

Tribal Development in North-East India



Dr. Girindra Nath Das

**TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN
NORTH-EAST INDIA**

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TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH-EAST INDIA : A book containing papers presented in the seminars on *Problems and Prospects of Tribal Development in North-east India* and *The Tribal Communities of Assam : Problems and Perspectives of Peace, Harmony and Development* held in Guwahati on August 27 & 28, 2007 and September 6 & 7, 2007 respectively, edited by Dr. Girindra Nath Das, District Research Officer, Karbi Anglong, Diphu – 782 460.

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In Memory of
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Preface

The North-eastern region of India comprises the seven sister States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. It covers 7.76% of the country's total geographical area of 32,87,240 sq. km. Although Sikkim is included as a part of the region, it is not taken into account for our purpose. The North-east lies between latitudes 22° and 29° 5' N and longitudes 89° 70' and 97° 30' E. The region with undulating hills, deep gorges, meandering rivers and rivulets, fertile valleys, and varied flora and fauna presents a splendid landscape. Moreover, special features of the region are its sharing of international boundaries with Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh and its linkage with the rest of the country through a narrow passage, popularly called chicken's neck or Siliguri corridor.

Since time immemorial the North-east has been the abode of various ethnic groups of Australoid, Mongoloid and Caucasoid origins. The inhabitants speak Tibeto-Burman, Siamese-Chinese, Austro-Asiatic and Indo-Aryan languages, etc. They possess distinctive socio-cultural heritage. Scholars have aptly termed this region as 'miniature India' or 'anthropological museum'. According to 2001 Census the total population in entire North-east India is 3.85 crore out of which the scheduled tribe population is 1.06 crore. In other words, the scheduled tribes constitute 27.42% of the total population of the North-east. However, major concentration of scheduled tribes is found in Mizoram (94.46%), followed by Nagaland (89.15%) and Meghalaya (85.94%). Arunachal Pradesh is having 64.22% ST population. Manipur and Tripura have 39.96% and 31.05% ST population respectively. The lowest percentage of STs (12.41) is observed in Assam. It may be mentioned here that all the tribes inhabiting the North-east belong to the great Mongoloid group and they are at different stages of development.

As a matter of fact, tribal development in North-east India starts with the formulation and implementation of the First Five Year Plan (1951-56). Constitutional safeguards have also been provided under various Articles. Unfortunately, the benefits have not percolated down to the grassroots level during the last six decades. As a result, the tribal communities of the region have been experiencing multifarious problems such as poverty, healthcare, drinking water, indebtedness, power, transport and communication bottlenecks, illiteracy, unemployment, border disputes, drugs, insurgency and identity crisis, etc.

Assam alone accounts for 31.3% of the total scheduled tribe population of the North-east. According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders

(Amendment) Act 2002, there are 25 scheduled tribes in Assam. It is a matter of grave concern that continued ethnic clashes between tribals and tribals, tribals and non tribals for the last few years across the State have adversely effected peace and communal harmony. Development activities have also been seriously hampered.

Keeping in view the above facts, two seminars (i) *Problems and Prospects of Tribal Développement in North-east India* and (ii) *The Tribal Communities of Assam : Problems and Perspectives of Peace, Harmony and Development* were organized at Guwahati in the year 2007. Prof. Bhuban Mohan Das, renowned anthropologist presided over the inaugural session of the first seminar. Dr. Tanmay Bhattacharjee, Department of Political Science, Assam University, Silchar inaugurated the seminar and in his speech he highlighted the major problems of the North-east tribes and stressed upon solution through an integrated approach. He maintained that the sufferings of the tribal people could be minimized by means of exploring potentialities of the region and executing welfare programmes subsequently within a specific time-frame. While delivering the key note address Dr. Ganesh Chandra Sharma Thakur, Ex-Director, AIRTSC, Guwahati brought into focus the recent problems confronted by the tribals and commented that sincere efforts should be made to solve the problems by a new outlook instead of an old stereotyped method. Acting as the chief guest Dr. H Kamkhenthang, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Manipur, Imphal inaugurated two books, viz, *Tribal Women and Development* and *Tribal Tradition and Development in the Hill Areas of Assam* published by the Directorate of AIRTSC, Guwahati and dwelt at length about the problems of the tribals of Manipur. In his presidential address Prof. Das opined that new strategies should be evolved to solve the problems of the tribals. Moreover, the need of the hour is to review the existing system of mainstream concept comprehensively. According to him an equilibrium is to be maintained between natural environment and man made environment. Over and above, tribal participation is highly essential at the time of formulation of plans meant for tribal uplift, he added.

The inaugural session of the second seminar was chaired by Dr. Basanta Kumar Doley, President, Mishing Sahitya Sabha. Sri Lanki Phangcho, IAS, Secretary, WPT & BC Department, Dispur as the distinguished guest highlighted the main factors responsible for tribal conflicts. He laid much importance on utilization of earmarked money for tribal development with transparency and accountability. Otherwise discontent will spread among the tribal communities. Eminent folklorist Dr. Nabin Chandra Sarma, as the guest of honour expected that the proceedings of the seminar will bring into focus pragmatic solutions to

the current problems faced by the tribals. Moreover, he emphasized on the implementation of the suggestions of seminars and projects for tribal development. Speaking as the chief guest Prof. Bhuban Mohan Das, renowned anthropologist threw sufficient light on the vital role of the tribal people towards formation of Assam's holistic culture. He made it clear that the contributions of the tribes and other communities over the centuries have created the vibrant socio-cultural mosaic in the State and hence, tribal and non tribal amity must be preserved at any cost. Dr. Doley in his presidential speech mentioned about the inter-tribe conflicts and hoped that such a seminar could act as catalytic agent in removing the roots of the conflicts.

It is to be noted that on this occasion Prof. Promod Chandra Bhattacharyya, eminent linguist and a doyen of tribal research was also felicitated. The book titled *Purbanchalar Bhasa Sahitya Aru Sanskriti* published by the Directorate of AIRTSC, Guwahati and dedicated to Prof. Bhattacharyya was inaugurated by Sri L. Phangcho.

On the basis of papers presented by various scholars of repute and lectures delivered by distinguished guests and detailed discussions that followed in both the seminars, the recommendations shown here under emerged as consensus outcome.

RECOMMENDATIONS (FIRST SEMINAR)

1. Government may invite local genuine NGOs at the time of planning tribal development schemes.
2. All proposals relating to tribal development should be sanctioned and fund released at the beginning of the financial year by the Govt. Sanction and release of fund at the fag end of the year should be avoided.
3. The existing mechanisms for protecting rights and properties of the tribals should be adhered to the fullest and new mechanisms be incorporated for more efficient protection of the tribal people.
4. Representation and reservation in terms of population may be given a rethinking so as to protect the tribals against the more populous non tribals.
5. Training to unemployed tribal youth for gainful self-employment in fishing, piggery, weaving, horticulture and crafts, etc., should be imparted.
6. Use of traditional institutions for imparting modern and scientific education should be encouraged.
7. Tribal belts and blocks should be protected in the real sense of the term. Stopping alienation of land through lease may be given due importance.
8. Indigenous knowledge and technologies of the tribes may be given due weightage as tools of development including tribal medicines.
9. Specific programmes on empowerment of tribal people are called for, for which attention of North Eastern Council and NABARD may be drawn.
10. IFAD project and Wadi project (Orchard development) should be extended in all tribal belt areas.

11. Schemes for welfare of STs under Ministry of Tribal Affairs through NGOs should be chalked out only in resource deficit areas of the tribal inhabited districts.
12. Assam government should take up certain specific projects for tribal potential development which should lead to be the telling example in all tribal areas of North-eastern region.


RECOMMENDATIONS (SECOND SEMINAR)

1. Suitable measures may be adopted for eradication of sense of alienation.
2. Immigration is taking place from pre-Independence era threatening the development and very existence of the tribals. Strict actions may be taken for tackling the problem.
3. For addressing the problems of inter-tribe and intra-tribe conflicts adequate steps may be undertaken to weed out the disagreements both at the administrative and political levels.
4. The mass media's role in focusing the areas of peace, harmony and integrity should be prominent and areas of conflict and difference should not be blown out of proportion.
5. The prevalence of drug abuse among the tribal youth should be checked thoroughly.
6. Awareness programmes and street plays may be organized in order to bring into focus peace, harmony and development.

The present publication is a compilation of the papers presented in the two seminars. However, all the papers could not be incorporated in the volume due to lack of space. We are grateful to the Development Commissioner for Hill Areas of Assam, Dispur for providing necessary fund not only for organizing the two seminars but also for publishing the papers in a book form. Mrs. Sumitra Das, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati deserves appreciation for her keen interest in the various sessions of the seminars in spite of her busy schedule. We would like to offer our thanks and gratitude to the dignitaries and other participants for extending co-operation in successful completion of the two seminars. Last but not the least, we offer our heartiest thanks to the Proprietor, Bohniman Printers, Guwahati for bringing out the volume within a short period.

It is expected that this publication will be received by the esteemed readers in good spirit.

Dated Diphu
the 30th March, 2008


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Approach to tribal development in the North-east highlands

K.C. Mahanta

Introduction

The notion of development in general is to be conceived as an aspect of culture that came into being ever since the emergence of man as a culture-building super-intellect being. Development is invariably related to ever increasing refinement and betterment of ways of life. Man has constantly been interacting with the environment to derive his livelihood and comfort thereby expanding the parameters of one or the other development process.

That development is a dynamic phenomenon hardly dawned in the mind of man at large ever since primitive times till mid-twentieth of the last century. Pre-literate masses all over the world used to treat the socio-economic state at any point of time as one immutable and invariable and could hardly be altered for yielding more avenues for resources. The pre-literate peoples in India, too, shared this global phenomenon of immutability of resources in the socio-economic development process ever since conceivable primitive times. For hundreds of centuries in the old world men in the pre-urbanized times used to treat the economic state as ordained by mother earth and hardly sustained any effort to enhance the productivity and thereby enrich the ways of life. People could not think of enhancing their economic output and hardly concerned about economic growth and consequent development. It may be noted that sustained economic growth and development is a western concept that percolated pre-literate masses around the onset of the eighteenth century

when western ways and means spread all around the world along with the expansion of colonialism. In India, especially in the North-eastern part of the country, for instance, the need for increased growth of staple food increased as a result of steady population growth in the North-eastern tribal and non tribal regions following British-imposed law abiding norms banning genocide-like situations that prevailed in the tribal villages, ostensibly to keep the population level at par with the availability of food around the habitat. Following the ban, internecine fights and strifes lessened and head-hunting and other murdering sprees stopped resulting in sustained growth of population among the pre-literate tribesmen of the region. Development ensued to procure more food to feed the increased population. People resorted to exploiting the environment more efficiently for sufficing the increasing need of staple.

Economic development is sought to be brought about in pre-literate societies with a view to improving the peoples' socio-economic lot. Their probable causes of poverty and backwardness are sorted out by West-oriented planners and sociologists without taking the indigenous people into confidence. Most pre-literate peoples all over the world are seen to be mostly unconcerned about their own socio-economic lot and remain content with what is available in the environment. In case of any natural food-shortage and crisis, habitually the people resort to living on alternative edibles as they are mostly omnivorous in their eating habit. Yet there is hardly any planning to increase the food-output in the foreseeable years. It is only the West-oriented planners who think out alternative or advance modes or methods to improve food-output for the native backward masses' lot. So in the West-oriented concept development becomes an one sided affair. The target people became the mute observers and failed to understand the modes and methods to increase the output. The imported Western ideology used to bring in a lot of hiatus in the folk-urban concepts, as it worked without whole-hearted involvement of the target people. In the pre-Independence eras Government-sponsored planners and anthropologists failed to understand the native mind and indigenous ingenuity to cope with emerging adverse situations, treating the native population

as 'savage' lacking in knowledge of their own well-being. So the colonial powers styling themselves as 'saviours' used to engage the pre-literate peoples as hordes for menial labour. The whole affair used to be treated as missions to civilize the ignorant 'savage' population. Matters, however, changed presently in the post-colonial era when welfare measures were adopted in real terms to ensure productivity and development. Development anthropology presently works on what is called community development. In the methods and processes of work, all having scientific bias and values, there is a lot of humane aspect to bring in the resultant outcome to the hill-dwelling tribesmen and plains tribal and non tribal population for their socio-economic up-lift.

Topography and historical background

North-east India is basically a composite geo-political unit comprising both plains and mountainous highland regions. The whole land has the unique distinction of being the last region of the sub-continent to come under Western subjugation. The region being almost wholly mountainous not easily accessible remained socio-politically dull and dormant with stereotyped age-old lifeways till around mid-twentieth century. The entire region received, since prehistoric times, intermittent waves of immigrants from the heartland of the Indian sub-continent as well as the South-Asiatic countries across the Himalayan ranges. Most such immigrants turned into sedentary settlers either in the wide Brahmaputra valley or in the highlands.

The Western culture and cultivation dawned in this part of the country by the early decades of the last century. Till then the entire North-east region was highly terraneous, abounding with evergreen impenetrable rain-forests. The nature of the land is highly riverine being criss-crossed by numerous streams and tributaries of the mighty Brahmaputra. The entire land is also studded with numerous bogs, marshes, swamps and perennial storm-water pools of water. The land besides being most inaccessible on account of numerous natural geo-physical barriers was highly epidemic-ridden and inhospitable. Notwithstanding these impediments, successive

immigrations did occur under highly imperative obligations as occasioned by famines, warfares, epidemics and multiple natural calamities both in the heartland of the sub-continent in the west and Indo-Chinese peninsula in the east.

The entire North-eastern region is by far an agricultural land – the people have basically been an agricultural folk. Normal livelihood is derived from agricultural pursuits. The people, since early times, had been supplementing their foods through miniature cultivation as well as gathering of wild vegetations and aquatic bodies. The agricultural pursuits comprised slash and burn cultivation that had been the mainstay of the people till Western innovations appeared by late nineteenth century.

It may be observed and asserted that the tribesmen's socio-economic lots could be improved through rigorous pursuits of agriculture both in the hills and the plains. It is only through agriculture that mass peoples' avenues of engagement could be ensured for spontaneous adoption and practice. Prospect of rapid tribal development consists in the earliest replacement of slash and burn method of age-old agriculture from the tribal masses by introduction of vigorous modern scientific agricultural practices. Planners and ethnographers could well note whether scientifically feasible crop patterns have come to be popularised among the tribal masses in the North-east at the instance of some welfare agency. Introduction of cash crop cultivation, in lieu of traditional methods, can bring forth rapid socio-economic development and revolutionise the tribesmen's outlook for modernization of socio-cultural life.

The aforesaid delineation for rapid socio-economic development is, however, beset with a good deal of impediments and problems. Socio-economic development could hardly be achieved without improving the age-old geo-physical habitations that need to be adequately provided with modern amenities for movement and communication. All weather roads, lanes and bye lanes for easy transportation and movement of man and material can help large-scale production of staple and other goods. It may be noted that adoption of neo-practice may lead to surplus production that must be siphoned to deficit areas in the neighbourhood through

improved roads. Storing of multiple variety of cereals and fruit and perishable crops is also a great need in the tribal land with plan for improving life-ways. For this, there ought to be storage houses and warehouses. Once people get accustomed to storing perishable crops for long periods, they receive incentive to produce more and more leading to good earnings and consequent improved life-pattern.

Tribal people's stubborn adherence to age-old methods of work and norms of life is the core of development-related problem especially among tribesmen, who naturally live much away from the centre of great tradition (Redfield : 1956). It is, therefore, through model cultivation, house-building, sanitation and other improved aspects that motivation for neo-methods and processes for economic betterment could be brought in.

