprawls its way into the river bank, It's a stream filled with huge rocks, And is canopied over by thick growth of trees (Rongmitu *ELG* 28-29).

The *Katta Agangipa* is the 'virtuoso' who chants the *Katta Agana* or *Katta Doka* on topics of a highly romantic, heroic or tragic nature, sometimes breaking new ground in the matter of story, theme and locale. In the pre-British days in every *A·chik* village there was at least one good *Katta Agangipa*. The author attests that *Katta Agana* is a genuine *A·chik* art. *Katta Agana* inspires joy as it celebrates by-gone days, exalts the present and projects the future. Filled as it is with stories and instances of war and valour, call of the wild, adventure and daring, riches and magnificence, it is appreciated and loved by the *A·chik* people from time immemorial. *Katta Agana* and *Katta Agangipa* belong to that genre, of which Zarrilli and others quoting D. Tedlock in *Theatre Histories* (2006), said:

> Here speaks the storyteller, telling by voice what was learned by ear. Here speaks a poet who did not learn language structure from one teacher and language meaning from another, not plot structure from one and characterization from another, nor ever an art of story-telling from one and an art of hermeneutics from another, but always heard all these things working together in the stories of other story-tellers. And this poet, or mythopoet, not only narrates what characters do, but speaks when they speak, chant when they chant, and sing when they sing.

An excellent storyteller can take the story beyond simple narration and mere listening. Such a narrator can create an ambience for both listening and seeing and thus help create a "mythic" world. Such a teller makes the story a "spectacle" in that it is visible through the story teller's dramatization, and the spectator visualizes it further in his mind's eye.

(iv) *Kabe* or Dirge-based *A·chik* Theatre

According to the myth recorded by Mihir N. Sangma in his book *Pagitchamni Kubisring* (1982), man learnt *Kabe* or the song of lamentation or keening from a female hornbill that was found mourning for her dead mate. The dirge of the bird moved him so much that he not only learnt the song of lamentation but also taught the same to his wife and instructed her to sing it in the same manner on his death. The *Kabe* myth tells us that from that time onwards the *A·chiks* began singing *Kabe* at the time of death. The term *Kabe* is derived from two *A·chik* words: *Ka* from *ka·tong*, meaning 'heart' and *be* from *be·a,* meaning 'to break'. The complete meaning would mean 'heart-break'. It follows that *Kabe* is a song of mourning by someone who is heart-broken by the passing away of a loved one. The *A·chik*s sing *kabe* to mourn the dead. The singing of *kabe* is a continuous process, where singer or singers recall the life and deed of the dear departed, in the process unravelling the life of the deceased to the hearers. The mourning for the dead involves: (a) dirge sung over the dead body of a man at a time when his female relatives - his mother, sisters, aunts, etc., approach the house. (b) Song of lamentation specifically at the death of a married man. This is sung by the mother, sisters and other female relatives of the dead. (c) *Mangna Chu Kano Kabe Ring·ani*: Dirge sung when the dead is given a bath by his female relatives with undiluted rice-beer and is offered the same drink for one last time. (d) A dirge sung when the *Tokkari* is split. When a father of the house dies, a receptacle made of bamboo, known as *tokkari*, is placed towards the head of the corpse. A sword and a frond of a variety of cane known as *so·ka* is placed in it. The *tokkari* is split and the string where the dead one used to hang his clothes is snapped with a sword to show that the one who used the sword and the clothes line is not with them anymore. A dirge is sung at this time. (e) Dirge sung when the dead is taken outside for cremation. (f) Dirge sung at the time when the bones embodying the spirt of the dead are carried into the house, etc.

A few lines of the dirge sung for a married man at the arrival of his mother, sisters and other female relatives known in *A·chikku* as *ma·nok* is being shown below:

A·chikku (*Garo* language)	English
Aiha! Nang·ni ba·rima ino donga *Ku·aganboda nang·mana* *Aiha! Gana bipake neng·gipani* *re·baengode* *Depante ku·aganboda.*	*Aiha*! Your siblings are here, Open your mouthand say something to your mother. *Aiha*! When the one who went through travails to bring you forth has come Open your mouth, son of the house.

Kabe may be said to be "perlocutionary act," where circumstances determine how the speech act affects the listener's feelings, thoughts, or actions. The meaning of the communication (from the perspective of both the speaker and the listener) varies depending on how the speaker delivers the words and gestures. In *A·chik Kabe* or keening or singing of dirges one finds the effective delivery of words and gestures. Through the employment of mournful tune, the *Kabe* singer often moves the listeners to tears. In *Kabe*, like in any other form of speech performance, one of the driving forces is choice of words. *Kabe* singers recall the life and deeds of the dead person and with the use of appropriate voice modulation, tune and correct pauses, are able to render a fitting *requiem* and move people to tears. Like theatre, speech acts take place in both time and space. Dance, mime and music are also communication. Depending on rhythm and movement qualities, a dance may be a dance of joy or a dance of lamentation; drum beats might encourage a feeling of dread or elation. Similarly, people gathered for a funeral ceremony perform gestures and words that are appropriate to the situation. Even without intending to, they are clearly communicating by performing "speech acts."

(v) Dance-oriented *A·chik* Theatre

The *A·chiks* share in the pan-Indian dance tradition. The dance forms of the *A·chiks* comprise Ritual Dance, *Grika* (warrior dance) and Community Dance. In *History and Culture of the Garos* (1981), M. S. Sangma writes that the *A·chiks* live mainly by *jhum* cultivation and they attach great importance to the worship of the presiding deities of the seasons and crops.

Of all the festivals celebrated by the *A·chiks* in connection with *jhum* cultivation, the *Wangala*, a post-harvest festival stands out as the biggest and the most solemn one. According to Dewansing Rongmitu Sangma in *Traditional Dances of the Garos*, the *Wangala* literally means Festal Ceremony or hearty send-off. The ceremony marks the end of the agricultural year for the *jhumming A·chiks*.

The Wangala festival begins with *Rugala* or ritual of Libation and is followed by *Chachat So.a* or Incense Ceremony. On this day, after lunch, the whole village gathers in the *Nokma'*s house. Cooked rice is strewn all over inside the house of the *Nokma*. The quantity of rice thus strewn is in proportion to the quantity of hailstones that visited that particular region that year. The *Nokma* performs the *grika* or the warrior dance, holding a spear and shield in each hand, and dances atop the strewn rice, stamping on it. Thereafter, the *Nokma* burns the incense near the main post of the house known as *Maljuri* and fumigates the whole house. This is also symbolic of the whole volume of dark clouds that heralded the rain in that particular year. If the incense smoke blows past the main post and blows following the ridge of the roof, it is believed that good harvest is in store in the next *jhumming* season.

After the worship of the deities for the annual harvest, everyone partakes of the rice-ale specially brewed for the *Wangala*. Soon after, the priest dresses himself in *gando* (a strip of cloth worn girded around the waist, reaching to the knee or mid-thigh), a *kotip* (a strip of cloth folded roughly and worn around the head and secured at the tied bun of hair), a ring of metal-bells at elbows and a ring of metal-bells at the wrist. He then first dances around the hearth inside the house of the *Nokma* and is followed by the similarly attired *Nokma.* The two are later followed by the whole village and the dance and merry-making go on till very late in the night.

There is also among the *A·chiks* the tradition of performing *grika* or warrior dance when a warrior or hero experiences victory or wins an impossible feat. Aldrich Momin in his book *A·chikni Kuandik* (1985) states that in this dance the victor dancer proclaims and exults at what he has achieved for the land, the clan and for his mother and sisters. He proclaims his mental strength, physical prowess and extols himself as the warrior of the land. *Grika* is a self eulogy. This often entails belittling others, provocation and incitement and finally contest and combat. Such a warrior is thought to be an asset to the clan.

During the *Grika* dance the musical instruments used are *kram, natik* and *rang*. The warrior dances with the *mil·am* (sword*)* and *spi* (shield) in his hands; he gestures in a wild and threatening way and matches his actions with his words. As he dances he yells out a eulogy like the following, as recorded by Aldrich Momin in *A·chikni Kuandik*:

A·chikku (*Garo* language)	English
Ka Goera Ka Chalang (a·ako ba wa·seko ga·tima) *Ka Sangma / Marak,* *Raka bitchri kimka a·jri* *Dake nigipa change nikgipa* *Krongjokona sing·kamjokona* *Ka Goera, ka chalang (a·ako/ wa·seko ga·timtima)*	Hail, I am *Goera,* Hail I am the warrior *(Stamps hard on the floor)* Hail *Sangma/Marak*. I am the seed, the core Undying like the *kimka* from the *a·jri* I am the leader who initiates things I am the pillar and the support Hail, I am Goera, Hail I am the warrior. *(Stamps hard on the floor)*

Wangala dance can be divided into ritual and secular sections. The ritual version of the *Wangala* ceremony has remained within the sanctum sanctorum of the *A·chiks* practising the indigenous religion, while the secular dance version has travelled to public entertainment halls and public functions.

Dewansing Rongmitu enumerates forty-seven dance items in connection with the annual agriculture festival of the *Wangala* while Mihir N. Sangma lists a total of fifty dance items. Major A. Playfair, in his book *The Garos*, mentions that "sometimes men and women dance together, and sometimes separately." He adds that the men usually dance with their sword and shield in their hand. Dewansing Rongmitu gives more specific descriptions. He writes that the *Wangala* dance is led by the *A·king Nokma* who performs the *grika*, doubtless reminiscent of the old fighting days, when on occasions of public rejoicing the warriors were wont to dance and recount their deeds of valour to admiring audiences. Their self exaltation is immediately followed by *Grong Doka* or starting drum beats, signalling open invitation to all present to join in the dance.

The lead-dancer, the *A·king Nokma,* goes on with his exaltations, while men and women, young and old, and even boys and girls go on

dancing together with rhythmic feet movements and gentle, graceful movements of hands and body. The dance is performed in rhythmic response to the orchestra of drums, gongs, flutes and stringed instruments of native origin. The first item of dance is followed by many others, night after night, so long as the food and drinks apportioned for the *Wangala* lasts (Burling 67).

It is believed that *Wangala* is a time when human beings and gods and goddesses connected with the *A·chik* agricultural cycle come together and the gods and goddesses are entertained and felicitated by the people. It is the most apt time for the people to exhibit their performance skills. It is to the god who gave them the seed of sustenance and the goddess who blessed the fields with fruits that they burn incense, pour out drinks and dance to. The dance items are all enactments of various actions of men as they engage themselves in warfare, agriculture and also imitations of the actions of nature like those of birds, bears, etc.

H.S Shiva Prakash writes in *Traditional Theatres* that all over the world rituals contain the seeds of theatre and that the greatest theatres of the world were evolved from rituals (Prakash). The *Wangala* dance with its grand display of so many aspects of life contains many elements of drama. *Wangala* begins as a thanksgiving ritual but ends in festivity which includes imitative dances. In *The Traditional Dances of the Garos*, D. R. Sangma terms *Wangala* as "dance acts" and writes that of all the ceremonial performances in connection with *A·chik* agriculture, *Wangala* offers the widest scope for dance activities and for singing of folk-songs of great variety. It is also a time when various *A·chik* folk musical instruments are used.

(vi) Combination of both Song and Dance alongwith Dialogue and Acting

There are written *A·chik* plays that revolve around *A·chik* myths and legends like *Metongbolni Gittim* and *Dikki I*. While *Muga Dingsepani Katta* is a historical account, *Serejing aro Waljan* and *Kalsin aro Sonatchi* are woven around romantic stories.

Two very popular *A·chik* folk plays of romantic nature are *Serejing aro Waljan* and *Kalsin aro Sonatchi*. Both these plays were given the written form by Julius L. R. Marak. *Serejing aro Waljan* can be claimed to be the first recorded *A·chik* play. The playwright, in the 'Introduction'

to *Serejing aro Waljan*, gives a lengthy description of the origin and time and place of the first performances of *Serejing aro Waljan*. He records that *Serejing aro Waljan* as a play was first performed around the years 1937-38 and became greatly popular in Dambo-Rongjeng in East Garo Hills district.

Kalsin aro Sonatchi (1998) is the other play rendered into the written form by Julius L. R. Marak. There is a novel by the same title purportedly written by Redin Momin. In the 'Foreword' to the play *Kalsin aro Sonatchi* the playwright records Ramesor Sangma, an early producer of the play, saying that he had procured the play of Sonatchi-Kalsin originally in a verse form in a diary by Bupen Momin around 1942-43. He had edited and improved the material in that diary so that by 1955 he was able to stage the 'Kalsin aro Sonatchi' play in Moskuli in Goalpara district of Assam. M. S. Sangma, an eminent *A·chik* historian, attested that it was around the year 1940 that he heard for the first time of the play *Kalsin aro Sonatchi* being staged in the village Moskuli in Goalpara district of Assam. Both *Kalsin aro Sonatchi* and *Serejing aro Waljan* enjoyed the patronage of *A·chiks* in Garo Hills and in Assam till the early 1980s. Even though the plays' popularity has diminished, they still are being performed by the team in Moskuli under the leadership of Nolistone. K. Marak.

(vii) Christian Devotional Forms

In addition to *Wangala* and *Gahon*, there is also the practice of singing of *kirtan* and *songkristan* with dances accompanying them. It is interesting to find that Bengali *kirtan* had come to Garo Hills via the erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, while the *A·chik sankirtan* had evolved through the influence of Assam and was first practiced by the *A·chik*s in the Assam border. *Kirtan* is practiced predominantly by the *A·chiks* and their off-springs who had migrated from East Pakistan in the 1960s. Today *kirtan* practice is seen in Nidanpur, near Tikrikilla, Balachanda and A·bima villages in Rajabala and in many other places inhabited predominantly by the Bangladeshi *A·chik* migrants.

The *A·chik*-Bengali *Kirtan* can have any number of performers, but necessarily it includes the lead singer, the drummer, the cymbal player and the one beating the gong. The *kirtan* performers enter the 'stage' in line in

a very devout manner. The lead singer, whom they refer to as *gaiok,* and the instrument-players form a small inner circle, while the respondents, known as *dowari*, form a bigger outer circle. Once the circle is formed, they pause and a silent invocation is made. This is followed by a slow rhythmic beating of the *khol*, *chengchop* or *kakwa* and the *konta,* and the *gaiok* starts the song simultaneously and the *dowari* repeat the lines. Lines like the following are sung:

Bengali	English
Eso hoi doyami Prabhu, *Eso mon mondhire.*	Come merciful Lord, Come into the temple of my heart.

A very simple but remarkably rhythmic foot movement marks the *kirtan* performance. The foot movement of the *dowari* is accompanied by a stylized, controlled clapping of hands and the dance is performed in a circular form. The whole show is suffused with devotion and religious fervour. The playing of musical instruments and the singing start in a slow tempo, pick up speed as they proceed and finally reach a crescendo. Thereafter, it is diminuendo, the volume, speed and rhythm diminishing slowly, until it comes to a final stop with jubilant intonation of *Jisu bol.* Just like its starting, *kirtan* ends in a very devout and profound manner. *Kirtan* singing and dancing is a whole night process.

In addition, there is also the practice of what is known as *Songkristan* among the *A·chik* Christians of Garo Hills. In the second half of the 15th century Shri Chaitanya founded the complete form of *kirtan* in Bengal and since then it has been widely popular. In Assam *kirtan* came through Sankardeva, much before Chaitanya Gurudeva movement. In the areas bordering Bengal, Chaitanya Gurudeva's Vaishnavism made significant impact. However, it is interesting to find that Bengali *kirtan* sung by *A·chik* Christians had come to Garo Hills via Bangladesh; while the *A·chik songkristan* has evolved through the influence of Assam and was first practiced by the *A·chik*s in the Assam border. C. R. Marak records that this term (*songkristan*) is applied to popular religious songs sung during Christmas and New Year season. It appears to be a borrowing of the words '*kirtan*' and '*sankirtan*' and modified to suit the needs of the community for particular type of songs. The themes of the *A·chik Songkristan* are religious in nature; the songs sung by a congregation of villagers as they dance are about the birth of Christ and the traditions relating to it.

The New Year songs centre on the message of God's boundless love for human beings.