Conclusion

In the socio-cultural life of a tribal community, the life-long backwardness and ignorance as viewed by West-oriented ethnographers and sociologists are, in fact, the intrinsic part of the life-ways and could hardly be averted. In the erstwhile colonial times tribesmen's intrinsic ways of chronic backwardness were highlighted without any effort whatsoever for remedial measures. Nothing of phenomena as they occur in tribesmen's habitats/reporting their life-ways for record had served the ethnographers' work of study in the colonial times.

In the post-colonial era ethnographers are steadily changing their outlook and studies are being undertaken in the most objective ways so as to bring in certain degree of welfare and achieve advancement and betterment of life-pattern.

The present day ethnographers are expected to keep tract of the five fundamental principles enunciated by Jawaharlal Nehru. In accordance with these principles, first, there ought not be any imposition on the tribal

masses and be allowed to have their own genius ; second, tribal rights in land to be retained ; third, administrative and development work to be done by a team of trained tribesmen ; fourth, development work to be done in tune to their own social and cultural institutions and fifth, total outcome to be judged by the quality of human character that eventually evolves.

Scrupulous following of these principles can bring in a wide range of welfare and well-being among the tribal masses of the North-east without any hitch or problem whatsoever.

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Problems and prospects of tribal development in North-east India with special reference to educational development

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Tribal development in true sense started only after Independence. The British administrators' effort in this regard was sketchy as the tribal areas of the country were categorized as "excluded" and "partially excluded" for administrative convenience. Half-hearted development activities were undertaken. The age-old poverty, malnutrition, indebtedness continued unabated. Only after Independence serious effort was made when the Constitutional Assembly set up a subcommittee under the Chairmanship of A.V. Thakkar to go into the problems of "excluded" and "partially excluded" areas (other than Assam). The committee suggested that the democratic character of the Indian Union had a responsibility towards the tribal people for their all round development. Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru had moved the principal resolution in December, 1946 mentioning the objectives. The resolution outlined :

"wherein adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas, depressed and other backward areas."

The resolution found adequate expression in the Article 46, under the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV of the Constitution which reads as follows :

"The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

Development of more than two hundred fifty tribes having distinctive socio-religious life pattern, modes and morals, folkways, festivals, legends, etc., became an uphill task. Next to Africa, the North-east India has the largest concentration of tribal population. There are states in the North-

east where the tribal people constitute the major segment of the total population. Nagaland is predominantly a tribal state with 88.61% tribals, followed by Meghalaya with 80.48% tribals, Arunachal Pradesh with 79.01% tribals while Mizoram is largely a tribal state with 94.01% tribals. There are as many as 176 nos. of scheduled tribes in the seven states of North-east India as per 1971 Census. The breakup is :

Arunachal Pradesh	33 nos.	Meghalaya	16 nos.
Manipur	29 nos	Mizoram	14 (+37) nos
Assam	23 nos	Nagaland	5 nos.
Tripura	19 nos.		

The North-east India is strategically important region in as much as four countries, viz, China in the north, Bhutan in the west, Bangladesh in the south and Burma (Myanmar) in the east are surrounding the region. No other region in India occupies such a strategic position as in North-east. Further, nowhere in India are there such a large number of tribes as in this region. Besides unlike any part of the world this region has a diverse population with multiple languages/dialects and variegated traditions, beliefs and practices, indigenous material culture, fairs and festivals, etc., yet woven into a single politico-economic identity, viz, the North-east India. There is linguistic diversity in the region having as many as 420 languages/dialects belonging to Austric, Austro-Asiatic, Monkhmer, Tibeto-Burman, Siamese-Chinese and Assam-Burma, etc.

Initially in the Five Year Plan periods tribal development was thought by and large to be synonymous with rural development and approach was paternalistic without any need based study of the special characteristics of the tribals. The Welfare Department of the Central Government (initially Ministry of Home Affairs) and Tribal Areas Departments of the states were the nodal agencies of tribal development. Besides voluntary agencies and quasi Government bodies, missionaries and individuals also engaged themselves in the tribal development in the post Independence decades. Sizable expenditures have been incurred as per specially earmarked budgeted amount under tribal development. The Five Year Plans contained exclusive tribal development schemes like Centrally sponsored schemes, Tribal Development Corporations, and Tribal Sub Plans. Integrated Tribal Development Projects were implemented for all round development of the tribal areas. Constitutional safeguards have been provided under Articles 46, 99, 244, 275, 330, 332, 334,

339 and 350. Provisions have been made for reservation of seats in the Parliament and State Assemblies, reservation of services and posts for tribals, Roster system of appointment and promotion for tribals, self rule in the form of Autonomous District Councils. Various committees like Dhebar Committee, Shilu Ao Committee, Kaka Kalelkar Committee had been constituted to suggest measures for tribal development in the light of the findings of the Committees.

In spite of the above benevolent measures, we confront very often with problems of under development in the tribal areas, Grumbles galore among some tribals and today there are demands for self rule (autonomy) from most of the plains tribes. There are pockets of tribal concentration which of late have developed into hot beds of political uprising and insurgency. Lack of trust on existing development strategies mostly engineered by bureaucrats emboldened by political ambitions and power hunger is manifest in its naked form.

In order to remove the age-old tribal backwardness and in order to have fruitful results of the planning efforts for tribal development various scholars, administrators and social thinkers like Verrier Elwin, U.N. Dhebar, S.C. Dubey, D.N. Majumdar, B.D. Sharma, B.K. Roy Burman, P.K. Bhowmick, L.P.Vidyarthi, Sachchidananda, B.M. Das, S.N. Ratha, M.C. Goswami et al., have suggested for a need based, result oriented pragmatic approach for tribal development in various national, state level and regional seminars. Further the reports of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes contain examples of mismanagement of tribal welfare schemes in various states of the Indian Union. Without any prejudice for tribal autonomy, solution of tribal problems, therefore, lies in Pundit Nehru's five principles of tribal development.

Educational development for tribals

Prior to 1950, the Government of India had sketchy educational programmes for tribals. The 'excluded' and 'partially excluded' areas of the North-east were almost devoid of state sponsored educational activities. In the plains areas of Assam there was primarily an indigenous system of elementary education through a network of institutions known as *Tols*, *Pathsalas* and *Madrasas*. In some selected hilly areas there were missionary schools. The tribal people had their indigenous training

institutions known variously as *Dekachang* or *Morung*, *Samadi* or *Jirkedam* which provided required knowledge to the youths for running the day-to-day affairs. Parents, kinsmen and other office bearers performed the role of teachers or instructors. This training and schooling system could cater to the then needs of the closed societies.

The Christian missionaries came to the scene mainly to spread the message of Christianity and education was an ideal instrument through which the work of evangelisation could be extended. The missionaries concentrated their activities only in the backward areas and hilly tracts while the local bodies were responsible for maintenance of schools in plains areas. The attitude of the educational authorities was half-hearted. "What the villager requires a school, if a school to be forced on him, is sound instruction in the three Rs for protection in the *bazar* transactions and railway journeys or pilgrimages for understanding of the mysterious demands of tax collectors, for the outwitting of extortionate officials and for writing of petitions and reading of the replies thereto."¹ But there is no denying the fact that the Missions acted as the harbingers of educational advancement in the North-east till 1937.

Education in those days was characterized by stagnation which can be attributed to a variety of factors like lack of interest in studies, lack of facilities at home, environmental hazards, indifference of parents, utilizing the children in household chores, distance to schools, subsistence economy, simple and easy going life pattern, early marriage, lack of competition due to closeness of the society, etc.

In the above backdrop the planners have had to undergo a herculean task to educate the people after accepting the Constitutional liability. The forty second amendment of the Constitution in 1976 brought education under the concurrent list as agriculture and education are subjects of prime importance to the country's progress towards achieving desired socio-economic change.

The North-east India is characterized by wide ranging social, economic, religious and linguistic diversities and educational development became a challenging task catering to the needs and aspirations of heterogeneous ethnic groups. However, the post Independence planning exercises could bring some tangible progress in the sphere of education which is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Total population, no. of literates and illiterates and percentage of literacy in the North-eastern states

State	Total population	Population 7 yrs and above	Literates	Illiterates	Percentage of literacy
Arunachal Pradesh	8,64,558	6,81,933	2,83,610	3,98,320	41.59
Assam	2,24,14,322	1,79,92,811	95,16,393	84,76,418	52.89
Manipur	18,37,149	15,30,532	9,16,692	6,13,840	59.89
Meghalaya	17,74,778	13,81,049	6,78,105	7,02,944	49.10
Mizoram	6,89,756	5,61,483	4,61,930	99,553	82.27
Nagaland	12,09,546	10,02,059	6,17,736	3,84,323	61.65
Tripura	27,57,205	82,60,083	13,65,980	8,94,103	60.44
Total NE States	3,15,47,314	2,54,09,950	1,38,40,446	1,15,69,501	54.47
Total India	83,85,83,988	68,81,62,813	35,92,84,417	32,88,78,396	52.21

Source : 1991 Census

In order to have a glimpse of the comparative progress in education, percentages of literacy in the NE states during 1971, 1981 and 1991 have been shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Decadal growth of literacy in the NE states during 1971, 1981 and 1991

States	Percentage of literacy			Decadal % of literacy 1981-91
	1971	1981	1991	
Arunachal Pradesh	11.29	25.5	41.59	15.09
Assam	28.72	-	52.89	-
Manipur	38.91	49.60	59.89	10.29
Meghalaya	29.49	42.10	49.10	8.07
Mizoram	53.79	74.20	82.27	8.07
Nagaland	27.40	50.20	61.65	11.45
Tripura	30.98	50.10	60.44	10.34
NE Region	29.45	43.60	52.21	8.61

Source : 1991 Census

Table 2 indicates that decadal increase in Arunachal Pradesh during 1981-91 is reasonably high (15.09%) among the NE states. Nagaland follows with 11.45%, Tripura 10.34% and Manipur 10.29%. There is an increase at least quantitatively in respect of hill states which were lagging much behind in the pre Independence and even post Independence period till 1971 as increase of Arunachal Pradesh which had a meagre 11.29% in 1971 rose to the position of 41.59% in 1991, although still lagging behind in comparison with the NE region figure of 52.21% in 1991. Decadal percentage of increase of Assam could not be shown as 1981 census was not held in Assam.

Due to various reasons mentioned already the tribal people of the region were lagging much behind in respect of literacy. Table 3 shows the percentage of literacy of the scheduled tribes in the North-eastern states.

Table 3. Percentage of ST population and literacy of the NE states during 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991

Percentage of population of the STs in NE states				Percentage of literacy of the STs			
State	1961	1971	1981	1991	1971	1981	1991
Arunachal Pradesh	79.02	89.12	69.82	61.66	05.20	14.00	35.45
Assam	10.99	10.75	-	12.82	20.70	-	49.16
Manipur	31.18	31.93	27.30	34.41	28.70	39.70	53.63
Meghalaya	80.48	83.07	80.58	85.53	26.40	31.60	46.71
Mizoram	-	98.10	93.99	94.75	53.50	59.60	82.71
Nagaland	88.61	93.10	83.99	87.70	24.00	40.30	60.59
Tripura	28.95	31.63	28.44	30.95	15.00	23.10	40.37

Source : Census of India 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991

The percentage of literacy of the general population and that of the scheduled tribes shows a wide gap except of course in case of Mizoram. But as the decades are progressing along with various educational schemes implemented by the Human Resource Development Department, the gap of literacy is gradually narrowed.

Among the states of North-east, particularly the states with majority of Christian populations tangible improvement in the educational sphere may be assigned to the serious efforts made by the Christian missionaries. Meanwhile Assam's percentage of literacy in 2001 improved reasonably, i.e. from 52.8% in 1991 to 63.3% (Male 71.3%, Female 54.6%).

In order to achieve qualitative improvement in education there should be a uniform balance among the three dimensional spheres, namely population, education and agricultural development particularly in the context of North-eastern states. The complementarity is so vivid that development activities cannot proceed without the integrated and multidisciplinary approach. For achieving a sustainable qualitative educational progress interactions among various aspects such as poverty, age-old indebtedness, poor health, short life expectancy, inadequate nutrition and need based education synchronizing with the traditional systems are necessary. Unless the rural poverty is abolished, real educational attainment will be a distant goal.

Development measures undertaken for tribal development in the NE having sizable tribal population fell short of actual needs of the tribal people so far educational progress is concerned. Enrolment escalation should not be the only criterion for educational improvement of children as the old problem of retention and dropout continues. A recent publication of the NCERT points out the gravity of the problem of dropout situation. "While the increase in enrolment at the elementary stage recorded since 1950 has been satisfactory, the problem of dropout has more or less negated the progress achieved. Out of every hundred children enrolled in Class I only about 40 reach Class V and only about 25 reach Class VIII." The Policy Document *Education for All by 2000 AD-Indian Perspective (1990)* observed, "The efficiency of an education system is determined not only by enrolling more and more children but also by ensuring retention in the system."² The dropout position of the NE states indicates more or less the finding of the above resolution (Table 4).

Table 4. Dropout rates (pc) in Class I – V in the NE states

State	1964-65 1968-69	1967-68 1971-72	1970-71 1974-75	1974-75 1977-78	1988-89 1992-93
Arunachal Pradesh	23	82	69	98	63
Assam	81	74	72	70	55
Manipur	82	84	82	81	70
Meghalaya	–	–	77	75	29
Mizoram	–	–	–	57	38
Nagaland	75	61	70	60	34
Tripura	67	67	63	63	48

Source : Basic Statistics, NEC Publications, 1994
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Due to steps like Midday meal, Operation Black Board, etc., taken by the authorities the dropout figures showed a downward trend in 1988-89 to 1992-93. But much remains to be done. The constraints are :

1. Tribal villages are scattered.
2. Environmental hazards
3. The structure and content of education and syllabus
“The urban middle class oriented educational system has got superimposed on the entire nation in terms of structure and content.”³
4. Distinctive ideologies among the tribals followed through generations-imposed new ideologies create conflict situation.
5. Occasional experiments have been conducted regarding medium of instruction. In Arunachal Pradesh Assamese was accepted not only as medium of instruction but as a link language for trade and commerce both for inter and intra transactions since time immemorial. But Erring Committee recommended “a recognized language of the country”. English and one of the national languages were the medium of instruction till 1975-76. The Devanagiri came to Arunachal Pradesh with a bang replacing Assamese language almost totally.

Conclusion

Tribal development in the North-east is beset with multi-dimensional problems economically, socially, politically and topographically. The British administration in the pre Independence days had done precious little in the development of North-eastern tribals and they preferred to keep the tribals as excluded and partially excluded categories or museum specimens.

After Independence the entire tribal development efforts got metamorphic changes when the Five Year Plans incorporated special schemes for tribal development. Thus from paternalistic treatment, the tribal development had a new lease of life under the democratic set-up of the Independent India providing the tribals the tribal autonomy or develop according to their genius.

Education is considered as a benevolent facilitator in the development of human resources through education and training by inculcating receptiveness, attitudinal change, development of skills for meaningful living of individual families, organisations and larger societies. It is widely acclaimed that the returns from primary education are much higher than benefits from secondary and higher education. It is said that a rupee spent on primary education is worth hundreds spent on higher education.

In order to tap the human resources in proper perspective the needs and aspirations and tribal psyche should be reckoned with. A balance should be maintained in the curricula introducing curricula adopted to the particular tribal setting along with the national scheme. The teacher-student-parent nexus should be maintained. There may be a separate cadre of trained tribal teachers. Mother tongue of the tribals should be duly respected while preparing syllabus. Rather than providing doles, stress should be given for infrastructural facilities. Last but not least, there should be regular inspection.

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Tribal development in Assam : people's participation, NGOs, and government

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1. Introduction

Assam has 23 scheduled tribes (Sen, 1999 : 123). As per 1971 census (1981 census was not held in Assam) the total scheduled tribe population of Assam was 19,19,947, constituting 10.99 per cent of the total population of the state (Samanta, 1994 : 128). Earlier the whole of North-east India was called Assam (except former princely states of Manipur and Tripura). Scholars have different opinions on the origin of the name Assam. The *Mahabharata*, *Vishnupurana*, *Kalika Purana* and *Yoginitantra*, referred to the state of Assam as *Pragjyotisha*, and in the medieval period it was called *Kamarupa*. Some others say that the name Assam is derived out from its unequal surface which is called *asama* (Sen, 1999 : 25-26).

There are several groups of Mongoloid people in Assam who have not been recognized as scheduled tribes, probably because they have not fulfilled the criteria laid down for consideration as scheduled tribes (ST). The ST population in Assam constitute 12.82 per cent of the total population of the state (28,74,441 out of 2,24,14,322) as per the 1991 census of India with very sizeable numerical presence in Karbi Anglong (4,41,718), Kokrajhar (3,29,461), Darrang (2,24,957), and Dhemaji (2,10,312) districts, although North Cachar Hills has the highest percentage (65.54) of ST population within a district, followed by Karbi Anglong (51.56) (Taid, 2003 : 141).

Assam was in turmoil many years. While United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) militants had been demanding *swadhin* (independent) *Asam*, autonomous demands of different ethnic groups – the Bodos, Karbis, Dimasas, Koches, Rajbanshis, Rabhas, Hajongs, Tiwas, and Mishings have

caused serious concern to the authorities at Dispur and New Delhi. In North-east region, the ethnic assertion is taking various shapes : the Karbis are demanding an autonomous state within Assam. The Bodos are demanding a separate state—Bodoland, the Hmars are demanding a separate autonomous district. The Tiwas are also demanding a separate district. Now the autonomous district councils of Manipur are demanding the application of Sixth Schedule, while those who are governed by the Sixth Schedule are either demanding more power or separate state, according to the stages of development and organizational power. In this paper a modest enquiry has been made into the tribal scenario of Assam with reference to education, development perspectives, and challenges. The paper shall also explore how the NGOs and government agencies play decisive role in this regard.

2. Tribal educational profile

Education in any given ethnic community is a pointer to their economic standing, and upto a great extent, on the socio-cultural heritage as well. When the question of the status of women in tribal societies is considered, almost all the ST communities in Assam have patrilineal social structure. Tribal women enjoy, generally a better status than that of their counterparts in many other tradition bound Indian societies, especially in the matter of young men and women mixing, and marrying someone of their choice. However, we cannot overlook the fact that the women in these societies have hardly any inheritance rights, and decision-making rights are negligible in all matters. Needless to say the unfavourable social attitude to women in traditional patrilineal tribal societies has adversely affected the educational achievement of girl child. In recent years tribal women of Assam have shown improvement in their literacy rate (Taid : 2003 : 143-44).

It is evident from Table 1 that the STs in the state of Assam have a long way to travel to reach even to catch up with the state literacy rate which is 52.89 per cent according to the 1991 census. When we compare the data with the performance of some of the highly successful states, namely Kerala and Mizoram, our educational scenario is even more alarming.

Table 1. Districtwise literacy rate of the scheduled tribes of Assam (1991 census)

District	Total	Male	Female
Dhubri	53.70	64.22	42.82
Kokrajhar	43.60	52.15	34.68
Goalpara	58.22	67.82	48.39
Barpeta	42.69	58.64	30.89
Nalbari	44.55	56.26	32.71
Kamrup	52.60	62.92	41.83
Darrang	44.06	52.45	35.51
Sonitpur	39.27	48.58	29.55
Lakhimpur	51.60	62.55	40.15
Dhemaji	49.53	63.08	35.16
Marigaon	46.97	58.59	35.21
Nagaon	53.25	63.78	42.50
Golaghat	48.21	58.34	37.34
Jorhat	55.00	65.37	44.22
Sibsagar	63.98	75.46	51.83
Dibrugarh	86.60	83.74	89.50
Tinsukia	66.96	73.79	59.45
Karbi Anglong	41.79	51.42	31.54
N.C.Hills	52.24	61.92	41.71
Karimganj	28.19	35.48	20.33
Hailakandi	66.84	71.15	61.96
Cachar	71.60	79.77	63.40
Assam	49.16	58.93	38.98

Source: Statistical Handbook, Assam; 2001

The phenomenon of dropout in schools is another major problem in the educational scenario of Assam, and ST children have a major share in it. Poverty of parents and academic non-achievement of the learners are the two major causes of this wastage that takes place every year. Added to this the common norm that girls should not go to school after attaining puberty, and general convention that girls should help in agricultural activities and household chores, also play a decisive role in

their academic pursuit. There is, however, a need for making teaching-learning materials and teaching-learning activities at the elementary level a little more local specific so that learning becomes easier for tribal children. Elementary education is the most crucial stage of education spanning the first eight years of schooling, and laying the foundation for the personality, attitude, social confidence, habits, learning skills, and communicating capabilities of pupils. The basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, are acquired at this stage. Values are internalized and environmental consciousness sharpened. If a child goes through quality education at this stage, it will exercise its initiative to overcome most of the hurdles which may come on the way.

3. People's participation

A successful nation has three attributes - politically it is free and democratic, economically it is prosperous and equitable, and socially it is peaceful and cohesive (Chakravarty, 2002:179). This same paradigm can be applied to the tribal communities of Assam to measure its level of success. Do we see the communities faring at least moderately well in the above mentioned spheres? According to UN, social development is to fulfil the great capacity of social system, social structure, institutions, services, and policy to utilize resources to generate favourable changes in the level of living. As the satisfaction of human needs and aspirations is the major objective of development, it is necessary that the essential needs of the majority of our people like food, clothing, shelter, jobs, etc., are satisfied up to minimum level. People's participation is the process in which individuals and families assure responsibility, and act as catalysts for their own development. Given below are some of the ways how people can participate in the basic needs of their development :

- (a) Encourage people to develop determination, confidence, and perseverance, in co-operating and dealing with other development agencies, especially NGOs.
- (b) Arrange training for understanding new technologies, especially which are feasible to be introduced in the local situations.
- (c) Provide open forum to discuss their major problems, and find indigenous economic and efficient solutions.

So, understanding about the community itself is of first and foremost importance. It is pertinent to note here that the knowledge of the people is more useful than the wide general knowledge, which will help to focus on their perceptions, aspirations, and preferences. The ultimate purpose is to encourage the people to run the programmes independently for their own benefit without other's help. Though at the initial stage they may require guidance and monitoring, in the long run they will develop confidence and enthusiasm to take up development programmes. Thus tribal development in Assam depends on people's active involvement in shaping their own destiny.

4. NGO's role in development

NGOs are catalysts and driving force of a society. They play a crucial role in promoting people's participative potential at village level, facilitate promotion of apex level organisations at block and district levels, educate people and create favourable environment for interface. There are a number of examples of commendable works conducted by capable and genuine NGOs in the country. A success story in our own day is that of the Bureau of Integrated Rural Development (BIRD), an NGO from Assam, which could raise the production of crops two or three times in many areas through people's participation (Chakravarty, 2002 : 181). In recent decades, NGOs have come to occupy a distinct space in civil society around the world. The term NGO for the first time used in the UN forum in 1949 has also acquired magical legitimacy upon certain claims maintained by its protagonists which, however, may or may not hold true in countries where constraints to social and human development obviously nullify the very idea of alternative development. Nevertheless, the fact remains that with the idea of NGO's participation and input as a means of ensuring transformation of the civil society in certain socially desirable fields, the space between the state and its citizens continues to gain ground holding out hopes, however little it may be to the disillusioned poor, remote and marginalized communities.

It hardly needs any reiteration that the apparent advantages of NGOs are many. Apart from their sensitivity to local conditions, NGO's determination to achieve its goal is tremendous. Group-based initiatives, however, constitute the key to the success of the NGOs. They operate at low costs, and their emphasis on self-help programmes makes them

people-oriented as opposed to bureaucratic state activities. Further, by providing a venue for discussion and debate around issues of poverty, equality, literacy, environment protection, employment generation, empowerment, and access to credit, the NGOs in tribal areas may indirectly play a key role in the struggle for peace and development.

NGOs have the necessary skills and programmes to work with people, to motivate them, and thereby empower them to identify problems to resolve them. The role of non-governmental organization is also being recognized currently by the government. At the same time NGOs are also beginning to realize the importance of working hand in hand with the government. Various religious organizations also have launched their educational and humanitarian services among the tribals of Assam, that even remote villages are experiencing the effects of their intervention.

5. Government's contribution

The involvement of government in various development projects have produced less results compared to the huge finance involved in salaries and infrastructure development. Economically backward communities need special attention from the government to advance in education, and employment enhancement. There are other ministries, from education to health to finance, which are in any case supposed to ensure that the weak get the first share of the resources. Assuming that this was not happening, is the Ministry for Minority Affairs or the Ministry of Tribal Affairs empowered to deliver? The Ministry of Tribal Affairs was constituted in October 1999, by bifurcation of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment with the objective of more focused attention on integrated socio-economic development of the most underprivileged section of the Indian society, in a coordinated and planned manner.

Funds for tribal development are sourced from :

- (a) State plan
- (b) Special central assistance
- (c) Sectoral programmes of central ministries/departments, and
- (d) Institutional finance (Vaid, 2004 : 27)

State Governments are required to quantify the funds from state plan for tribal area development in proportion to the percentage of tribal population in the states. Similarly, Central Ministries should quantify the

funds from sectoral programmes for tribal development in proportion to the percentage of tribal population in the country. These funds are to be used for implementing development programmes in the tribal areas primarily for the scheduled tribes, in the fields of education, health, agriculture, horticulture, small industries, pottery, and other income generating activities. Though there are very many tall claims with regard to the achievements of various ministries related to the welfare and development of scheduled tribes the truth is that all the efforts have not targeted towards the causes that create problems and the priorities are not set right even today. Therefore, the need today is not a minor intervention, which will not root out the problems that hinder the development process, but we require a bold political leadership which severs the vicious nexus between the bureaucracy and the politicians. No doubt it would call for a drastic surgery, not first aid or a pain killer which would serve for the time being.

6. Tribal customary laws

Immediately after independence, in the approach to the problem of the tribals, great emphasis was laid on improving their conditions of living. This included health, education, and some aspects of the economic life. At the same time, in North-east India, particularly in areas covered by the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, the tribal communities were allowed considerable freedom to operate and develop their traditional institutions through the Autonomous District Councils and Regional Councils. The powers of the District Councils include the power of enacting legislation on customary laws. But while most of the District Councils did not exercise their powers fully in this direction, some faced troubles after they had enacted the legislation. These acts of omission and commission indicate that the traditions are not rigid frames of action ; there are many cross-currents of interests which are to be mutually accommodated (Burman, 1998 : 349).

There is a widely held view that the failure to codify the customary laws of the tribals has been a serious impediment to the integrated development of the tribal areas. A working group set up by the Reserve Bank of India in July 1976, to study the problems of bank credit

in the North-eastern region has mentioned absence of land ownership / land laws as one of the factors why institutional finance did not flow to the region adequately.

Customary laws are integral part of the tribal community, and they consider it as a part of their culture and tradition. They cherished these laws as intrinsic to its identity. But one of the changes that modernization has brought among the tribes is with regard to their legal system. It has resulted in a new identity search among the tribals because of the feeling that modern trends to devalue their culture. The search is expressed, more than anywhere else, in the demand for recognition of their customary laws. Since customary laws are central to the tribals as it provides the backbone for their culture, they perceive modernization as an effort to impose an alien culture upon them (Kumar, 2005 : 1).

Among the Rangdani Rabhas the traditional village council regulates their society. The duties and responsibilities of the village council are confined to the settlement of disputes between the members of the village and to look after the general welfare of the village. Though the council looks after the welfare of women in general, participation of women in the council is still ignored, and the men are the sole decision makers of the society. However, the tribal council is gradually modifying the customary laws of the society towards the patrilineal principle, and the whole society follows the tribal council's directions even today.

The Tiwas traditionally have their own customary laws governing all aspects of their lives, which are administered by organizations and institutions of two categories : the secular and non-secular or religious. They have a secular village organization which is headed by the *gaonburha* (the village head) and assisted by an official called *barika*. The *gaonburha* decides cases (civil and criminal) in a *mel* (traditional assembly of the village arbitrators), and inflicts punishment upon the offenders (cited in Medhi and Barpujari, 2006 : 1-16).

The introduction of the Sixth Schedule in the Constitution was no doubt an important step towards granting autonomy to the tribals to develop their own genius but from the very beginning, in the Sixth Schedule areas, the District Councils became a bone of contention between the State

Government and the Council's authorities. Many limitations have come to light in the process of implementation of the Sixth Schedule which failed to satisfy the growing political consciousness of the tribal people. Consequently, it has affected the developmental process in the tribal areas. Customary laws are more suited to the needs of the local communities even in the face of rapid changes. This is because customary laws, contrary to popular belief, do not constitute a static legal system but is flexible and adjustable to the changing needs of the times. Therefore, the need to make a serious coordination between the tribal customary laws and the laws that govern the state in general is very important when we draw up strategies for tribal development.

7. Perspectives of development

Why after six decades of independence this region has remained as poor as it was ? In some economic parameters, the North-eastern states have fallen into a worse position vis-a-vis rest of India. If all India per capita income in 1980-81 is taken as a base level, the per capita income index of Assam fell from 103 in 1960-61 to 85 in 1970-71, and yet further to 70 in 1980-81, all in 1970-71 prices. From an excess of 40 points above the all-India per capita real income in 1950-51, the per capita real income of Assam gradually fell behind it and stood as much as 847 points below the all India level in 1994-95, all measured in 1980-81 prices. Whereas 72.5 per cent people lived in villages in India in 1991, 88.1 per cent of the total population of Assam lived in villages. Thus the economy of Assam is more rural and agriculture based than the rest of India (Barkakati, 2002 : 118).

We need a proper and appropriate perspective of development, which cannot be imported from elsewhere but developed indigenously. So anyone interested in the development of Assam has to take into consideration the whole North-eastern scenario as we somehow belong as the part of the whole. Thus the primary task is to study the problems and fathom its intensity. See what are the infrastructural needs ? Have the money earmarked for developmental works spent properly ? Does the burden of underdevelopment lie entirely on the government ? Is there a way to make the corrupt politicians and bureaucrats change their attitudes ? NGOs should mobilize the stakeholders to participate in action plans. Only then the resources for development will reach the right destination, and the efforts would be equipped with proper direction. It is because of lack of

it that the members of the extremist outfits become social parasites after returning to the mainstream of the society (Barkakati, 2002 : 120).

While craving for peace and development it is imperative that we light even a tiny lamp instead of merely cursing the darkness. In our search for development we are not merely isolated individuals, we belong to one another, so there is no room for individualistic triumphs but collective efforts to progress and prosperity. The tribal communities who live in relative isolation and fear need to feel secure and this is possible if we take the larger good of the community with all earnest. Government officials, voluntary agencies, NGOs, etc., have their proper role to play in this regard to ensure that the constitutional protection to STs is a reality.