Dawn of Modern *A·chik* Theatre

A·chiks have no established visible theatre structure; but the base for theatre was always there in the incantations, epic narrations, dances, etc. This is why it is no surprise that *A·chik* theatre has made a subdued graduation towards modernity. It is true that there is cultural distancing with the younger generation having lost interest in the archaic lore but now it appears that there is a re-awakening of interest in native practices. The outcome is the emergence of interest groups like *A·chik Theatre*. It is an amateur theatre group, associated with *Dapon, the Mirror*, based at Tangla, Assam. *A·chik Theatre* is based in Garo Hills districts of Meghalaya and the group has produced two very significant and popular plays, namely *A·chik A·song* and *Du·kon* and staged the same in Garo Hills as well as in several other parts of the country under the aegis of *National School of Drama.*

The primary objective of the group is social service through the medium of theatre. The off-shoot of this objective is to create a space for the articulation of the talent amongst the youth so that they have a space for positive creativity and recreation even in the times characterized by traditional anxieties.

The play, *A·chik A·song* (The *A·chik* Land) was first conceived by the Purakhasia Development Committee (in West Garo Hills District) under the leadership of its chairman, Tarun Saikia and jointly produced by *Dapon, the Mirror,* (Tangla, Assam). The original script of the play was in Assamese and the translation was done by Saikia, with the help of some of his Committee members. The play is based on the socio-political history of the Garo Hills between 1870-1872 with special reference to the glorious first and the last arms struggle of the *A·chiks* against the British. It starts with a traditional, cultural and social activities, rituals and beliefs of the remote hilly *A·chik* village. Then it shows how the British gradually entered into the interior of the *A·chik* village, compelling the Garo villagers to revolt against the British invasion. The hero of the episode was Togan Nengminza, a valiant youth of the region, who organized and trained a group of young *A·chiks*. They attacked the British camp and

fought for the freedom of Garo Hills. Togan sacrificed his life for the cause of the freedom of his motherland. The *A·chiks* still remember him with great respect as the first national hero and martyr of the *A·chiks*. The play *A·chik A·song*, covering one hour and twenty minutes, was staged for the first time in Babelapara village, Purakhasia on 1st and 2nd of February, 2005. Since then the *A·chik Theatre* had staged the play in several places of India.

Du·kon is the second play by the *A·chik Theatre Group*. The group defined it as an evolved play since the play evolved through a month-long workshop and the performance text preceded the written. The play was directed by Pabitra Rabha and was first staged in Tura District Auditorium, the head quarter of West Garo Hills District. Thereafter it was staged in several places outside Meghalaya. The play, *Du·kon,* spanning over one hour and twenty minutes, depicts the crisis of contemporary social environment. Trends of modernization and globalization lead to dehumanization of emotions and qualities like love, brotherhood, friendship, kindness, etc. are replaced by bitterness, violence and cruelty. Everyone becomes greedy. The young generation in particular is affected the most as they find themselves in a complex environment that is neither acceptable nor avoidable, while older people are nostalgic about times gone by. Younger people clamour towards modernization, thereby deepening the gap between generations.

The word *du·kon* in *A·chikku* refers to a species of invisible (magical) plant. The *A·chiks* believe that if anyone accidentally stepped on this plant he or she would wander round and round, always returning to the spot where he or she had stepped on the *du·kon* plant. This circular wandering about would go on until somebody physically touches the person under the spell of *du·kon*; the person would then come to consciousness. The play metaphorically uses the idea of *du·kon* to depict how in the contemporary world there are many reasons that could make one lose one's way and drift about aimlessly and the challenge is to be able to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong. Pabitra Rabha, the director of the play, notes that the earth keeps moving on its own way but the lives of human beings are marked by confusion and destruction. We, as humans cannot ignore the fact that if we disturb the equilibrium of life, both human existence as well as human sensibility suffer. In the journey

of life, knowingly or unknowingly, we sometimes ignore incidents that determine our ability to care for others. The theme of this play is based on human existence beset with various conflicts, confusions and different choices that one makes and the manner in which those choices determine our fate.[30]

Thus, from rituals to *Du·kon*, the *A·chik* theatre is seen making its evolutionary journey through incantations, prayers, ritual dances, secular songs and ritual dances which later morphed into secular entertainment. *A·chik* theatre is all the more enriched with borrowings from neighbouring places and other religions.

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Field Work:

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Gender Relations and the Web of Traditions in Northeast India

Ruth Lalsiemsang Buongpui

Abstract

Although the women in India's northeastern region appear to be enjoying a higher status compared to their counterparts in the rest of the country, in reality traditional and customary practices discriminate the women in so many ways. The paper aims to look at the gender relations in northeast India and explain how the women are still caught in the web of traditions and customs.

Keywords – Women, gender relations, gender socialisation, customary law.

Northeast India comprises of the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. It is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in India. The region has a high concentration of tribal population in the hilly states of Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and also in the hill districts of the state of Manipur, Assam and Tripura (Shimray, 2004). Each tribe has its own distinct historical identity, linguistic, cultural practices and life styles that are carried forward from generation to generation (Fernandes and Sanjay, 2002).

Women in the region when compared with their counterparts in other parts of the country, are often portrayed as enjoying greater freedom with respect to their mobility and the absence of certain practices such as dowry, obligatory wearing of burqas (covering of one's entire body from head to toe using veil or long garment). This visible gender equality which is mostly obvious in the public sphere is most often being talked about in the context of the northeast and is often envied by the women of other regions of the country (Banerjee, 2010; Xaxa, 2008). This picture of

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women enjoying a higher status however is an illusion created by many. Even though the discriminatory social practices seem to be absent, yet in reality there is strong discrimination against women mainly in the light of tradition and customary practices. Based on secondary sources, the paper aims to look at the gender relations in the socio-economic life of the tribal in northeast India which constructs gender inequality and how women are still caught in the web of traditional custom.

Societal Dictum that Portrays Women as Inferior

The metaphors of women in the tribal societies are predominantly negative. Lucy Vashum has mentioned in her article, 'Status of Tribal Women' (2003) that among the tribes of northeast India there are various taboos. Contact with women on certain occasions is considered to bring evil or bad fortune to the man. For instance, the Zeliangrong Naga men believe that sleeping with one's wife before going hunting may bring bad luck to the whole group'. The Zemei Naga males are forbidden to touch the meat of an animal killed by a woman, as it is 'considered that touching the meat would be below their dignity because bravery is a quality of men and docility that of women' (302). Among the Tangkhuls in Manipur there are certain gender taboos such as, 'a woman should not yell in public, a woman should not climb over roofs, trees etc. Ill luck will fall upon a man if he walks below a woman's clothes line' (Kashung, 2012: 11-12). The oral traditions of many of the tribes 'reflect the broad spectrum of marginalisation of women in the society' (Chakraborty, 2008: 28). There are phrases and sayings among the tribes which indicate that women were not given the same status. The traditional attitude towards Hmar women are reflected in the sayings such as *Nuhmei varin tuikhur ral a kai ngai naw* which means that the wisdom of a woman does not extend beyond the bank of a river. Even among the Mizos, there are also certain sayings such as a woman and old fence can be replaced any time. Just as the crab meat is not counted as meat, so also women's word is not counted as word. Unthreatened wife and unthreatened creepers of the field are both unbearable (Dena, 2008). Rose Nembiakkim (2008) has also mentioned that in the traditional Garo society, women are 'ridiculed with the saying that just as a goat is without teeth, so a woman lacks brain'. The Mayon Nagas of Manipur considers 'women as having no principles' since women are considered to have no permanent clan, as her clan changes into that

of her husband's after her marriage (12). The Khasis in Meghalaya also had the sayings that 'if the hen crows, the world including the family will change for the worst' (Zehol, 2006: 104).

Such sayings indicate 'substantiation of the historical role ascribed to the women and also serve as justifications for the distorted and stereotyped construction of gendered practices in the society' (Chakraborty, 2008: 28). It also gives a picture of patriarchal ideologies in the society. It can be noted from the above sayings or phrases that women were not regarded to have the 'wisdom and the reasoning power' and the capability of being given any power, be it in the private or public domain (Lalrinchhani, 2008: 214). These sayings not only lower the status of women in the society but also weaken the priceless work done by women in the family.