8. Common concerns and shared responsibility

Tribal communities in Assam should not see themselves as isolated entities. They need to feel that they are part of the whole. They need to tie up with people of other communities to achieve a common goal which will contribute to the development of the state as a whole. When we see other tribal communities as allies and plan for the welfare of greater number we shall see beautiful things happen. Therefore, sustainable development calls for multi-faceted and comprehensive intervention to address a wide variety of problems of the people and the state. The community, for whom the development programmes are meant, must take part in their planning and execution with greater involvement and accountability.

As it is said it is 'only the wearer who knows where the shoe pinches', to identify their problems tribals must play a decisive role and they must be assisted by voluntary agencies, and those sympathetic to the task among the social scientists, particularly anthropologists. The priorities must be identified ; policy must be drawn keeping in mind the short and long term programmes. These should be well designed to suit the local situations. Over and above these, the implementation that follows must avail the services of expert tribals and tribal experts. Administration should be responsible to the tribals and vice versa. The task of development ultimately rests on the level of tribals themselves. It can be done if there is a desire and will.

Year after year, almost all ministries fail to spend a major chunk of

their allocation. Yet, budget allocations are rising in almost all departments. It is disheartening to notice that departments and ministries are created not on economic or administrative logic but political arithmetic. In a developing economy there are new areas that require government attention. C. Rangarajan, chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, and former governor of RBI points out, "There is a need to create new focus areas and retire old positions which have lost relevance" (Aiyar and Mishra, 2007 : 24).

9. Communities in transition

In the past, the economy of tribal areas of Assam was in a state of complete self-sufficiency, having developed their own way of life without any help from outside. Well balanced ecology was their blessing with natural resources and foodstuffs. They had a non-exploitative social structure, freedom from indebtedness, and other dependence on non tribals. After independence when government of India introduced development programmes for promoting social and economic well-being of the people of tribal areas the subsistence structure of the tribal economy broke down. The constitution of the tribal belts and blocks in different tribal areas also failed to achieve basic objectives of protecting the tribal lands from being transferred to other non tribals and immigrants owing to the institutional and administrative lapses. Therefore, land reforms should be implemented in such a way so that the tenant cultivators become the land owners and landless agricultural labourers could acquire proprietary rights in agricultural lands in the tribal areas of Assam. Similarly medical services, literacy, electricity, and other infrastructural facilities should be extended to tribal people for economic, social and cultural progress. Unless this is done demand for the separate tribal states will be raised by the tribal organizations.

Toffler in his *Future Shock* argued that the acceleration of history brings forth its own consequences. He defined 'Future Shock' as "the disorientation and stress brought on by trying to come in terms with too many changes in too short a time". In such a case people have not enough time to respond to certain fast moving events, because other events change the situation so radically that the reaction comes too late to make relevance for the time. This is true of world events as a whole ; it is all the more true in our case with regard to North-east India. Similarly, while searching for economic, social and political advantages,

it is possible that the tribal communities make the mistake of compromising on cherished values which are inherited, that form the core of a community's cultural identity. We may remember that a commitment to the larger good was very much dear to tribal traditions. On the contrary, if individual interests were placed before the community goals, it moves on the path of disintegration (cited in Menampampil, 2006 : 1-7).

10. Major hurdles to development

There are a number of hurdles to be surpassed on our journey of development. Restoring natural resource systems and improving natural resources management practices are important for the empowerment and participation of the grass root peoples in the development strategies of Assam. We need to evaluate various development projects, both local and state level. This comprehensive evaluation should be guided by perceptions and opinions of indigenous people about their stakes in the natural resources based on sustainable developmental planning. Given below are some of the major hurdles to development with special reference to some of the tribals of Assam.

(a) Indebtedness

Agriculture is the basic source of income of the people. They depend mainly on agricultural products. All sorts of expenditures are managed out of agricultural income. A few educated persons in service, however, have improved their economic condition to a certain extent. Business is rare, and industrial firms are non-existent among them. But with the change of time the agriculture-based economy of the community has now broken down for many reasons and the majority of the population are sunk in indebtedness and poverty. Most of the people of the community have no land of their own to cultivate. They cultivate land of other land-holders as share-croppers. In fact, most of the cultivators are actually not cultivators but agricultural labourers. Hence landlessness is one of the major causes of their indebtedness. They are losing their land due to growth of population in the family, transfer of lands to certain village *mahajans* and middle-class element of indebtedness and for their ignorance of land laws (Rabha, 2002 : 183-4).

The tribals still use old methods of cultivation. They have still not

adopted the scientific methods of cultivation with high yielding seeds, thus they cannot get the maximum crops though they put in hard labour day after day. Again the traditional social system is also responsible for their worsening economic condition to a great extent. They are custom-bound to use a lot of paddy for making rice beer in every social function they observe and also offer extravagant feasts to the community in ceremonies such as in marriage ceremony, funeral rites, etc. In this way they are compelled to spend a huge amount of money beyond their income which eventually leads to indebtedness.

(b) Land alienation

Land is the prime need for all humans. In the name of forest policy state has acquired tribal lands pushing them out of their age-old habitats. Every time the land of a tribal has been acquired for some project of the government, he has been paid cash compensation – realizing pretty well that he has no respect for cash and stacking money is not a part of his cultural ethos. Besides, while the land is acquired, if it is for an industry, there is a promise of job in the industry. So, when the poor tribal whiles away the cash received in compensation, he survives on the promise (Vaid, 2004 : 79). Immigrants from Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal are creating problems of land alienation in Assam directly by forcefully occupying vacant land of the tribals. To preserve the cultural and ethnic identity of the tribals, alienation of land must be stopped. Development of the tribals needs to be done cautiously taking into consideration the tribal way of functioning, their value systems, morals, etc. Emphasis should be laid on overall socio-cultural development, and not merely on material advancement. Thus land alienation is a key issue we need to address from various angles when we draw up plans for tribal development.

(c) Individualism

Individualism has done havoc at the roots of the old unsophisticated and community minded tribal life which is very much the outcome of the entry of money economy in the tribal life. In fact, the present day co-operative societies have their origin in rural tribal societies. Today it has become a round about way system with much complex administrative structures. Thus developments of the tribals need to be done cautiously keeping in mind the tribal ethos, morals, and aspirations. Emphasis

should not be merely on putting up some infrastructures and producing a well balanced final report, but an overall involvement of the people in line with the socio-cultural moorings of the people of the specific area of development would bring in the optimum results. We speak of individualism when self-interest goes beyond the legitimate measure. And this goes against the communitarian tradition of a tribal community. Thus long term interests can suffer under threat from short term benefits. We need to enquire whether the political and economic advantages that have been won in the name of development have benefited the community as a whole or only a few individuals. It is a pity that the socializing virtues of the tribal societies are yielding place to individual and self-seeking opportunism.

(d) Insurgency and corruption

The ULFA has sprung from among the majority Assamese community. In 1990 it has been banned along with NSCN, and Assam has been brought under the Disturbed Areas Act putting the state under President's rule (20). Now, it will be necessary to make a few observations as to how Assam has come to this state of affairs. Since 1930s the Assamese were becoming alarmed about their own position because of the large presence and continued migration from Bangladesh particularly Muslims into the state. In 1979 the anti-outsiders movement was started by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) which was converted into anti-foreign national movement. AASU did not recognize the legitimacy of the elected Congress government. Thus dissatisfaction made them work for an alternative government, i.e. Assam Gana Parishad (AGP). In the following years though AGP was the elected government of the people, the ULFA took control of the decisions of the government in the state. ULFA's separatist aspirations, Bodo demand for autonomy, etc., are still absorbing much of the resources of the Assam government and the central government which could have been used for other development projects elsewhere (Dutta, 2002 : 20-23).

An opinion poll conducted by the 'North-East Girl Students Coordination Committee', extracts from which were published in the press (*The Statesman*, Calcutta, 31 January 2000), reveals that 'corruption and gross misuse of public funds' are the primary reasons for the backwardness of the North-east India (Ganguly, 2002 : 57). Surely we cannot allow the fence to eat the crops if we intend to gather a rich harvest !

11. Conclusion

The tribal communities of Assam are in transition. For that matter all the communities in North-east India are on the march. Are the rapid changes that are taking place too stressful for the communities of the region to catch up with ? There are a lot of researches undertaken in the last two decades which are dealing directly on North-east India with specific reference to the scheduled tribes, but it should not be the end, the findings of the researches should become the concern of the administrators, planners and most of all the leaders and people concerned themselves. For example, the customary laws of the tribals should be taken into serious consideration. These days one observes that the customary laws of many of the tribal communities are codified. It shows that they are important to the functioning of their system. If not the might will overpower the rights of the people. Good intentions are not enough, they have to be translated into action plans based on the empirical studies and researches. Meaningful kind of knowledge has to be disseminated. Feeling the pulse of various communities is important to take up their cause which is culturally based and economically sustainable. It is heartening to note that recently many tribes of Assam have taken more interest in expansion of education, improvement of communication, and social mobility of the people.

However, *Sahitya Sabha* of each of the tribal communities and enlightened citizens should give more precise orientation to the members of each of the tribes. Work towards peace and progress should address sustainable livelihood issues as well. It is imperative to promote a number of talents in IT, Health, Engineering, and traditional wisdom of the village elders especially in the field of medicine and folklore. Communities are in transition. That means cultural change is a reality in any human society. The challenge is to answer, what aspect of life is to change, how much to change and at what speed this change should take place. A related question is how do we do it, and who will identify the things which need to be preserved, enhanced or transformed.

To sum up, without any doubt we can affirm that the phenomenon of tribal development in Assam as elsewhere in the world can be possible with the participative endeavour of the people. Piece meal solutions will take us nowhere. People's whole-hearted participation is no doubt necessary. In this endeavour the NGOs and the government bodies will have to work harder than ever to make the process of change for sustainable development a reality.

Inherent impediments and prospects in tribal development in Manipur

H. Kamkhenhang

Government of India is very good for the weaker sections of the people of India particularly for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes for providing constitutional protection and developmental safeguards. Proper and improper implementations of the schemes and projects having opposite effects in the development of the tribals are done mostly by non tribals in states having Tribal Sub-plans in the North-east India without having much knowledge of and care of the minority sentiments and their psychology and without much awareness of their difficulties in coming and going to the government office in the state capital while the officials are discharging their duties. A visitor from a hill district to a tribal development office and other offices in the state capital will be very much disillusioned, disappointed and discouraged to revisit the office in pursuit of something if he is greeted with some flimsy and unrelated excuses like that the day is the day of Presidential election and that officials to the ingenious tribesmen may not be counteracted but disappoints a visitor to come back to the office another day. Shyness is one of the criteria listed by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India for specifying a community in a scheduled list of tribes. It appears that the members of the minorities have more shyness and suffer more a complex of inferiority in their mind. This kind of psychological condition in the mind of the minorities is an impediment in the process of tribal development. A prompt attention to a man coming from a distance to a government office in a more or less

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centrally placed state capitals may be accorded as he or she cannot afford to come back again and again to the office unlike those visitors coming from the nearby localities. A little slight meted to a visitor is often taken as humiliation and this kind of treatment creates emotional disintegration and suspicion on the part of the minorities even things are done with good intention.

Proper implementation of the policy of reservation of posts and vacancies for scheduled tribes is one of the best means for the development of tribals in tribal minority states of the North-eastern India. In Manipur it is not known how many scheduled tribes and scheduled castes persons are employed and what percentage of the posts do they occupy. What can be known now is that there is a big shortfall of percentage in the recruitment of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. No special recruitment drive for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have been done and no backlog vacancies have been determined even after the Parliament had passed a bill modifying the relevant Article 16 (4B) which has been incorporated in the Constitution by the Constitution (Eighty-First Amendment) Act, 2000 which provides as under :

Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from considering any unfilled vacancies of a year which are reserved being filled up in that year in accordance with any provision for reservation made under clause (4) or clause (4A) as a separate class of vacancies to be filled up in any succeeding year or years and such class of vacancies shall not be considered together with the vacancies of the year in which they are being filled up for determining the ceiling of fifty per cent reservation on total number of vacancies of the year.

This is to facilitate to fill up the backlog vacancies up to 100% by candidates belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Non implementation of these schemes are remarkable impediments in the process of tribal development. However, implementation and policy making for execution of the provisions of the Constitution are again in the hands of the majority community. At present the reservation act of 1972 for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes was amended by the State Assembly of Manipur

without increasing the number of seats proportionate to the population of the scheduled tribes. At the same time the reservation act had no rules for implementation of the provisions of the Act. Once the rules to the Act were framed and published in the Manipur Extraordinary Gazette but it was rescinded by the government. The Act is in the process of review as All Tribal Students' Union, Manipur lodged a complaint to certain points in the recent amendment.

Ignorance on the part of the tribals is one great impediment in their development. The tribal boys and girls do not possess, without former training, the normal level of knowledge, skill and aptitude possessed by non tribal boys and girls through their normal social interactions. There is a need to train the tribal boys and girls in certain trades in various vocational trainings *en masse* at the grass root level in order to let them work for their own development. Development should come from within in a normal organic growth. Training needs to be imparted to the tribal boys and girls in basic courses of different trades and household arts to supplement family income and also to eke out their living. The programme of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India on vocational training in different trades is one of the best development programmes for the youths of the scheduled tribes particularly for the youths of the North-east India. The intention of the Government of India is to impart to a tribal youth a workable skill in order to make the youth work for his living. Once a boy acquires basic skill and starts working in a particular trade he can concentrate in the work and earn his living. A youth who has no skill to work in any trade cannot spend his time in a profitable way and is prone to go astray into disruptive activities. Such a person can easily be misguided in disruptive and antisocial manner under the present disruptive and violent nature of the North-eastern India. The courses of vocational training offered by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs is to wean away misguided youths from the path of violence and disruptive activities by providing skills in order to enable him to embark on a certain trade of his own. Individuals at the bottom of the social stratum should be given ways and means to develop themselves in their own through micro financing and training in certain trades. They will be self help individuals. In states having tribal sub-plan there is a need to introduce self help groups in all tribal inhabited hill districts covering all the

villages in a more or less similar pattern of Naga Village Development Board of Nagaland. Traditional schemes and programmes for tribal development are not always effective. It will take many more years to cover all the families under poverty line in implementing the schemes. Self help groups are becoming popular for achieving development from the grass root level. The state governments can devise a suitable and workable corporate body by means of legislation if they have political will. The State Government will pull development fund meant for the tribal districts from all the departments and provide fund to the corporate body in a more or less similar pattern of the Naga system of planning. Execution of the works should be done through the blocks and villages for the people of the block and villagers without engaging contractors. For example, construction of village school, construction of inter village road, etc., should be taken up by the villagers to earn money and to raise fund for the village fund. Government should provide fund proportionate to the village fund which self help groups and individuals can make best use of it as loan. Grain banks should be extended in the hill areas which experience partial famine conditions every year in the usual lean season. The needy ones can procure food grains from the grain bank and make the payment with the money they earned from the works available to the villagers. This will ensure availability of food grains and a means for repayment. The village unit, area wise unit and block level units can raise fund in accordance with their capacity to be utilized for development works within their areas. It will make involvement of the people at all stages for their own development at the grass root level. The Deputy Commissioners in each district will coordinate the functioning of the state backed and sponsored corporate body in his district. A corporate body dealing with development of tribals at the grass root level will bust up the pace of eliminating general poverty in addition to whatever schemes for tribal development are being taken up.