Gender Relationship in the Society

Gender is a constitutive element in all social relations. The term 'gender' refers to the social classification of men and women as 'masculine and feminine' (Oakley, 1972: 16) and their expected behaviour based on their assigned social roles (Basin, 2000). The different roles that are ascribed to men and women are socially and culturally determined and influenced by traditional practices, institutions, customs and beliefs. Most of the societies in northeast India are patriarchal society where men dominate and exercise control over most of the resources and are considered superior to women.

Traditional gender roles have a great influence on gender relationship in the society. Almost all the tribes in the region have their history of warfare and headhunting. In such situations ensuring peace and security to the people was an important duty on the part of the youth. Hence the institution of bachelors' dormitory played an important role as the training centre for the youth. Even though maintaining security was its main concern, the bachelors' dormitory was also concerned for the welfare of the village community. It was also an institution in which the young men learned technique of war, fighting, wrestling, traditions, etiquette, religion and all the essential things for their lives (Dena, 2008; Sikdar, 2009). Women and girls were not allowed to enter such youth dormitories (Mann, 1996). Most of the tribes in the northeast deny young women with such training facilities (Burman, 2012). They were rather obliged to look after

the welfare of the family as most of the domestic affairs and the household maintenance fall upon them. Today, even though such institutional practices have been done away, yet the attitude towards women, to quote Temsula Ao (2010), as 'benevolent subordination' continues.

The pattern of gender socialisation in the region has been shaped by the deeply rooted culture of patriarchy. Socialisation is defined as the 'process through which people come to know about the expectations of the society (Anderson and Howard, 2008: 66). Hence, gender socialisation is the 'process of socialisation which teaches children their gender roles' (Basin, 2000: 13). From the moment a child is born, gender socialisation and gender expectations come to influence the way boys and girls are treated. Gender socialisation thus affects the 'self-concepts of women and men, their social and political attitudes, their perceptions about other people, and their feelings about relationships with others' (Anderson and Howard, 2008: 305).

From the early age children of this region learn what it means to be a boy or a girl. Girls are socialised early into household chores. They are taught to cook, fetch water, wash dishes, clean the house, looked after their younger siblings while their mothers are away in the fields. Meanwhile boys are taught maintenance chores such as looking after the fields, cutting firewood etc. Girls are expected to remain at home and look after the family where they are made to think that the domestic activities and nurturing are women's work while boys are made to work outside thereby depicting the 'gender-stereotypical roles' (Lakshmi, 2007: 213). The process of gender socialisation continues throughout the life cycle. When a girl grows up and become a married woman, managing the household is her sole responsibility. For instance, though a woman might be just returning from the field it is expected that she prepares food and do the needed household chores (Krishna, 2005). Men showed their masculinity by not interfering in any of the household chores. As have been mentioned by Lalrinchhani (2008) that, though a man might be near the cooking place where his wife has cook something and even if the vessel overflows, he would just watch and call his wife who is busy in some other chores to attend it. Man considered doing 'household chores as a shameful thing' as they don't want themselves to be address as 'henpecked husband' by their fellow men (148-149). This negative attitude of men underlines the patriarchal notion of men.

Most tribal traditions make a clear separation between family and society. While the management of the family and all the activities connected with it are considered to be the sole responsibility of women, men on the other hand are concerned with administration and management of the affairs of the community. There are indeed very strict gender rules and norms that define the roles, responsibilities and attributes allotted to women (Ao, 2010). Within such a framework, gender has always been a basic differentiating factor, as is reflected in the cultural norms that have assigned specific roles to men and women in society.

Today, the economic responsibilities of women no longer centers only on agricultural work. Educated women have started working in government and in private jobs and started residing in towns and cities. These women bear double work burden as their family responsibilities continues which creates problems for women who take up jobs outside the home. As this work outside the home demands from them 'independence, mobility and long hours of work; the family demands the opposite- subservience, service, co-operation'. Even in the outside world men continue to take control as they did in the home. As men do not have to carry the double burden of work, they are much better trained in their profession and rise much higher than that of women (Basin, 2000: 36-46).

Customary Law and Gender Relations

The gender relations of the tribal which constructs inequality can be analysed looking at the customary law of the tribal communities in the region.

Customary law is part of the tribal traditional customs and practices where the tribes considered it 'intrinsic to their identity and culture' (Fernandes and Gita, 2009: 95). Customary law can be understood as 'an established system of immemorial rules which evolved from the way of life and natural wants of the people, the general context of which was a common knowledge, coupled with precedents applying to special cases, which were retained in the memories of the chief and his counsellors, their sons and their son's son, until forgotten, or until they became part of the immemorial rules' (Bekker, 1989: 11). The operation of customary laws acts as a powerful tool to define the roles of men and women and dictate acceptable standards of behaviour. Women's social and economic

status continues to be influenced by customary rules (Agarwal, 1994; Krishna, 2005).

Almost all the customary law of the region which includes 'people's beliefs, customs, social mores, precepts, rites and usages practiced since time immemorial, are not always conducive to the interests of women' and the customary laws relating to 'property and marriage are highly oppressive to women' (Nongbri, 1998: 20). As has been mentioned above, women in the region shoulder heavy economic responsibilities viz-a viz men. Yet their customary laws deny them equal rights to property and inheritance which is one of the important factors affecting their empowerment (Agarwal, 1994).

The customary laws in matters of marriage and divorce also are far from favourable to women. Among many of the tribes in northeast India, women are treated as mere commodities which can be seen in their custom of bride price. Bride-price prevails among the various communities in northeast India where the bridegroom has to pay certain amount of money to the girl's parent. This custom of bride-price which is practiced among the tribes is based on the recognition of the importance of women's role in the economic sphere. It is the 'reflection of the fact that women are a productive worker in the economy of the tribe' (Nembiakkim, 2008: 13). Though bride price was paid to compensate the girl's family for their loss of an 'economically active member', it has provided man with the 'justification to treat his wife as a disposable commodity' (Nongbri, 1998: 22). The payment of bride price did not protect women against exploitation within the family (Krishna, 2005) rather it creates limitation on women's right to initiate divorce as it 'entails the obligation to return the bride price to the husband. So women prefer to suffer in silence even if she is ill-treated rather than take recourse to divorce' (Nongbri, 1998: 22-23). In most of the communities of the northeast, the customary laws are constituted and interpreted by male alone. Women have no role in decision-making. Due to their customary laws, they aren't allowed to share their ideas in village decision-making (Fernandes and Gita, 2009). Women are excluded from participating in all the important decision making institutions (Ao, 2010).

Almost all the communities in northeast India are patrilineal society where descent is traced from father to son except for the state of Meghalaya,

where the Khasis and the Garos follow the matrilineal system where descent is traced from mother to the daughter. Yet what remains similar is that patriarchy rules in all these societies. Women were never allowed to represent the family or the kin group at the community level. Moreover, they are neither being given any authority at the social level. Thus, even though women have property rights in the matrilineal society, but when it comes to decision making whether it is in matrilineal or patrilineal societies, it is regarded as the domain of men (Gneezy, 2009; Krishna, 2005).

Concluding Remarks

The status that men and women enjoy in the society is socially and culturally determined. Moreover, as women are socialised from early age towards the household responsibilities, they considered themselves as subordinate to men. In spite of their economic contribution women are still far from being at an equitable position. Women are no doubt educated today and could earn their own living, yet they are still not the decision makers in social, economic and political institutions. As the economic, political, social and cultural institutions are by and large controlled by men, gender inequalities and subordination of women continue to exist. In the name of preserving traditional customs and tribal identities, very often individual and gender choices get foreclosed and women are relegated to the lower status. The customary laws and practices among most of the tribal societies in northeast India treat women as 'second sex' (Gough, 1971). Such practices overlap with gender equity, women's liberation and their empowerment. The customary law of all the community needs to be grounded on equality and human rights such that both men and women are given equal rights. As Kamla Basin (2000) has rightly stated that in order to attain gender equality 'it requires each one of us, man and women, to look into ourselves and overcome our negative 'male' (being aggressive, domineering, competitive, self-centred) and 'female (being submissive, fearful, difficult) qualities' (83).

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BOOK REVIEWS

Gurucharan Das, *India Grows at Night: A Liberal Case for a Strong State,* New Delhi: Allen Lane (an imprint of Penguin Books): India, 2012. ISBN: 9780670084708. pp. 307. Rs 599.00.