There is another area to be considered for development of the tribes living in remote and forest areas in the hills. The tribal people are laborious and have stamina to withstand difficulties. They do not abhor all the products of other cultures. They will accept products of many other cultures. Their traditional culture does not provide whatever is needed nowadays. They

supplement the products of their own culture with the products of other cultures. They had already accepted certain elements or products of other cultures in their own traditional culture in a very small scale. While keeping their own culture they can safely adopt here and there different elements or products of other cultures like sericulture, pisciculture, horticulture, agriculture, viniculture, aviculture, floriculture and many other more cultures for their development. Traditionally they have been practising elements of horticulture, agriculture, apiculture, animal husbandry, pisciculture but in a small way and in a crude manner with primitive technology. They have general stamina to work hard in the laborious, risky and dangerous conditions in shifting cultivation. A man clearing a forest patch of land for his *jhum*-field is described as waging a separate war and a pregnant woman risking her life with a sharp arrow (foetus) in her belly. In the hills of Manipur the land belongs to the tribals. Generally the tribal people appear to be less ambitious and lazier with less volition for work in many cases. But they can do any work without prescribing certain works and prohibiting certain other works. The only reason of their tardiness is ignorance and lack of skill in the trade. Required skill on imparting to an individual for the work will create interest in the individuals for the works. In the North-eastern India and particularly in Manipur there is no dearth of land as the lands belong to the tribals covering an area of 90% of the total land area of the state. Different areas are found to be suitable for growing certain horticultural items. Conditions conducive for implementing different horticultural projects and any other cultures are there in nature and these cultures may be introduced as a means of alternative occupation to shifting cultivation. These are long termed programmes. Once a man successfully establishes an orchard, he will not go back for shifting cultivation. The people have an experience that shifting cultivation is not profitable as it offers only subsistence economy. They are entangling in this subsistence economy because of poverty that makes them unable to shake off the age-old tradition of shifting cultivation that makes them poor and poorer. They need help and assistance so that they can help themselves in the long run. But the process of growing period or gestation period in horticulture is long and most of them will find it difficult to adopt horticulture without assistance from outside in spite of the fact that

they like the products of horticulture which they had some experience in their kitchen garden or in one or two trees planted in the vicinity of their house. They should be taught in the art, treatment, technique and method of growing different cash crops for improving the quality of life, health and economy which the traditional shifting cultivation failed to provide to the tribal people.

Problems of aged and elderly in the tribal population of Arunachal Pradesh

R.M. Pant and N. Upadhyaya

Introduction

Arunachal Pradesh, like rest of the country is facing the problem of ageing population. Rapid changes at economic front are necessitating a shift in the mindset of the people and societal patterns, as society is heading towards materialism. With economics gaining an upper hand over social systems, today's society is faced with the grim challenge of maintaining its age-old social fabric that assured social harmony and provided a safety net for all in the society. Tribal society of Arunachal, which is well known for its strong community bonds, is witnessing rapid changes at economic front. Human beings are recognized more for their earning capacity rather than their social worth. Non-earning or people with lesser earning capacity are fast becoming pariahs. Glitter of materialism has outshone the intellectual component of the society. Older people whose earning potentials are shrunken due to their reduced physical strength, are falling prey to this trend. Need of the hour is to find out some solutions to this growing problem of ageing in the tribal societies of Arunachal Pradesh, to ensure an economic growth with human touch.

New thinking, new questions

With new economic order, new thinking patterns are emerging where humans are being treated as resources, just like money, machine and any other material resource in this material world. In this material order where productivity dictates human behaviour, as long as people are contributing in production, they are resources and valued. Once they cease to do that, they become liabilities. This gives birth to a new set of questions – Should humans be treated as resources? Is 'elderly' population an effete resource? Is it justified to see 'social phenomenon' from economics or market angles? Should production alone be the only parameter to evaluate a person's worth? Is it not proper to recognize

the past contribution of the aged population that facilitated the present growth? These questions echo in today's Arunachal that need to be answered on ethical and humane grounds and alternatives need to be identified to rescue tribal society from this crisis, before it gets too late.

Plight of elderly population in the 21st century

Majority of the inventions and innovations took place in the 20th century and 21st century seems to further strengthen this trend. These new trends at technology front are ushering human civilization to new heights and have facilitated better living standards. Advancement in healthcare sector has improved longevity. Long life expectancy and falling birth rate are welcome changes in Indian condition, but they are at the same time bringing in some complications. Lesser active manpower and more mouths to feed is an agony for bread earners; and it can be a psychological nightmare for the elders. Elderly population is on rise in India. In the year 1996, the share of elderly population was only 6.7% of the total population of India which rose to 9% in the year 2006 and according to an estimate, it will rise to 21.2% by 2050. Arunachal Pradesh is no exception to this trend. And here, due to its fast changing cultural scenario, problem is even more serious. The age wise composition of population in Arunachal for the year 1991 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Agewise composition of population in Arunachal in 1991

Age group	Total population
0-14	3,45,933
15-29	2,32,146
30-49	1,95,759
50 and above	85,683
Total	8,59,521

Source : Census 1991

As per the 2001 census, Arunachal's population has gone up to 10,97,968 and a conservative estimate suggests addition of another 2,00,000 persons in the age group of 50 plus population, that makes the share of elderly population a one-fourth of the total population in the state. However, facilities to take care of their health and hygiene (Table 2) remain almost static and inadequate, especially in rural areas, leaving the elderly people in a vulnerable spot. There is

an urgent need to negotiate this alarming situation.

Table 2. Total number of Medical (Allopathic) Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh

General Hospitals (Govt.)	General Hospital (NGO)	District Hospitals
02	01	12

Source : Directorate of Health Services

In addition to the above, 17 family welfare clinics are also operational in Arunachal, albeit with extremely poor facilities. Three *Ayurvedic* hospitals (2 government and one private) are also serving the state with minimum facilities. All these health institutions together fail to meet the total demand for health facilities and remain inadequate and primitive. Medical facilities, howsoever little, too are concentrated in urban centres, forcing elderly population to move to urban centres, albeit reluctantly.

High migration rate ; widening gap between young and old

With the growing trend to move to urban centres in search of better life, and also, that these urban centres are the hub of opportunities for the younger generation, more and more youth are attracted to the glamour of urban life. Be it education or employment, these opportunities exist only in urban Arunachal. Rural Arunachal continues to be deprived of modern facilities. From the year 1991 – 2001, Arunachal Pradesh has witnessed a population growth at the rate of 26.85% (Table 3), which is higher than the national average of 21.35%. Urban centres like Itanagar, Bomdila, Changlang, etc., have seen a sharp population rise. Papum Pare district (Capital complex of Arunachal Pradesh falls in this district) experienced maximum decadal growth in the state with a rise in population with 67.31% figure. One of the main reasons for this growth is the entry of immigrants from different parts of the state. With the exodus of working population from rural areas, elderly and women are left to face the hardships in the villages with virtually no facilities. This growing trend is creating psychological, social and economic problems for elderly. All those who accompany the young ones to urban centres, find it difficult to adjust to their new surroundings and soon begin to feel nostalgic for their native places.

Rapid transition from simple community life in rural to the life of overburdened and fast life of cities is causing problems in social set-up and affecting the social fabric of the people of Arunachal.

Urban life has brought about a significant shift in decision-making process in favour of the younger generation that is more educated and has more exposure. Aloofness, poverty, ill health and neglect are some other factors that are gripping elderly in Arunachal.

Table 3. Population growth trends in Arunachal Pradesh

Population	Decadal growth rate %	Population density	Literacy rate 2001	% of urban population
10,97,968	26.85	13	54.74	20.41

Source : Statistical Abstract of Arunachal Pradesh, 2003

Plans that were never implemented

Although planners are waking up to the severity of this problem in Arunachal, but no serious attempt is taken from the planners side. Changing demographic composition of Arunachal's population is becoming an important point in discussions during seminars and conferences that Arunachal is well known for and the leaders, policy makers and social workers, often coin attractive slogans but these slogans die soon like any other rhetoric. Implementation of these schemes remains a far cry. Hardly any effective interventions are initiated from the government as well as by the NGO sector. Some populist schemes mentioned below were initiated for senior citizens in the state :

- 1. Old age pension scheme :** This is a state sector scheme meant for senior citizens of the state. A monthly pension of Rs. 150/- per month is planned for the people between 60 – 65 years of age.
- 2. National old age pension scheme :** This scheme caters to the age group of people above 65 years. A pension of Rs. 75/- per month is given to them. State government also contributes to pay Rs. 75/- to make the total benefit to Rs. 150/- per month to the target group.
- 3. Scheme of assistance to voluntary organizations to encourage them to provide old age homes, day care centres and non-institutional services for the aged also exist.**

Organizations eligible for assistance are : Voluntary organizations, Panchayati raj institutions, Municipal bodies & charitable trusts.

Assistance : 95% of the total investment is given by the government and 5% contribution is to come from the organization. Organizations are expected to start :

- Mobile medical services for the aged for consultation and treatment
- Day care centres to supplement activities of families in looking after the need of aged with minimum 50 persons in one centre
- Old age homes-residential units for at least 25 aged persons

These seemingly wonderful schemes failed to come out of the official files. Virtually no effect of these schemes is seen in Arunachal. No proper mechanism exists to identify the beneficiary groups. Bureaucracy fails to provide any solution to this socio-economic problem of the elderly population. What is required is a philanthropic solution with a participative approach from the different stakeholders in the society.

Where does the solution lie ?

There is no problem, which does not have a solution. Problem of aged and elderly is a new phenomenon in Arunachal Pradesh, as this state is going through a transition phase. Rapid development has shaken some tradition systems and society is finding it difficult to overcome the inertia. However, this problem needs to be tackled and solutions are to be found sooner than later. Following interventions from government as well non government sector provide the solution to the problem of elderly population :

- 1. Old age homes and better healthcare facilities are to be established with Government and NGO participation.** Industrial houses should also be encouraged to discharge their social responsibilities. Jamshedpur (Tatanagar) model can be emulated to improve the plight of elderly and needy population of Arunachal Pradesh.
- 2. New and innovative social security schemes are needed in Arunachal.** Arunachal Pradesh can boast of having some premier academic institutions in the state and also it has a galaxy of brilliant officers and intellectuals in its cadre. Brainstorming sessions can provide some viable solutions to the problems of elderly people with affordable investment. What is required is to lead the thinking in the right direction.
- 3. Some potential industries like tourism, hydro-power, etc., need to be promoted with the interests of native people of the state in the mind.** Tourism models

adopted in Nepal and Indian states like Rajasthan and Gujarat to promote local culture and economy that will check out migration from the rural areas.

4. Arunachal being the biggest state of the North-east region of India (area wise) suffers from the problem of lack of infrastructure. Given its limited resources, it may not be possible immediately to set up necessary infrastructural support in the areas of health, public distribution systems (PDS), etc. However, to some extent, this problem can be eased with mobile health centres and PDS.

5. As a part of long term strategy, PURA, a much talked about visionary scheme of our former President, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, provides solution to this problem. PURA or Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas will not only check migration from rural areas but will also check sagging value system in the society. This will also help strengthen our traditional family system that has sustained since time immemorial.

Indian value system rightly prescribes, 'In a society, where elders are respected, people are blessed with all four qualities, i.e. Longevity, Knowledge, Fame and Power', and the tribal society of Arunachal Pradesh needs these the most.

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Micro-finance institutions for tribal development in Manipur : an experience of IFAD project in Ukhrul

K. I. Meetei

Introduction

The whole world is looking for unleashing the human potentials for development in their own countries.

Attempts have been made in various fronts for having a balanced economy in the country, India. Till today a larger section of the Indian populace has failed to get the basic elements of rural development, with higher discrepancies in tribal backward areas. Manipur state is not an exception to this.

In spite of all possible efforts, basic elements of tribal development like food, cloth, shelter, basic education, basic rural road, primary healthcare, etc., are not accessible to tribal people of Manipur. Poverty and unemployment are the chronic diseases of the tribal masses. In the tribal belt area it is necessary to take up suitable steps for setting up of micro-enterprises through the support of micro-finance institutions. As such, micro-finance development through certain mechanism has become critical need for tribal areas.

The focus

This paper is intended to analyse the performance of a micro-finance promoting institution, the Ukhrul District Community Resource Management Society (UDCRMS) under the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) which is an agency working for attacking poverty. Since its inception in 1999 as many as 654 SHGs have been set up and brought under credit linkage facilities.

Objectives

The objectives of the paper are :

- A. To discuss on the activities undertaken for micro-finance institutions – SHGs.
- B. To analyse the credit absorption for their livelihood.
- C. To identify emerging problems of the promoting agency and SHGs.

Methods & data base

For presenting the paper reliable literatures and internal records of the promoting agency (UDCRMS) and selected SHGs were referred.

Both secondary and primary data were made available for the purpose of analysis. 32 SHGs were selected for the sample units.

Background of the IFAD project

International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) is a specialized UN Agency in poverty in developing countries. This agency supports a number of poverty alleviation initiatives in the Asian Region. North East Region Community Resource Management Project (NERCRMP) is one among such initiatives in India.

The project is operational in 3(three) states in India covering 6 (six) districts, viz, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills in Assam, Senapati and Ukhrul in Manipur and West Garo Hills and West Khasi Hills in Meghalaya. The project was declared effective from February, 1999.

The implementation mechanism of the project is through its Project/ Programme Support Unit (PSU) at Regional Society in Shillong and District Support Team (DST) at the District Society at the District HQ of respective district. The project has the participation of 50 NGOs as partner organizations. At the community level, the project activities are implemented and delivered through the project-initiated community based institutions, viz, the Natural Resources Management Groups (NARMGS) with representation of men and women drawn from each household and the Self Help Groups (SHGs), predominantly of women.

The present study is intended to conduct in Ukhrul district of Manipur where the project is implemented through the Ukhrul District Community Resource Management Society (UDCRMS) since 1999, covering 103 villages with 7,768 households forming 146 NARMGS and 654 SHGs.

Ukhrul district at a glance

Ukhrul district is one of the hill districts of Manipur state, bounded by Myanmar in the east, Chandel district in the south, Senapati district in the west and Nagaland in the north. Located between 24 degrees north, 25 degrees south and 41 degrees 47 minutes longitude, covers an area of 4,544 sq.km. The 1,40,945 approximate population of the district is mainly made up of the Tangkhul tribe, with the Kuki tribe and the Maring tribe in some pockets.

The community has a well defined traditional institution headed by village Chief who is known as the Headman (*Awunga*) and the ministry of councils who are the clan representatives (*Hanga*). Women are generally excluded from the village council. They do not have much say in family or community even though they contribute to the economy. Illiteracy and lack of financial power makes women more vulnerable. Moreover, the existence of only one bank in the district compels the project as well as the community to take up micro-credit activities.

NERCRMP is a project jointly funded by the Government of India (GOI) and the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD). The North Eastern Council (NEC) and the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) represent the GOI in the project set-up.

The social set-up, such as the existence of the Tangkul Shanou Long, TSL (Tangkhul Women Council) in every village, was found conducive for initiating social mobilization. Taking the above highlighted problems as a challenge and as an opportunity, NERCRMP decide to make this district a model on SHG movement. With the initiation of NERCRMP, the TSL mobilized the formation of SHGs in almost all the villages of Ukhrul district in the year 2000-2001. The streamlining of the SHGs activities for upscaling was initiated by UDCRMS in the year 2003. The main purpose of forming SHGs across the district is to open a women's Non-Banking Financial Institute (NBFI) in the district headquarters through Self Help Groups.