Though at present we are witnessing the slide of almost all economic growth indicators, it cannot be ignored that compared to many other countries, the Indian economy has been growing fast and has been much discussed and talked subject for good as well as bad reasons in the present times. India has been the second fastest growing economy in the world after China and aspires to have double-digit growth in the times to follow. Urban India visibly has portrayed that kind of development through the expansion of physical infrastructure and the provision of amenities, though not adequate to cope with the fast migration of striving rural class towards urban centres. Another topic of discussion amongst the argumentative Indians is the issue of governance which has of late become a serious problem as day after day a new scam is getting unfolded and the media as the fourth pillar of democracy is able to influence people conscience in different ways.

In these times an acclaimed author and columnist, a management guru (as Arvind Kejriwal calls him), an erstwhile corporate leader, Gurcharan Das brings out the book, *'India Grows At Night* (IGAN) – *a liberal case for a strong state'*. As he mentions, he originally intended to keep the title as 'India grows at night when the government sleeps'. Although he drops the other half of the original title, the book reminds the reader that in spite of the governance deficit, growth has been taking place which is praiseworthy. One tends to wonder as to what would have been the situation had there been better governance. I am sure as regards to the economic growth; India would have surpassed China by this time easily. But that was not to happen.

An excellent case of comparison between Faridabad and Gurgaon in the backdrop of Indian polity, policy and partnerships of private as well as public initiatives is made in the book. One a sparkling star whereas another one getting fade off. The former is Gurgaon and the latter is Faridabad. I, myself observed it when I visited Faridabad first time

sometime in late 80s or early 90s, that it was a much better township as compared to erstwhile Gurgaon.

Having read *India Unbound*, another masterpiece by Gurcharan Das, somehow I could relate and preempt the interventions made by IGAN, though not agreeing to all points made by him. However, I enjoyed reading the book with full involvement, concern and commitment. India's transformation in the visible indicators during last 20 odd years is appreciated in the book apart from the dismal conditions of social infrastructure viz., education, health, sanitation, etc., especially in rural India. The reality, I think, is even worst in rural India. The force driving the rural youth towards cities in search of petty jobs is still continuing and at least I have not come across any data supporting the case that such migration is in real terms going down even when our growth rates are positive and are being appreciated by all.

The book provides an excellent account of rationalizing the existence democratic practices. Comparison between democracy in America and Scandavian countries is tracked and elaborated. The author reiterates the merit of democracy, by drawing comparison between Tahrir Square uprising in Cairo with Anna's agitation at Jantarmantar in Delhi. Ironically, in India we do see mockery of democracy (many in Indian social media term it as 'demonocracy' however as a form of government still carries more merits and judicious fairness as compared to dictatorship or autocratic rule of state.

In his earlier work, *India Unbound,* Gurcharan Das primarily traced business history and related the changing economic conditions in the wake of liberalization. The story of young aspiring Raju narrated in the book makes his way learning Windows and English is in contrast to Raju of Satyam and Raja of Indian telecom scam fame. The appreciation of Anna Hazare movement as an awakening call is illustrated at many places in the book, although the author does not subscribe to all that this movement stood for. In order to build a case for poor governance, the author cites the cases of Jessica Lal and Ruchika, apart from many others. These are not stray cases; happening day in and day out in all cities and villages, at all places. Crony capitalism has somehow found a concrete grounding in the Indian development story. The purchase and sale of favor is rampant and the politicians playing the role of middlemen

have become so acceptable that aspiring bidders first form nexus and then manipulate the whole process.

Dharma as a proxy for moral well-being and *artha* as a proxy for material well-being are narrated through the text very convincingly. Gandhian way of promoting small business and developing industries on the basic premise of self sustenance is questioned and in a way big-push theory of economic development is advocated by the author highlighting and illustrating its strengths over welfare economy. Although both development and welfare are essential, there is a debate among the economists as to which one should be given priority. My personal belief is that the policy should target welfare first and that should further lead to economic growth. However, Gurcharan Das's thinking is that economic growth should be primary and that should lead welfare.

At the end, in the chapter titled, "What is to be Done?", Gurucharan explores political alternatives and advocates the need to revive the now extinct Swatantra party or start a new political party at the national level, as both the major parties viz., Congress and the BJP are losing people's trust. I too feel that an awakened India would certainly like to see the change at the top and would commit oneself and pray for a better India which does not only grow at night, rather during the day as well and there is never a time when the government really sleeps. I admire Shakespeare for his farsighted and ubiquitous statement '*great men work when others sleep'*.

The book is a simple read making a strong case for liberating India from the clutches of corrupt individuals and showing us a path which could help the state to deal with governance deficit successfully. It is a richly referenced book defending the viewpoint of the author very nicely. I recommend this book to all who are concerned about the future of India.

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Gladson Dungdung, *Whose Country is it Anyway – Untold Stories of the Indigenous Peoples of India,* Adivaani: Kolkata, 2013, pp. 280. *ISBN*: 978-81-925541-2-9. Price: Rs. 200.

There have been many writings on issues concerning the Adivasis – the indigenous peoples of India. But these have often tended to be written by academics or activists who are mostly non-Adivasis. The book titled "Whose country is it anyway", written by Gladson Dungdung, a tribal activist, breaks away from this trend. The book, to use Gramscian terminology, is the work of an organic intellectual which challenges the hegemony established in the name of development.

An insider's perceptions of the injustices faced by Adivasis are presented through a collection of articles titled under the broad heads: Violence and Adivasis, Displacement, Land and Forest, Red Corridor, Corporate Crime, Dissent Voice, Communalisation, Civil Society. The first section on Violence and Adivasis questions the linkage of Adivasi society with violence. By providing historical and contemporary evidence, the author argues that it is the Adivasis who are the victims of violence and not vice-versa. The changes introduced during colonial and post-colonial rule, such as the Permanent Settlement Act, introduction of private property in land, the state takeover of forests through various forest legislations, etc. have only alienated the Adivasis from their natural environment and deprived them of sources of livelihood. The Adivasis became encroachers in their own lands. Land alienation continued despite the tribal uprisings and protective legislations. Land Acquisition Act and Special Economic Zones (SEZ) have further accentuated the problem. The beneficiaries tended to be landlords, project officers, engineers, contractors, bureaucrats, politicians and outsiders. The development process has marginalised the Adivasi religion, language and culture. The self-rule of Adivasis has been replaced by Panchayat Extension for Scheduled Areas (PESA). A need based economy has been substituted by market economy.

In the second section dealing with the issue of Displacement, the author brings to light judicial bias in handling cases related to compensation and rehabilitation of the displaced. The cases related to victims of Malay dam, Kelaghgh dam and Nagri education project - all in Jharkhand - are discussed. The government policies turn self sufficient

communities into dependent rehabilitation victims. Gladson considers Jawaharlal Nehru as the architect of Adivasi misery. The author argues that all the principles of Panchasheel that Nehru enunciated were violated through exogenous development, disrespect for tribal customs and tribal leadership, imposition of an external governance system (PESA) and inadequate attention on human growth. However, the struggles by Adivasis against land acquisition, for fair compensation, rehabilitation and people's movements against corporate giants continue.

The third section on Land and Forests discusses the problem of land alienation among the Adivasis. Land alienation of Adivasis continues despite the protective legal provisions such as Chotanagpur Tenancy Act. The legislations for forest and wildlife conservation have only separated the Adivasis from their life source. Despite the claims by Adivasis under Forest Rights Act (FRA), there is biasness in settlement of their claims. The author states that media has a vested interest in opposing protective legislations. While some of the local news channels in Jharkhand are run by builders and industrialists, in some cases their revenues depend considerably on advertisements from the corporate sector. The media bias is reflected in its underreporting of protests against violations of protective legislations and in its giving priority to the industry viewpoint. While violations of protective legislations by Adivasis are reported, the same by non-Adivasis are underreported.