Credit was regarded as man's domain. The patriarchal system promotes ownership of property by man alone and does not recognize women as credit worthy because she does not have property to mortgage. Hence, womenfolk did not have access to the informal credit system. Access to formal credit had never been an opportunity for the isolated womenfolk of the villages wherein knowledge had only been introduced recently.

Concept of micro-credit

The world has recognized the gravity of rural population in developing and underdeveloped countries and a consensus emerged for designing and implementing poverty alleviation scheme in such a manner that the poor would be encouraged to take loan for productive economic activities of their own. As part of the poverty alleviation measures the Government of India has implemented self-employment programmes, *Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna* (SGSY), where the major emphasis has been laid upon Self Help Group (SHG) formation, social mobilization and economic activation through micro-credit finance.

Micro-credit as defined by *Grameen* bank, symbolizes small loans extended to the poor for undertaking self-employment projects that generate income and enable them to provide for themselves and their families. The defining criteria used as thus the size of loans, and the targeted population comprising micro-entrepreneurs, particularly women micro-entrepreneurs, from low-income households. These loans are generally offered without any collateral.

Micro-credit institutions are meant formal institutions like banks, both commercial and non-commercial, which are in the "business" of finance. Within the institutional mapping of micro-credit, non-governmental organizations often fall in the category of intermediaries, which constitute the link between banks and the clients. Hence they are also in the business of finance since they have to on-lend and maintain their own financial sustainability. They are, however, not formal financial institutions themselves.

Micro-credit in India is being understood against the structure of financial system which has evolved through two sets of financial institutions - formal and informal.

(a) The formal system consists of multi-agency approach, comprising cooperatives, public sector commercial banks (CBS), regional rural banks (RRBs) and private sector banks.

(b) There are innumerable types of informal credit supplies in India which consist of rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCASS), traders, merchants, contractors, commission agents and money lenders, etc.

Definition of micro-finance

Micro-finance is a broader terminology of micro-credit, which includes other financial instruments such as savings, insurance, financial intermediations, etc. Micro-finance includes interventions such as changes in gender equations in favour of women, improved health and nutrition, improved education, increased self-reliance, even better management of natural resources.

Micro-finance interventions have been carried out by NGOs, government agencies and banks through promotion of SHGs within three broad approaches.

In the first approach, micro-credit is seen as an entry point or complementary activity to mobilize people and sustain, though the principal objective is something else such as promoting literacy and education, enhancing maternal and child health, facilitating watershed development, catalyzing women's empowerment or reducing child labour.

In the second approach, micro-finance is used as the main tool for poverty alleviation.

In the third approach, the relative strengths of the government, NGOs and banks are sought to be combined under an umbrella organization promoting multi-purpose SHGs; where micro-finance is an input along with systematic training and capacity building in virtually any subject of concern and interest to the members.

The project NERCORMP

IFAD has taken up the role of micro-finance constituting SHGs formation, provision of seed fund (without service charges) and facilitating

linkages of CBOS with financial institutions and government line departments. The micro-finance activity has been given due emphasis in the project in view of sustainability of the project initiatives.

Ukhrul District Community Resource Management Society (UDCRMS) Institutions for micro-credit delivery

Agricultural credit is one of the most crucial inputs for agricultural development. For a long time, the major source of agricultural credit was the money lenders. The source was inadequate and highly exploitative. After Independence, a multi-agency approach consisting of cooperatives, commercial banks, etc., known as institutional credit has been adopted to provide cheaper and adequate credit to farmers.

Micro-credit and economic development

Micro-credit does benefit all the SHG members in the way that it gives them access to a savings facility, gives access to small loans to tide over emergencies as well as to strengthen existing livelihood activities.

Various studies conducted by NABARD, BIRD and the NGOs have shown encouraging trends and positive impact on socio-economic conditions of the members.

Credit is a crucial input in the process of development. An informal arrangement for credit supply to the poor through Self Help Groups (SHGs) is fast emerging as a promising tool for promoting income generating enterprises. The idea of attempting to reduce poverty in developing countries through the provision of loans by specialized financial institutions to micro-enterprises in rural and urban areas has in the recent years generated enthusiasm bordering on hysteria.

Apart from NABARD and SIDBI playing a prominent role at various stages of implementation for this programme, there are other national level NGO/VAS, viz, *Rastriya*. The micro-enterprise finance has generated enormous enthusiasm among aid donors as an instrument for reducing poverty in a manner that is financially self-sustaining.

The IFAD project has made remarkable achievements in community mobilization, prevention and management alleviation, infrastructure development, health and sanitation. Ukhrul District Community Resource Management Society (UDCRMS) is one of the six project districts of NERCORMP. Over the years the society has been successful in implementing the project.

Concept of self help groups

In India a number of Self Help Groups (SHGs) were created in the 1980s for providing credit facilities to the poor, especially women, in both urban and rural areas. These SHGs stumbled upon a surprising finding by targeting women, repayment rates come in well over 95 per cent, higher than most traditional banks. Impressed by those repayment rates, institutions like NABARD and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) began increasing their lending to SHGs in India.

Management

Most of the Self Help Groups (SHGs) do not have their defined vision, mission and objectives. Only 12 out of the 32 SHGs are found having their vision, mission and objectives. As a result, they have weakness in their own planning. They cannot plan for their income generating activities.

Majority of the SHGs do not have well prepared rules and regulations for their own governance. They go on in the informal or verbal ways of rules and regulations. 30 per cent of them recorded their rules and regulations in their minute books.

From their governing rules, it is learnt that absentee fine (Rs. 5/- per seating) is imposed and Rs. 2/- as late fine. By this way the present rate of member is very high.

The President of the SHG is selected not elected. The term of the Presidentship is usually one year, but in the case of Secretary and Treasurer they may continue longer as per requirement. Presiding of meeting is on rotational basis. Punctuality is maintained in the meeting. Meetings are held twice a month.

Thrift collection

Monthly thrifts from members are collected ranging from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 10/- per member.

Record maintenance

Most of the SHGs maintain more than 10 books of record.

Literacy

67.51 per cent of the members are literate, out of which 27.08 per cent have reached high school level.

Age distribution

Table 1. Age distribution of SHG members

Age	Member	%
25-29	36	6.50
30-34	76	13.72
35-39	100	18.05
40-44	110	19.86
45-49	110	19.86
50-54	46	8.30
55-59	32	5.58
60-64	28	5.05
65-69	8	1.14
70-74	8	1.14
Total	554	100

Source : Field Survey

Table 2. Nature of loan delivery to SHG members

	Consumption	IGA	Asset creation	Total
Total no. of loan	1,339	2,482	15	3,836
Total amount of loan disbursed	6,81,368	42,33,475	3,700	49,18,813
Minimum amount of loan	50	100	500	NA
Maximum amount of loan	6,500	6,500	7,600	NA
Average amount of loan	508.86	1705.7	2466.67	1282.28

Source : NERCORMP.- IFAD, August 2006

Table 3. Net capital, growth of SHGs, fund during the years of reference

Fund position in 16 SHGs

Village	SHG	No. of members	Fund received from Project	Fund position	Net increase	
					Amount	%
Ngaina	Semi	15	20000	52519	32519	162.60
Nungbi						
Khullen	Yami	20	10000	58250	48250	482.5
Kalahang	Mathotmi	19	20000	64001	44001	220.05
Halang	Chirchomri	20	20000	70883	50083	250.42
Halang	Ngachanchon	20	20000	65116	45116	225.59
Halang	Mashunyar	20	20000	43782	23782	118.91
Nungbi						
Khullen	Thuileiphi	19	10000	110513	100513	1005.13
Langdodang	Leiyarun	15	0	53808	53808	NA
Nungbi						
Khullen	Ngachonrin	20	10000	112799	102799	1027.99
Ngaina	Universe	15	20000	47291	27291	136.46
Talui	Roshimkat	15	0	63534	63534	NA
Talui	Rangummo	15	10000	51720	41720	417.2
Kuirei	Horthanmi	16	0	2375	2375	NA
Kuirei	Nammii	17	0	2167	2167	NA
Kuirei	Thotdharin	16	0	2467	2497	NA
Kuirei	Mashitmi	15	0	215	2615	NA
Total		277	16000	803870	126996	79.37

Source : NERCORMP – IFAD, August 2006

Money supply in tribal areas for development

Tanmay Bhattacharjee

This study is more on the necessity of money in the matters of development in the hill areas of the north-eastern states. There shall not be any attempt to project a picture purely based on quantity of money supplied which find channels in ever widening streams. We may start with a stand where there was no money economy at the beginning and most of the tribal areas of this region and all the tribal groups lived virtually without supply of money and most of their economic deals were conducted through barter systems. Any perusal of the old texts available on the tribal economy would give us this picture. The British for the first time introduced through its system, a strong 'penetrative' political economy which was unknown in the previous regimes. In the earlier times, a king ruled at the top but the village remained aloof with their autonomous set up. The village got the touch of interference, economically only during the British regime. The earlier regimes did not touch the village economy through their operations. A government, then was essentially a military organization. The Mughals, the immediate predecessors of the British, were immensely so.

We saw a political system, super imposed over a geography and a demography with little interactions between polity and economy. Normally, a colonial system worked on this political philosophy where economic conditions were not tagged to the imposed political system. A political system under the colonial rule has a universal tendency to block the emergence of a viable economy as it might generate sufficient strength to change the political system itself.

When we come to discuss the situation in the hills of this region, we see that no political reforms were initiated and these hills were only made the parts of the empire and as the hills did not see any kind of economic development, and there was no scope of much interactions with the outside world. The restrictions, Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas and Inner Line Permit were introduced and at least one of them, the inner line permit still operates in the region. These were conscious colonial efforts, not thought of in the past before them. Before the British, the tribals lived

A tribal, by a pure classical definition, was a local entity living in isolation with no interaction with outside world. The Reid plan² nearly included one hundred of tribes not connected to each other by blood and culture. It was an incongruous situation where only a colonial system with a hidden agenda could sustain it. There was absolutely no consideration for economic development whatsoever. It is true that the British brought these areas into one political system for the first time and before the arrival of the British, it was the domain of free movements. The way the colonialists ruled, the tribes in this region retained that definition. But the independence of the country opened these territories and threw them into the orbit of competition, consumerism and even the effects of globalization are felt in the tribal areas, all the protections of the constitution notwithstanding. They are, no longer, isolated in mind and action. We may take up any tribal area in the region and study how the tribes are losing their definitive tribal characters. This, again, not only threw them into challenges and turmoil which they hitherto did not know. These are different from the challenges in the past when they lived in isolation.

Might was really right in this vast region. There were hardly any fixed boundaries existed. The present boundaries were created in the interests of the colonial masters. India's north-east and Myanmar's north and west are a huge area and there was no central authority to control. In India's north-east, there were the regional rulers but they did not have any control over the vast periphery where the tribal chieftains held their sway for ages. The Nagas were ill at ease with the new political boundaries the colonial masters left for us to defend. With the advent of the independence, a democratic system was inaugurated in the region. With all limitations, in India's side of the border, we are having a democratic system with periodical elections held though ethnic turmoil are common in our side of the borders but in Myanmar, the country was ruled by the military juntas for last sixty years. In absence of democratic institutions in the vast periphery of the country, the armed tribal groups clash often with the army.

In the post-colonial era, we have not abandoned altogether the administrative structure created by the British and 'the colonial system - induced structures' continued with 'democratization with welfare'. The administrative structures did not change, it was only super imposed by a democratic system. An uncommitted administration with a committed political institution overhead, which a true Marxist would not agree. The obvious change was the participation of the people in the system. Considering the strong feudal and tribal attitudes still persisting, the leaderships often tend to remain immobile in few hands with little signs of democratic power sharing.

The fruits or otherwise of the welfare measures on the India's with all its money squandering propensities admitted, could be felt in many areas, a special mention may be made of one area on the Indo-Myanmar border, Chin Hills vis-a-vis the Indian state of Mizoram. In the past, before the advent of the British in the region, there were deadly feuds among the kindred tribes for the possession of Chin Hills, a highly mountainous region now entirely fall within the territory of Myanmar, and in the past, many of the present day Mizo tribes had to leave the territory literally 'lock, stock and barrel' for their precious lives. The feuds were common rather than exceptions. The severity of conflicts was enormous. The small story of this 'great uprooting' could be found in the books by Baveja and Stevenson. The colonial urges took the British to this unknown corners of which we hardly had any knowledge previously. The British writers left a vivid tale of the hoary expeditions in this highly mountainous region near to our north-eastern borders. After the lapse of nearly two centuries, the situation has changed now. The tribes from Chin Hills try to enter Mizoram for economic reasons. The Government is worried over the infiltration and they try to check such infiltration. Mizoram seems to be a better prospect now for the kindred tribes.

Mizoram is having a decent polity which Chin Hills do not enjoy. The situation prevailing in Mizoram, one hundred and fifty years ago had yielded place to a world view of development and for all practical purposes, the state is progressing and the positive signals are received in the development radar³. The present generation of the Mizos do not like to remember the raids to the Alexanderpur tea estate (near Katlichera, Hailakandi) in the late nineteenth century when its manager Winchester and his wife were killed along with many workers and their small daughter was carried off. It hurt the British pride and a punitive measure against the offending tribe became imperative. Till that time, the tribal attacks took the usual methods of attack and plunder and it was obvious that the raiders did not have any idea of the might of the political authority behind the unfortunate tea garden owner. The most of the areas remained desolate before the British came and these were the happy grounds for tribal plunders. That ominous incidence took place in the year 1871 when the communication system within Cachar itself was nearly non existent. The British enterprise in the form of tea plantations was only opening up the interiors and the hills south of the present day Barak Valley was thoroughly unknown. The present situation cannot give us the realities of the wilderness of the past. The life was unsafe in the interior and that explains the sparseness of the population. The raiders under the leadership of a Chief Buola fell upon the hapless tea garden owner. The story of the raid is well documented where the Hmar and the Lushai chiefs took part in the plunder.⁴

The British took note of the danger and sent one very well known Army General, Lord Roberts of Kandahar (who took part in the army operations in South Africa and Afghanistan in defence of the British imperialism, became the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army in 1892) to tame the tribes to the south. The organized Army made a short work of the tribal resistance in the difficult terrain and brought them under the control of the Administration. This was the beginning of the colonial administration of the then Lushei Hills, present day Mizoram. The consolidation of the administration in the Hills, of course, took some more years.

Another Roberts, his name was Reverend Watkins, a man from Wales in Great Britain set his feet on the village Senvon in 1910 where the chief Kamkholun lived. He offered the Chief, a copy of the Gospel according to St John which included attractive photographs. This immediately caught the attention of Chief and the Christianity made an entry into the hills. By 1912, there were 200 converts to the Christianity which included the Chief Kamkholun of Senvon. Now, it will be difficult to find a non Christian Mizo in the state. A good description of it will be found in the book by Pudaite, a Hmar evangelist having connections with the American Christian missions. He was also born at that historic village, Senvon but the destinies had made him a true Christian from birth as well as enlightened. The tribal raids were common in the Cachar plains but that historic raid by the tribes in 1871 had started a new epoch in the lives of the tribal people. They, through this ignominious act, facilitated the annexation of their territory into the empire. Naga areas were annexed a little earlier and all the tribal areas annexed had a set pattern of amalgamation with the system.

The tribes moved from one area to the other freely, very often engaging themselves in terrible blood letting battles with each other. The presence of an overwhelmingly superior sovereign over all these tribes was absent. The British brought these heterogeneous hills, dales and plains under one system. The Colonial masters gave the idea of one sovereignty with similarity of administrative structures but the present-day administration is much more widespread and brought in other western features of polity, democracy and welfare of people. The British brought the single sovereignty over the region but they were not ready to introduce other polity features, obviously, these did not serve their purposes of limited governance over the region. They only moved with necessity and not with welfare motives. The British initiated the largest colonial exercise known in the Indian history. Again, money as a means of economic transactions are pre supposedly meant for payment of goods brought from outside. The economy was local altogether and the barter was convenient to serve their small purposes. Money was also conveniently an imperial insertion into our system and particularly in the periphery, the people merrily lived without it.

Money supply increased with welfare concept expanded

Our freedom movement had one redeeming feature that we did not want only the political emancipation but also the economic emancipation and that benevolent ideas were nourished for all people. That the boundaries are breaking down and the knowledge began to expand. The national leaders too perceived welfare in its historical perspectives. The last sixty years after our independence saw the rapid expansion of the welfare ideas. There was a notion generally felt among us certain sections of the population were exploited and continuously denied of their social, political and economic rights. All our reformist leaders from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Mahatma Gandhi with Babasaheb Ambedkar in between, pleaded for the emancipation of those people whom we had neglected in the past.

This is a reasonable conclusion in a democracy where all people have the right to participate. An active democracy is also a vigorously sustained welfare state. The world views on political systems and economy are shared immediately. The attitude of the Central government (as India's polity is heavily centralized though vaunting its federalism all the time) is benevolent and paternalistic, its money supplying propensities had increased bit by bit and many grandiose plans were initiated on which such money supplies could be accommodated. With the booming economy at the national level with rate of growth soaring at present, the money supplies increased at the peripheral levels. The Government has enough money to spend for welfare, only the plans are to be made however unwieldy these might be in execution. The modern economy visualizes development through two important inputs, communication and electricity generation. In these sectors, huge amount of money are necessary along with the skilled management. These sectors of development cannot be sustained with local resources. Here, the money supply is huge and prospects are enormous. These are also linked with the generation of self-reliance at the local level. Here, also the necessity of proper management arises. A good number of insurgent groups having the titles of 'liberation armies' try to get a share of it as the amounts are large, their greed too becomes large. The real development is not their concern, they want money any way.

An unearned capital formation only adds to the accumulation of black money and it is not capital at all. So many interest groups enter into fray making projects unviable as the cost escalates gradually. The private enterprises hesitate to invest in the region for obvious reasons. Even then, communication and electricity generation require huge expenditures which must be spent though the risks are substantial. If the self-reliant economy

is the goal, the infrastructural expenditure as well as risks are to be borne. Money comes from the Centre and the spending pleases the hearts of many, the most important among are the liberation outfits. It is doubtful whether the real benefits go to the people.

A booming trade in Dimapur sustains the coffers of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland. Dimapur's commercial rise gladdens the hearts of the insurgents as the part of the booty is theirs. The ULFA's money siphoning game is well known. The smaller outfits get the shares of our welfare money. More we go for welfare (which theoretically we should initiate), please 'the other bodies' who do not vow to our constitution. A part of Dimapur's wealth go to the NSCNs, both factions but they are not accountable to anybody for spending. They do not pause to be the modern versions of Robin Hood also. The old concept of deprivation of the masses in the past meant that the situation could be corrected through increased money supplies. As many politicians presume that the money supplies in the hitherto dried areas would bring in welfare of the people who do not have much ideas of the meaning of the word welfare. Money can only bring welfare to the people, they believe. The deprivation in the past means the correction of the situation at present but everywhere, Uttar Pradesh to the north-east, the elites are created among the deprived sections of the population who corner most of the benefits.

Money is a great patroniser, a vote getter and through it an ambitious politician extends his control over the electorate. The increase of money supplies in the name of welfare has more negative impacts on the people. The money supplies in the name of welfare is largely an uncontrolled phenomenon in our country and the public accountability is less and it cannot be established so easily. In the hill areas of Assam it is much less. That the increased money supplies could not stop the emergence of militancy in the region in the hills is the clear signal we receive of the fact that a large portion of the welfare money find its way into the hands of the insurgents who operate as the anti-state groups in the districts. There is a symbiotic relationship between the money supplies and the rise of insurgency. It, of course, travels through the most sinful part of our political system that is, financial corruption by the public representatives. It is not a 'happened' case, it is happening all the time. All insurgency related deaths occurred recently in the hills of Assam were money related too. Nobody should consider there is any ideology involved. The increased supply of money in the name of welfare of the people are now shared at different levels, our representatives, officials, contract people and the insurgents. The actual welfare of the people remain an unfulfilled dream in the end.

The history of the people in the past in the hills was a continuous tale of internecine skirmishes and there was no money involved in these deadly skirmishes. The extension of powers and the acquisition of some materials were mostly coveted. There was pride in the attacks made on the adversaries. In many areas of the hills, the human heads were brought as signs of victory and as a trophy. Today, the tribal warfare continued not with swords and spears, deadly weapons manufactured elsewhere in the factories in the distant lands find their way into the corners of our hills. The users only know how to operate them with deadly effects, they know not which factories in the affluent countries produce them. The producers live incommunicable and the users in the hills know only the middle men who supply them. This is more or less true for all the third world insurgency situations. The weapons are not supplied free of cost and proper money is to be paid through agents. A state knows about such anti-state activities and in most of the situations, they consider it as a law and order situation and they do not go beyond this question. The tale continues.

Even though, the state sponsored welfare activities generate lust among the representatives of the people and the rentier groups, the non-government sponsored enterprises thrive and they cater to the needs of the people to a great extent. They generate money from their own sources and are sustained by it. In our political and economic deliberations, the idea of self-reliance is emphasized but we do not apply it properly. In North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong, many tribes produce things in the fields through their sincere efforts. As they have the necessary expertise, they have the potentiality to increase the yield with better knowledge of the conditions. One instance is of the orange producers of Jatinga in North Cachar Hills which became a viable economic enterprise through their very own sincere efforts. There was no necessity of huge supply of money from the Government sources. The nicely kept orange orchards in that place needed no big money. The people in the village do every thing with the labour and inputs supplied from their own sources. The Jatingan Khasi tribe, the Kukis of Singhasan Hills in the district of Karbi Anglong producing gingers, the Hmars producing gingers and pineapples in North Cachar Hills only exhibit that the tribes can be induced to undertake economically viable courses themselves. No big money is necessary, which is Government-propelled. They market them also and there are individuals among the tribes who became economically solvent through their efforts. We know that these

enterprises became successful through only small moneys and their own welfare measures are self induced. Big money only invites large scale corruption where only the big players are involved. The politicians are worst culprits, there should be less doubt about that and a polity that only helps the growth of the rentier and profiteering classes is no polity. This is only happening in the greater horizons of the north-east. Money supplies are debasing the characters of the people and we are teaching people, no work but earn money any way. This ulterior message is clear and loud and reaches every fabric of the society.

Dispur as the junior partner of the money supply game (of the Centre), distributes it in the name of welfare and it is alleged the politicians and officials corner large buck of it in the process. Neither New Delhi nor Dispur ever tell in very genuine tone that you, the people, you are to be self-reliant any way, your survival lies in it only and it cannot lie anywhere else. Large money only invites greed and manipulations. A man cannot be inherently bad but the system corrupts him and in the long run, it (corruption) is only the part of the system. Excessive money supplies through the ministers and officials are the bane of the whole system. The District Rural Development Agency, announced with great ideals behind it, is now the tale of corruption and mismanagement only. Money without accountability is no money, it is only a drain covered with filth. The D.R.D.A. stories, the genuine people do not like to remember.

Gap between provisions and practice

Theoretically, there is much truth in the ideas in the peripheral development which was utterly denied in the past. The ideas on India's polity formation developed with major shift in the trend that the periphery should manage its own affairs through its own means. We hardly engage our attention on the question that there could be big gap between polity and the capacity to handle the polity by the people at the local levels. A student of Political Science learns in the class room that the Indian constitution is federal but it is unitary biased. We do not realize that the same thing happens at the state level where the constitution of autonomous councils in hill districts having so many provisions which the local bodies are not capable of performing themselves. Only the extension of powers without creating locally induced economic values are empty in contents and that is happening in the hills.

A tribe living in the districts had their own self sustaining economy which worked well with their political system. As they lived in isolation, every thing was locally available. The vast changes that were wrought in tribal societies could be found by comparing the state of affair now with that in 1968⁵, a Karbi village 'Kangther Terang' then hopped clear fifteen kilometers away from its location near the Diphu police station. A tribal village hopped as there were plenty of lands available. The village shifted on many pretexts, among them, the sudden emergence of epidemic or the death of the chieftain. Now, the isolation is broken down and the institutions are to be modernized. Our constitution gave them so many powers which are foreign to their psyche.

A tribal person is a worker and he can work if the conditions are congenial. Horticulture and small cottage industries which a tribal man is accustomed with and these can be developed with propensity to creating economic values. In the past, they lived with subsistence economy and it was a concept they thought as a permanent feature. This psychological trait in a tribal community is hard to remove but it is to be removed and the ideas of 'capital values' are to be created. Some tribes are doing it. It is the perceivable and useable economic values which protect their future. A tribal society having their roots in the village where economy is also socialized and a man in distress is looked after by his kins, it is a social responsibility. So, one man's distress is attended to by all people. When the economic values created which do not know any kind of capital formation, they face troubles in bad days. Now a days, many tribal writers are bringing out the true pictures of a traditional society, Rongbong Terang's *Rongmilir Hanhi*⁶ (The smile of Rongmili) where the people lived at the subsistence level and the predilections of the people are depicted nicely. Here, Rongmili is a typical Karbi tribal village.

It should be remembered that a tribe too now lives in a fiercely competitive world. We have exposed them to the signs of competition without realizing their capacity to react to it properly. This has already created turmoil in a tribal society. No tribe is free from such turmoil. Hence the creation of economic values is important. The basic tribal character of hard work and honesty should not be taken away by the lure of big money. That ominous foreboding is utterly disregarded. The economic values are not created from outside, it is created from within. If some tribes are creating them already, others can also do it but huge money in the name of grandiose projects should be altogether avoided. It would be disastrous to think that the happenings in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills are only isolated instances and it has only bearing on law and order situation.

In Tripura, the tribal people are already swamped over by the influx of the non tribal refugees from across the border. This 'swamp' theory should apply to the fertile and resourceful district of Karbi Anglong too where the local tribes may face the same type of situation with bizarre effects. The vast cover of virgin forests are gradually taken out and an unequal fight for existence ensued. In the Council election results, it is clear that the constituencies with pure Karbi majority population having capacity to win on their own is only the half of the area, the rest are having the mixed population. It is not only a fight to correct demographic imbalance which is emerging but also a fight against a superior production initiated by the comparatively new settlers. Incidentally, the size of these two areas are nearly equal and resource wise, the possibilities are nearly equal. Tripura's case would have been irretrievably lost if a genuine political movement was not initiated, there are signs of revival of tribal economy there and attempts are made to create capital out of economy and not depending on the subsistence economy only.

In Karbi Anglong, the phenomenon of ultra left political movement was very unique but the glare of the ultra left movement (on Marxist Leninist line) only touched the Karbi tribe more than others. In Tripura, 'dominant social group' spearheads the movement enlisting the support of the tribals in it. The theory that there should be a dominant social group available to sustain a viable political movement carries meaning. The Karbis are already under threat of being swamped in their own district by others. The Marxist-Leninist movement initially among the Karbis are being counteracted by the coalition of interests of other tribes represented by the Congress.

Moreover, they have their internal conflicts which weakened the movement. However, it must be admitted that the tribe had no use for money a hundred years ago is now sufficiently advanced to understand the nuances of the tenets of class struggle.

The spread of the rubber plantation in Tripura in last few decades was remarkable and the beneficiaries were the tribal people mostly. Tripura is already the second rubber producing state in the country next only to Kerala. The tribal people at last saw the signs of economic salvation. It is a good sign indeed ! This is also another picture of how the active *jhumiyas* slowly transferred their skills to profitable earnings. It should be imitated elsewhere in the hills of north-east. The rubber cultivation may not be suitable in all places, other types may be tried. Anyway, the lessons of self-reliance should spread everywhere. As mentioned the Kuki enterprise in ginger cultivation in Karbi Anglong district has already become a profitable exercise

for the tribe. This, of course, gave rise to a deadly conflict between the tribes. If the tribes are genuinely involved in such economic activities, in the long run, the political conflicts would decrease.

The history of expansion of the tribal autonomy in the hills is linked with heavy expenditure cost ever widening through decades. Who meets the cost any way ? Is it the local revenues which sustain them ? On the first question, the answer is the state and the central governments. It is one kind of grant economy, 'you grant money, we run administration.' On the second question, the local resources are minimal. In the initial state, some money should be given with a clear message that the motto should be self-reliance, once the institution gets into proper working. If bigger money is given, it should be for infrastructural development in the spheres of road building and electricity generation where the local resources might not suffice. The agencies which work for such works are not the local institutions, these are specialized agencies meant for such works. Now a days, the highways pass through the hill areas and there is high cost involved in building it. So is the electricity generation. Another instance is the *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan* (Movement for Education for All) launched by the Central Government. Its import and purpose must be realized properly and the money must be utilized properly. But the reports which are coming on its implementation are not encouraging, money is squandered away in many places. Our system does not tell the local authorities that it is your local government institution, you are to maintain it with your own resources. If the resources are not enough for maintaining the structure even, it is better not to go for expansion.

A political system which does not generate enough resources for the minimum needs, it should not be undertaken. But the elite in the society do not sit idle once they get power. They demand more political powers and undertake bigger struggles by passing the facts that their estates were poorly run and the money given by the Governments were not utilized properly. A political institution is sustained on its own political economy. It is true in case of Karbi Anglong or North Cachar Hills, it is true for ADC, Tripura also⁷. The Central or the State Government should first in stringent measures, enforce the financial disciplines in the autonomous institutions granted in the hills.

Question of accountability goes abegging

The Central Government allot money (as it is the main money giving authority), the implementation is not proper. Take for instance, the spending of the central government money is much better in Tripura, than it is in Assam. When one visits Tripura, its roads are better maintained, education

is better run, supply of electricity fails less there and probably, the government officers (and also the venerable representatives of the people) are not used to that type of bribe taking as we face in our state, if a comparison is made with Assam, the difference is glaring. In this part of Assam (South Assam), the utilization of resources is very poor. It is the same picture in the hills which go in an unremitting pace. Assam cannot compare adequately with the speed of development in Mizoram. The success or failure of schemes can be quantified. It is not the intent of this article, it is only a general statement. The above statement is not to certify certain states over others. It is only an observable picture of the maintenance of the basic needs which a common man expects from a state.

When we look at the ever increasing political power structure, we find that this is the manifestation of the liberal ideas that we know from the copy books. The elite in the tribal societies throughout the north-east demand more powers for themselves. These can be misjudged as the people's demands. As for instance, two such demands, one for the formation of an autonomous state comprising of two hill districts of Assam, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills (under the Article 244A) and the second one for the formation of a separate state for the Dimasa tribe calling it Dimaraji. The first one was spearheaded by the Karbi leadership and the second one by the Dimasas. One big conclusion comes out of the two movements, the elite in both the tribes want more powers (obviously on behalf of their respective peoples). These movements were not spearheaded at the same time. The demands were met midway by the granting authority with the expansion of the political and administrative structures already in existence⁷.