The fourth section on Red Corridor describes the situation prevalent in areas under Left Wing Extremism (LWE) which the state views as the 'greatest internal security threat'. The book gives the details of instances of death of innocents, burning of villages, arson, rape, murder, atrocities and torture by paramilitary, police and Special Police Officers (SPOs) in the name of Greenhunt and Salwa Judum. The killing of earning family members is creating livelihood crisis for the families and making children orphans. Gladson says that all this is happening with the purpose to create 'investment climate', rather than for protecting the Adivasis. He claims that the Operation Green-hunt is intended to create fear, insecurity and livelihood crises among villagers so that they move out and the land can be given to corporate houses. In his view, Naxalism which has its genesis in inequality, injustice and discrimination can only be dealt with equitable development and justice.

The fifth section on corporate crime highlights the crimes being inflicted on the Adivasis for establishing corporate corridor. The author says that initially the corporate houses use muscle power to force the Adivasis to move out. When muscle power fails, they talk of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The author views the CSR work of companies like that of the Mittals in Jharkhand as a 'conspiracy for snatching resources'. The corporate sector tries to co-opt opposing forces and produce consent through media. The media produces biased report in favor of the corporate houses by glorifying them. However, CSR programs could not make much headway and now corporate houses have started talking about human rights, although they are the worst violators of the same.

The sixth section on Dissenting voice shows how the state tries to suppress the dissent by equating it with Maoism. The book cites how the efforts of human rights organisations to bring to light the cases of human rights violations by state police and paramilitary are maligned. Organised protests by human rights organisations are branded as Maoist events. The human rights activists are questioned for their position on Maoist violence, despite the fact that they do equally condemn Maoist violence. The seventh section on Communalisation takes a critical stand against the efforts of Hindutva organisations in identifying the Adivasis with Hinduism. The author points out instances in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* to argue that the Adivasis never were part of Hinduism. The Sarna religion practiced by Adivasis is different from Hinduism. He criticises the efforts of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) carrying out *Ghar Vapsi* program in the name of re-converting the Adivasi Christians back into the hold of Hinduism and trying to create communal tensions in the tribal belts.

The eighth section on Civil Society interrogates the pretensions and performance of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working in the tribal areas. The author points out that most CSOs are led by elites who have got enriched by pretending to be working for the marginalised, but the situation of the marginalised Adivasis remains as they were before. The book correctly points out that the Adivasis are at best found only in the lower rungs of CSOs, working at low salaries but never in higher echelons of leadership. The funding agencies also favor CSOs led by non-Adivasis, and ignore organisations led by Adivasis themselves. Awards are

instituted for non-Adivasis working for their work with Adivasis, rather than the Adivasi leaders working for the Adivasis.

At a time when development is being increasingly equated with growth and industrialisation, the book by providing space for subaltern voices shows the other side of neo-liberal reforms. It shows exactly what the growth and industrialisation means for the marginal classes. The book of this kind is relevant at a time when the so called reforms have been affecting various marginal communities.

One area where the book lags is in its failure to see emergence of classes within the Adivasi communities and the alliance of the tribal elites with other exploitative classes. It also fails to see similarities of interests between the exploited Adivasi communities and other non-tribal marginal classes such as peasants, unorganised and organised workers etc. affected equally under the neo-liberal reforms. The book raises relevant questions about the nature of Indian democracy and the reforms taking place in the country in the name of economic development. However, the book is worth reading for anyone interested in the issues concerning the Adivasi and indigenous peoples, political economy of development and the impact of neo-liberal reforms.

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Tage Tada, Jagat C. Dutta and Nabajit Deori, *Archaeological Heritage of Arunachal Pradesh*: *Discoveries from 1991-2011*, Directorate of Research, Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Arunachal Pradesh: Itanagar, 2012. pp. i-xviii +214. Price: Rs. 500/-.

The book, *Archaeological Heritage of Arunachal Pradesh*: *Discoveries from 1991-2011*, under review is based exclusively upon the findings of archaeological investigations of two decades (1991-

2011) in various parts of Arunachal Pradesh. The Government of India, through the Finance Commission has provided financial support to the Arunachal Pradesh under heritage up-gradation schemes for protection, preservation and development of archaeological monuments. These grants helped and encouraged the Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Arunachal Pradesh to conduct a series of archaeological explorations and investigations even in the far flung border areas. The book under consideration is the outcome of such devoted hard studies. The book comprises of five chapters.

The first chapter is the introduction to the book containing a theoretical account of the heritage, archaeology and a brief description of the political development of the State. The second chapter named land and people is the description of geography, geology, river system and the people and their living patterns. The third chapter deals with prehistoric archaeology and the fourth with historical archaeology. The fifth chapter, Summary and Conclusion, attempts to summarize the new discoveries and draw a conclusion especially on the migration of the local inhabitants. Apart from projecting the glimpses of hidden archaeological treasures of the State, the chapter also talks about the scope for further investigation. A select bibliography and an appendix on archaeological wealth of the State and Government notifications on declaration of State Protected Monuments are incorporated.

The archaeological findings published in the book is going to be significant not only for the future researcher of the history of Arunachal Pradesh but also the neighbouring areas. It is more so internationally because of the state's geographical situation: three sides of the state are surrounded by three countries – China, Bhutan and Myanmar. The third and the fourth chapters are the two main chapters wherein the entire primary findings of the last two decades of the archaeological investigations have been presented with photographs, maps and sketches wherever applicable along with description. The authors of the book under review have systematized and classified the findings and preserved them for the future scholars to conduct further research / scientific studies and arrive at new conclusions. Unlike the other publications on the archaeological findings of Arunachal Pradesh, this book covers the whole of Arunachal Pradesh as well as the Neolithic, Megalithic, traces of blacksmithy, religious structures, forts etc.

The book *Archaeology of Arunachal Pradesh* by Y. A. Raiker and S. Chatterjee (1980) had documented a few prehistoric and historic artifacts and monuments reported and excavated mainly from the foothills of Arunachal Pradesh. Later on, books on Malinithan, Naksaparvat, Itafort were published with findings of the respective exactions. A. A. Ashraf in his book, *Prehistoric Arunachal* (1990) exclusively dealt with the Neolithic findings of the Parsi-Parlo in the present Kurung Kumey district. Apart from the books, a number of booklets, research papers and articles were written by many scholars of the Department and other institutions, which were published in different journals, highlighting the archaeological wealth of Arunachal Pradesh. These reports and research findings have also been published in the journal of the Research Department of Government of Arunachal Pradesh, *Resarun.* If we analyse the contribution of this book, it is certainly able to bring back the history of Arunachal Pradesh to its prehistoric past with more evidence from almost all parts of Arunachal Pradesh and connect them to the subsequent developments. The new Neolithic and Megalithic finds and the traces of blacksmithy of the early period, as reported in the book are significant.

If historians and anthropologists want to analyse these findings in their researches, it will lead certainly to new heights in the researches on Arunachal Pradesh. There is a definite connect between the stone age cultural developments of Pari-Parlo and other areas to the growth and development of iron and finally the guns coming from Tibet/China and Myanmar in the areas of Arunachal Pradesh and its impact on the material culture of the area and the neighbouring areas. The archaeological findings of the book can also be very helpful to deduce the technological progresses in various parts of Arunachal Pradesh. The impact of the neighbouring areas not only on the archaeological finds but also on the material culture of the area can also be studied in future. Thus, this book is a mine of information with significant pointers to the direction of future researches on the bases of archaeological finds towards places and routes of migration and settlements in Arunachal Pradesh, development of art and architecture of Arunachal Pradesh, sacred status of some stones and other antique objects; thus have tremendous potentialities to encourage future researches.

However, the authors should have avoided the claim to "highlight the glory of hidden heritage of the land" as one of the objectives of the

work. We study the developments of the past to understand them, not necessarily to glorify them. Even for the developments of the Buddhist art and architecture, the use of terms such as "glorious" should have been substituted with any other value neutral term. Barring such limitations, the book is a significant addition to the existing knowledge on the land and its people. It is one of the finest examples of institutional involvement and devotion to the archaeological studies; and will certainly open new vistas in exploring the comprehensive history of the region.

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R.K. Satapathy, *United States and Central America: The US Involvement in Nicaragua,* Mittal Publications: New Delhi, 2012. ISBN : 81-8324-361-4. Pp.183. Price: Rs. 600.

Since the Spanish American War of 1898, relations between the United States and the Hispanic America were centred round the Caribbean Sea. The sea is of vital interest to the US from the perspective of both commercial interest and military defence. The Caribbean Sea offers an entrance to the Atlantic and the Pacific and thereby its importance to the US as a sea line of communication (SLOC) is immense. Further, various republics bordering the Caribbean Sea are of special significance to the US because of their natural resource reserves. In this context the pronounced US goal, to have supremacy over Central America only states the USA's overriding concerns for the region. The famous Monroe Doctrine (1823) bears the testimony. It is known to any political analyst that the smaller, weaker and debilitated states of this region were always source of US worries. Throughout the history of colonialism, the fear of European aggression in this region kept alive American vigil and concern over the region. The bold enunciation of President Monroe, "henceforth the American continent are not to be considered as subjects for future colonialism by any European powers'' (speech delivered to the Congress

on Dec 2, 1823), underlined the future US engagement with the region. The United States has followed the doctrine as a policy in her own interest for more than a century. In course of time, it has moved from its original content of prohibiting any European intervention to the self-proclaimed right of US to intervene in every conflict between an American and a non-American power. In pursuance of this policy the United States has extended its control over this area by means of mediation, intervention, commercial expansion, training and aids to pro American regimes. None other than Nicaragua, the largest of the Central American states exemplifies so clearly the US intention in this region. Apart from its strategic location, its natural resources have induced US interest in Nicaragua. The location of Nicaragua fulfils the prime interests of the US - the military base, control over canal routes, protection of Panama Canal and commercial expansion. Mining, timber, banana and coffee industries of Nicaragua had attracted foreign investments in the republic from the days of colonialism. Once the USA emerged as a great power after the civil war of 1861-65, it began to assert itself in the region, viewing it as its own backyard. Further during the Cold War era, incremental increase in Soviet presence in the region and the emergence of Cuba as Soviet ally further induced an increasing and aggressive US presence in the region.

Written with this backdrop, the book, *United States and Central America,* is a welcome addition to the vast literature on US intervention, interest and engagement in Central America. The book is an adaptation from his Ph.D work on the subject and the research output of those years has enriched the book with valuable insights.

Apart from the concluding chapter and a postscript, the book comprises five chapters. US involvement in Nicaragua forms the core of the book and except for the first, rest of the chapters primarily focuses on the core area. The central theme of the book highlights the exploitation of Nicaragua by the US, its "unrelenting war of attrition against Nicaragua" (p.vii). The book presupposes the hegemonic ambition of the US in Central America. As an appendage to its ambition of global supremacy, the relations between US and Nicaragua surfaced as "exploiter-exploited and dictator-dictated." (p. 23)

The preface sets the tone of the book by providing glimpses of US intervention in Nicaragua. The introduction unfolds the basic postulates

of US design in Central America and presents an overview of American policy options over a wide period, from 1821 to the decade of 80s up to Reagan administration. A brief sketch of colonial subjugation, economic exploitation, inequality and political instability of the region in the beginning of the chapter provides a prelude to US policy design in the region.

Chapter 2 promises the readers a historical survey of US-Nicaragua relations from 1840 to 1979 - the various phases of US intervention in Nicaragua. Inclusion of detail analysis of different landmark events, treaties and agreements in the early part of 19th century involving US, Nicaragua and Britain supplements our understanding of the historical background and evolution of the US−Nicaragua relations. The chapter examines US intervention in Nicaragua from Walker era until the killing of Sandino and the rise of Samoza Garcia and Samozian dynastic rule. It covers primarily four time periods - (1855-1893, 1893-1912,1912-1933 and 1933-1979). The US interventions in 1855 and 1910 are said to have been motivated by the desire to secure control over Panama Canal and its routes. Beginning with William Walker's involvement in Nicaragua (who became the President of Nicaragua by virtue of leading the successful filibuster, the 1856 conquest of Nicaragua), the chapter proceeds on analysing the US interventions against Jose Santoes Zelaya (1910) and the consolidation of US control over Nicaragua (1912-1933). The chapter draws attention to the dictatorial rule of Samozas for more than forty years which is marked by US support and backing. The chapter briefly examines the then prevailing economic conditions, political cleavages and instability in Nicaragua. How those conditions have augmented US involvements in Nicaragua, also finds a mention. In this context, the elaboration of `Dollar Diplomacy', which finds a brief place in the text, would have made the chapter interesting - as 'Dollar Diplomacy' explains substantially the American intention in Nicaragua. Nevertheless, the chapter prepares the readers to uncover the most destructive rage of US against Nicaragua from 1979 to 1990. During that period, the United States had to confront the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSNL- *Frente Sandinsta Liberation Nacional*) which posed a serious challenge to US hegemony.

Chapter 3 illustrates how the US made things worse for Nicaragua during that period, until the fall of Sandinista Government in the 1990 elections. The author provides an account of US opposition to Sandinistas,

by documenting in detail the nature and extent of US involvement in Nicaraguan domestic affairs. US interference was marked by host of activities which ranged from false propaganda against FSNL, low intensity war against Nicaragua, training of the Contras-a militia to overthrow the Sandinista, creation of economic hurdles for Nicaragua, various secret CIA / Contra plans and operations to destabilise FSNL and finally orchestrating the defeat of FSNL in 1990 election. Historic continuity of US dominance in Central America was scripted by US through such policy options. Approach towards the Sandinista Government broadly remained unchanged under the three successive administration of Carter, Reagan and Bush i.e. the "harassment, malignity and strangulation of a tiny nation, which braved to come out of the control of a super power" (p 60).

Chapter 4 outlines the international responses towards the United States Nicaraguan policy. The responses of the Europe, United Nations, Soviet Union, and Central American nations form the core of this chapter. The chapter brings into focus the fact that the role of United States in Nicaragua did not even receive the support of some US allies. The discussion on reaction of Central American nations captures the factors responsible for divided response fo the neighbours to US response to Nicaragua. The author discusses initiatives taken by various groups of countries to bring peace and stability in the region. The analysis of the efforts of groups like Contadora, Lima etc., various stakeholders' response to their proposals, their ideological proximity to the US or USSR has added substance to the content of the chapter.

Chapter 5 draws the attention of the readers to the ulterior motive behind US active involvement in the 1990 election of Nicaragua. The United States played a pivotal role in that election to ensure the ouster of the Sandinista government. Contextualising the electoral debacle of Sandinistas, the author has highlighted how the US forced the FSNL to adopt various unpopular measures and went for all out support to rival Contras.

Chapter 6 summarises the US approach to Central American republicans in general and Nicaragua in particular. Chapter 7 (postscript) carries the work to the contemporary developments in the US-Nicaragua relations. The chapter points out the US interference in the elections of

1996 and 2001 against FSNL and its as presidential candidate, Daniel Ortega. The chapter ends with a bird's eye view of President Ortega's efforts to rebuild the country by accepting IMF conditions and for opening up Nicaragua to the outside world for diversification of economic relations and for rebuilding its defence relations with the US. The author concludes by saying that only through confidence building measures it will be possible to bring a positive change in US-Nicaragua relations.

The book helps as an introductory book to understand US attitude to any perceived or potential threat to Pan-Americanism and it has been explained through the case study of its age old hostile attitude towards Nicaragua. Use of resources other than the US Department of State has enriched the book. The detailed information of covert and overt activities of US in Nicaragua and elaborate discussion of US policy approaches towards Nicaragua in various phases will go a long way in encouraging such endeavours in future. The students of International relations will benefit immensely from the book.

The work however has not much to say in terms of new insights. It has not made any reference to the untended modernising affects of US intervention on Nicaraguan society and economy. Some of the recent researches on US–Nicaragua relations have focused on this aspect. The work also does not address the dilemmas and dichotomies of the indigenous elite in Nicaragua. This would have made the book more interesting to read. The mere stereotypical profiling of US actions in Nicaragua might inhibit the interests of a section of readers. In the introduction, a brief reference of the geographical area under focus and the nations that comprise Central America would have been helpful for those who hardly navigate in the world of international relations. A map of the region certainly would have made a visual contribution to the book. Some of the opinions expressed appear to be subjective, as they are not supported by proper references. (pp. 63, 75, 76, 78). For such a well researched work, citing sources which helped the author to form opinions would not have been difficult.

The book could have taken care of typographical errors, avoided repetitions (in preface and acknowledgement) and evaded long sentences. Proper editorial care would have placed the book to a higher academic

plane. The cover page which has an excellent design could have included the sub-heading of the book – *US involvement in Nicaragua* – as well.

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Sagar Boruah ed., *Historical Studies In The Context Of Globalization: Rationale for Restructuring Curriculum*, Khagarijan College: Nagaon, 2011. 978-202-8876-7. pp. 113. Rs. 150/-.

As the editor of the book observes in his preface, this book is the outcome of a National Seminar organized at the Khagarijan College, Nagaon and the theme of the seminar has been adopted as the title of the book. This edited volume as a collection of eight papers attempts to understand the challenges posed to History as a discipline and knowledge system and the response evolved from within the discipline to counter them in this new age, identified as the age of Globalization. Challenges to history as a discipline is of course not a recent phenomenon. Scholars have raised issues over the relevance of studying History in the past as well. One can only remember the attempts by historians to respond to the Age of Science by asserting with all their intellectual rigour that 'history was a science, no more no less'. History is one of the oldest disciplines within human knowledge systems. The onset of Globalization has unleashed new forces that have challenged organized classical disciplines, including History.

About two decades before E. H. Carr[1], it was Jawaharlal Nehru who in his *Discovery of India* viewed history as a continuous attempt of the 'present' to engage with the 'past' and highlighted the necessity of a discipline such as history to re-discover its relevance with the times. History writing is a continuous romance between the Historian and

[1] E. H. Carr, What is History?, Penguin Books, London, 1990 (Rep)

'historical fact'. Nehru observed that, "[T]he past becomes something that leads up to the present, the moment of action, the future something that flows from it; and all there are inextricably intertwined and interrelated."[2] There is no doubt that for a colonized land that India then was, history became an important platform from the age of Bankim Chandra, both for assertion of colonial hegemony and for resistance against it; an effective forum of contest between the colonized and the colonizer. Within this contest, framing a curriculum in History became an important part of political struggle between the major parties (Indian National Congress and the Muslim League) and their leaders (Mahatma Gandhi and Muhammad Ali Jinnah).

India's engagement with the global capitalist order continued even after the transfer of power. The importance of continuous engagement with the global order was asserted by Nehru himself who set the tone in his inaugural address to the Asian History Congress in 1961, the very year that E. H. Carr delivered his 'George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures'. Nehru set the tone for the framework of a new curriculum in History in a globalized world by asserting that, "… the world is getting integrated. We have really to consider history today in a world perspective…".[3] When the Congress government later adopted the policy of globalization, it was not totally incongruent with the Nehruvian vision, over which the political spectrum in India had evolved a broad agreement. The new age ushered in far reaching social changes. Preceded by a technological revolution, it had an impact on the manner in which knowledge systems came to be perceived and pedagogy came to be constructed. The editor of this book, Sagar Boruah correctly contextualized the situation when he observed in his essay, that "…the Globalization has given birth to such an environment that every aspect of society is bound to change its own nature. The subject history as an academic discipline is too affected by the wave of globalization."

The impact of globalization on the Indian knowledge system was indeed phenomenal. The political class who rode high on the wave of technological revolution since mid-1980s was openly critical of classical

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2 J. Nehru, The Discovery of India, pp.9-10, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2010.

3 Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, Vol.-IV, 1957-1963, Publication Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1983.

disciplines. Some even went to the extent of proclaiming the redundancy of subjects like History and called for its replacement within the school curriculum by subjects which were in tune with the times and served the cause of employment generation. This position of the political class was criticized by professional historians and History Associations alike. The 1990s was indeed an age of crisis for discipline of History. The last decade of 20th century was difficult and the historians responded to the challenge by framing new history curriculums which could meet the challenge of globalization. The curriculum by which the discipline of History was geared up to meet the needs of globalized citizens itself became one of the arenas of fierce ideological contest among the historians . With the onset of a new age, history had to reassert the relevance of its traditional concerns with polity, society and economy but also engage with new areas such as environment, technology, food and fashion.

This collection of eight essays is in tune with the attempt by historians to engage with the curriculum. The opening essay by J. B. Bhattacharjee sets the tone for the book. The essay helps readers to make sense of the various crises faced by the discipline of history in the new millennium. The strength of Bhattacharjee's scholarship is not just in identification of the crises but also in his attempt at providing suggestions for overcoming them. One cannot help but give a serious thought to the assertion that "... if historical method is to be more 'scientific', the proposed techno-historical approach deserves serious consideration….." (p.6). If the first essay set the tone, the essay titled 'The curriculum of History in Modern' by A. K. Thakur successfully picked up the leads by highlighting the changes that have taken place over time within the teaching-learning processes of history in modern India. In the essay, Thakur identifies the dominant currents of historical thought and examines how some historians in India have shaped the study of history. Using a wide array of 'historical' data, the author highlights the contrast in history writing between the colonial and the post-colonial period. The reference to the Nehruvian vision of History is both ideological and functional. The author successfully weaved a narrative of challenge and response in scientific history writing in post colonial India. The scientific approach was not a fetish but the cornerstone of Indian secular historiography. This essay is a mine of information about the continuous tussle within dominant political classes within the Indian state

to influence and determine the course of history reading and writing. At the same time it also deals with the efforts by professional historians to resist the attempts to politicize history and history writing. The author's assertion that such an ideological and political nexus harms the idea of a secular and scientific historiography, sets the tone for review of similar contests between the motivated political class and professional scientific historians in the early years after Independence. It appears that the author is very much influenced by Prof. V.C.P. Chaudhary, one of the stalwarts of scientific and secular historiography in India. Incidentally Thakur himself refers to Prof. Chaudhary's unpublished article ('Indian Historiography as the Tool of Ruling Class Interest: A General Survey from Canning to Morarji', submitted to Indian History Congress held at Waltair, 1976) to integrate his core arguments. This essay is successful in highlighting the nexus between political ideology and history writing and curriculum framework, not only in India but also at various other countries of Asia and Europe. The case studies from China, France, Pakistan, and South Korea have given this essay an added leverage and this book a new dimension.

Globalization has been advocating the linkage of education with job market. Of late, the relevance of a discipline is judged on the basis of its employment potential. Probably in response to such demands, J. B. Bhattacharjee in his introductory essay observes that "contemporary global situation calls for striking balance in which the students are prepared for the emerging economy… Globalization demands that the curriculums in all courses are to be globally compatible……" Such an academic engagement between globalization and history seems to be the dominant thread in the essays by Ajanta Khargharia and Dipjyoti Das, Manjushree Bora and Swapan Jyoti Nath. Applied History in the sense of trying to relate History with applied disciplines such as Travel and Tourism and Environmental Studies within History are the core concern of the papers by Pradip Barman and Mamoni Bhuyan and Prasanta Khanikur. The result of such an engagement can be practically demonstrated in the commencement of a diploma course in Travel and Tourism in various department of History in Indian universities. The only paper that sought to enter into a theoretical discourse on globalization using the colonial and post-colonial as historic signposts is the essay by Kishore Goswami. Goswami must be credited for engaging with the idea of modernization and underdevelopment as a

justification of colonial hegemony over non-western societies. He makes sense, when he projects the ayurvedic movement initiated in late colonial and post colonial India as sites of resistance against the juggernaut of globalization. The essay, 'Globalization and History' by the coordinator of the Seminar, Sagar Boruah serves as an interesting epilogue for this book.

Over the ages, the nature and practice of history as a discipline has undergone several changes. From serving the cause of theology in the medieval ages to technology in the age of globalization, history and historians have tried to rise up to the challenges of the times. In India, with the emergence of a new nation state with a millennium old civilizational heritage, the discipline has witnessed rapid transformation. There is no doubt that this book does make an attempt to intervene in the debate over the nature, scope and the prospect of historical studies in India in this global age. But on reading the book, one cannot help but note the typographical errors. Some of the authors could have done more justice to the theme of the seminar and the book if they had come out with detailed case studies, rather than observations of generic nature. But at the close, one is left wondering whether there could have been some space for understanding the nature of Globalization as a world system perspective or an overview of its relationship with the idea of colonialism and neo colonialism in theory and practice. Probably that has been left for historical scholarship in some other seminar in future.

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