But do the peoples want more political powers really or they want freedom from the economic drudgeries which they face every day? The people are led not by their own conscience, they are led by their leaders in the open and by those who handle weapons in the jungles. The Central Government treat them as the typical case of law and order. Let us look at the type of economic organization in the country and the people involved in its ever widening operation. Where does the ordinary tribal group stand in the whole operation? The projects come in different shapes and their contents are different with significant money supply. Only the field of operation might be a tribal territory. Capital, machine and skilled labour, all are absent in a tribal territory. The large economic operations in the country with the impact of the globalization over it, generate a level of consumerism which was hitherto unknown in tribal areas but the people come under the spell of it soon. While they are unable to participate in the economic operations themselves, they are only drawn to the glare of it. Their character

is lost already. The honesty and integrity are proverbial in a tribal society but we are losing it. The modes of that economic operation is foreign to them.

Mode of economy has bearing on political system

If a tribal group is to maintain its existence, the mode of economy must be assimilated into its psyche and with that, with their political system. They fail to assimilate into this economic operation, their frustration will grow. It finds manifestations in all channels, mostly in negative ways. In Karbi Anglong, the turmoil should not be treated as a matter of law and order only. A huge area⁸, covered with thick forest in the past now laid bare, the infiltrations are occurring as the land is plenty and fertile. The people with better mode of economic operations will dominate over their economy. We have already seen the Kuki enterprises in the Singhason hills and here and there some Karbis show dexterity in economic exercises but instances are few. There is already a widening demographic gap between the Karbis and the non-Karbis in the district. Can a tribe with its traditional means will be able to withstand that infiltration fury for a long time? The bizarre tale of increasing money supply with all its 'unsocial use' gave rise to similar types of acquisitions where the people vow to disobey the rules of law with impunity.

The existing system is not given a fair trial by following clear rules. There could be an obvious difference between a developed and a developing country, the economic disparities are clear but a developed nation could achieve it and we could not? It is not done by spending money only, it is done through following rules of the copy book. We follow rules when these are to our advantage, we disown them we do not have chances of deriving any benefit, economic or otherwise. We create laws (most often at Delhi's behest) only to spurn them at our will. All turmoil in the north-east emanate from absolute disregard of the system analysis.

The Centre answers to these abnormal situations by treating them as an incidence of law and order with the increase of more money supplies to the troubled areas. If the anomalies continue in certain areas for a long time, it is better to suspend the autonomous body and go for total cleaning. North Cachar and Karbi Anglong may fit into such demands for cleaning. The system correction is needed. The top heavy officialdom with cunning politicians overhead with lustful eyes on the big money supplied on big projects may not solve the problem. The chain of under hand beneficiaries is too long to be controlled without a long fight. Are we ready for that?

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Problems and prospects of tribal development in Tripura : a historical overview

Sukhendu Debbarma

Tripura once a princely state ruled by the Borok/Tripuri people finds mentioned even in the days of the Mahabharata. According to the *Rajamala* or the chronicles of the kings, the ruling dynasty of Tripura was one of the oldest in India and belongs to the Indo-Mongoloid family and to be more specific to the greater family of the Bodo linguistic group of Tibeto-Burman. As many as 184 rulers ruled the state. Tripura had its own era, which was used in all documents, public as well as private. The era was introduced in 560 AD.

Tripura merged with Indian Union on 15th October, 1949. The strong impact of partition, independence of India followed by communal riots on Tripura was exerted through the influx of refugees. The influx continued over a long period of time and ultimately outnumbering the indigenous tribal people of the state. The situation can be gauged as within the period of about 24 years, i.e. 15th August 1947 to 24th March 1971, there were 6,09,998 refugees officially settled in the state. However, these excluded those refugees settled in Tripura without being registered and any rehabilitation facilities from the Government. According to the census of 1971, the total population of Tripura was 15,56,342 and the refugee population was 6,09,998 upto 24th March, 1971, meaning thereby that in 1971 the refugee population was about 39.19% of the total population of Tripura. These refugees were given Indian citizenship. Once the indigenous tribal people of Tripura became minority in their own land, all the woes began to befall.

The first being that all laws that are enacted did more harm than good. The forest / land laws did not at all do any justice to the indigenous people. Alienation and illegal transfer of land from the tribal to the Bengalis was rampant. The traditional self-rule and self-sufficient economy has become less stable due to the extension of forest operations to the remotest corner of the hills in 1961. Most of the indigenous tribal villages on hill tops were

declared under reserved forest, protected forest, in a notification in English (official language) by the state government in 1961 and also subsequent notifications.

While conducting a survey on shifting cultivation, I came across a situation where an octogenarian indigenous man thought that I was from the forest department and was not willing to part with information regarding the shifting cultivation that they do. I enquired further why he was so apprehensive about the forest officials? Was told that each time the forest official visits them, they were told that they are living illegally in the forest land. On disclosing my identity he asked me one question, i.e. "Whether the law came first or we came first?"

The most comprehensive land laws entitled "The Tripura Land Reforms & Land Revenue Act" came into force in 1960. Consequent upon this new enactment, all land laws so far in existence in the state were repealed and all tenures have been completely abolished. TLR & LR Act, 1960 empowered ownership of the entire land of the state vested with the state. The basic objective of the act is to bring the cultivators in direct contact with the state and guarantee permanent heritable and transferable right over land cultivated by peasant. In order to stop land alienation from tribal to non tribal, Section 187 of the act imposes restrictions of transfer of tribal land to non tribal without prior permission from the Collectors. Subsequent amendment has been provided with more comprehensive provisions for the protection of land right for the tribal including restoration of the transferred land to the non tribal. The cut-off date for determination of such restoration was fixed on or after 1st January, 1969. It is rather ridiculous as the TLR & LR Act, 1960 was given effect from 1960 but in case of restoration of alienated tribal land the effective date is 1st January, 1969, thus legalizing all the illegal land transfer before 1st January, 1969.

Self-governance in scheduled areas : experiences of Meghalaya and Nagaland

Sujit K. Dutta

Self-governance in scheduled areas as compared to non-scheduled areas is totally different. Even the states falling under Sixth Schedule Area, differ from each other. However, the basic intention of framing the Sixth Schedule is to confer a considerable amount of autonomy to the tribal people by giving them protection to retain their identity according to their own genius, socially, politically and economically through their elected representatives and nominated members. The Sixth Schedule provides a type of local governmental arrangement, which aims to better the life of the tribal people, keeping in view the ample opportunity to grow in their own roots (Bose : 1979 : 182-184).

In reality the spirit of the Sixth Schedule is to provide complete safeguards to the tribal communities in respect of land, forest, system of justice and social customs. But it was also felt that the State and Central Governments would help them in securing the benefits of a democratic, progressive and liberal administration (Jyrwa : n.d).

In order to achieve these aims the Constitution has given the power to the tribal people to form their district councils/autonomous councils with autonomous powers to make laws on various subjects applicable to the tribal people as enshrined in the Sixth Schedule.

Against this backdrop, the District Councils or Autonomous Local Government come into being in tribal areas of the North-eastern region especially to introduce internal autonomy in tribal compact areas for protecting the social, economic and cultural interests of the tribal population.

However, the Autonomous District Council/Autonomous Council under the Sixth Schedule are vested with three types of powers in general such as (i) Legislative (ii) Executive and (iii) Judiciary.

In order to protect the social, economic and cultural interests of the tribal people of this region, the autonomous local government comes up with the following objectives :

- * To free the tribal people of this region from all kinds of social injustice ;
- * To strengthen the bond between tribal and non tribal people living in the council area ;
- * To reduce the material disparities between the advanced and backward sections of society ;
- * To strengthen the traditional values and customary practices of the tribes ;
- * Some agency function relating to the implementation of the centrally sponsored schemes.

The local government in the hill areas in those states where there is no *Panchayat* the things are less complicated. Such states are Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram where dominant ethnic groups are the tribals and the functioning of their local government is less complicated than those states where both *panchayats* and autonomous councils/district councils of tribal groups exist. Arunachal is the only exception where being a tribal state has accepted *panchayati raj* system.

For expository convenience we concentrate our study to two hill states of North-eastern region, namely Meghalaya and Nagaland.

Meghalaya

In Meghalaya there are 7 districts but three autonomous district councils (ADC), namely Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC), Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC) and Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC). Under KHADC three districts – East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills and Rebhoi and under GHADC – East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills and South Garo Hills districts are included. JHADC covers one single district. Excepting some terminological differences in these three district councils administrative structure remains the same. Only there are differences in their function.

In Meghalaya in total there are 5,484 villages and in every village there are *durbars* (single unit of administration at the village level) which function independently under the guidance of respective ADC. As they fall under the territory (*elaka*) of some chiefs (*Syiems, Lyngdoh, Wahadadar, Sirdar, Dolli* or *Nakma*) they have to oblige them also. But the Khasi chiefs feel that the creation of District Council is a controversial issue as this has created more factional conflicts and cleavages within the Khasi society in order to fulfil the

interest of a few affluent people not for the welfare or benefit of the mass as pointed out by good number of traditional Khasi chiefs (Dutta, 2002 : 1-4). However, district councils claim that they are the true representatives of local government who resolve numerous disputes and conflicts through their courts at the district level and with the *durbars* at the village level (grass root level) local institutions.

The age-old rivalry between the traditional institutions and the autonomous district council is well known in Meghalaya. The discontentment of the chiefs is mainly because they feel that they are now under the control of district councils. It is evident that the district councils under the Act of 1959 wholly regulate the succession and appointment of chiefs and headmen. The Supreme Court of India observed in 1960 that *syiem* was a functionary under the District Council. All the chiefs are now presiding officers at the additional subordinate District Council Courts. But their decision is subject to appellate jurisdiction of the subordinate district council court at Shillong. As regards financial matters, the chiefs' pay is one-eighth of the total income of the district council. The council has also certain control over the budget of the chiefs. Overall it has been found that the chiefs are today under hard press in many ways ; even their status has become subordinate. In such a situation many of them have become aggressive and are preparing for a revolt (Dutta, op.cit : 6).

However, the *syiem* as the chief of the tribe is always respected. He still receives different forms of tributes from his people. Despite the erosion of his powers and rights, he still plays a vital role in the administrative affairs of the tribe. He supervises the conduct of his subordinate authorities at the raid (commune) and village level. If a village headman or a commune headman is found incompetent and charged with abusing his powers, the *syiem* can order fresh elections in order to replace him. He still protects the rights of the people ; administers justice and punishes the culprits. After the formation of district councils all *syiems* have been given the powers of Additional Magistrates in their respective *syiemships*. Accordingly, they are empowered to try civil and criminal cases except murder case (Dutta, op.cit : 7).

In 1971 when sixth schedule was amended, the strength of the district council was fixed at 30 including four nominated members. At present the KHADC is divided into 29 constituencies, the JHADC into 16 constituencies. The number of nominated member is one in the KHADC and three in JHADC. The total strength of JHADC is 19.

The major activities of KHADC and JHADC are as follows :

- (i) Activities related to forest
- (ii) Look after primary education, i.e. looking after the activities of the primary schools, their administration, day-to-day activities, payments of banks, etc.
- (iii) Collection of tax (professional)
- (iv) Look after activities of fisheries
- (v) Look after activities of public works, i.e. building of roads, bridges, pavements, footpaths, digging of ponds, etc.
- (vi) *Elaka* administration
- (vii) Trade and commerce
- (viii) Market regulation
- (ix) Transport
- (x) Control of grazing grounds
- (xi) Control over land resources

Besides the above activities the councils also perform basic functions like legislative, executive and judiciary.

As regards entrusted functions, the government of Meghalaya decided that Governor may entrust conditionally or un-conditionally some functions to district councils in relation to the following departments :

Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Community Projects, Cooperative Societies, Social Welfare, Village Planning, or any other matter, which the executive power of the state extends.

But, ADCs are yet to be assigned the above subjects from the state government.

Financial resources of the ADCs

- (i) Share of income from major and minor minerals from the State Government
- (ii) Taxes collected at the tollgate
- (iii) Share of income from professional taxes
- (iv) Revenue from forests
- (v) Grant-in-aid from State Government
- (vi) Grants regarding enforcement of laws and regulations

At the grass root level the village *durbars* also perform their functions out of the funds of Member District Councils (MDCs), which is meagre amount (around

10-15 thousand rupees) as reported by many village headmen. They are not involved in any schemes/programmes of government excepting selection of beneficiaries for the respective schemes/programmes. But the tribal chiefs as already mentioned continued to collect excise, revenue, land revenue, forest revenue, tolls and rents from their own markets and *haats*, etc., for managing their own administration. Of course, they are also not involved in any government programmes.

Customary laws and status of women

Many customary laws, social rights and religious rituals undermine the status of women, in a way they are deterrents to the progress of women as a whole as equal partners in socio-economic development, particularly the North-east. If such discriminatory practices are allowed to continue in the name of preserving customary practices and tradition, this would amount to putting obstacles for the women power.

Another point is about reservation of women in their local institutions. This is not broadly accepted in the sixth schedule areas ; particularly in Meghalaya it is composed of three matrilineal tribal groups. It means that authority does lie with the women, but they are reckoned through females alone. They have a law of inheritance under which the youngest daughter inherits the property. However, it is reported that some changes are also coming in this society. Very recently in the ADCs election in Garo Hills they are allowed to enter into the *durbar* as members.

Nagaland

In Nagaland, the village council (VC) and the Village Development Board (VDB) are important local institutions. These grass root level organizations constituted under the Nagaland Village and Area Council Act, 1978 have been functioning very effectively. This act was enacted according to the Naga tradition and customary laws which functioned from time immemorial as a very potent institution, not only for the governance of the village, but also for their overall socio-economic development as well. However, the functioning of these institutions varies from tribe to tribe as the different tribes process different customary practices. Therefore, pros and cons of institutional arrangements at lower level must be looked into because at that level mobilization is important in this state. Only then we can think and do some modifications in the existing system vis-a-vis 73rd Amendment.

Unlike *panchayat* in Nagaland there exists village council in each and every village which performs (i) Executive (ii) Administrative, and (iii) Judicial functions in order to settle private and public disputes of the entire village, maintenance of village structure like water supply, foot paths and constructions, bridges over streams and rivers, etc., organizing village festivals, religious ceremonies including sports, hunting, preparing for *jhum* cultivation/terrace cultivation, planting and transplantation, use of grazing land, choosing of sites of houses, granaries, management of village fund, rice or food grains, etc., assisting the chief in the matter of village defence. They also frame law of inheritance, property right, law of adoption, marriage and divorce and maintenance of law and order related to rape, theft, related to engagement of marriage and payment of loan; murder cases and slavery. Clan members are chosen either "Clan-wise" or "*Khel*-wise" (hamlet). The chairman and secretary of VDB are chosen from among the village council members. Only Kanyak and Sema Nagas have the hereditary chieftainship. The rest are having chiefs who are selected by the villages. Only married person holds the office of a councillor without any remuneration.

The village council being the local government has got wide function concerning various aspects of village life as mentioned including formulation of village development schemes, supervision and implementation of all government schemes. Village councils exist for five years term. Qualification required for holding such position is citizenship and minimum age should be 25 years. Within the village council VDB is functioning as development agent of village council. Whereas village councils become the village court to settle all disputes, the VDB becomes the principal functionary who carries out the development works.

VDB is like *gram sabha* in *Panchayati Raj* System, every village there exists a management committee of VDB, whose secretary is chosen from the same village. The utilization of community fund and other development funds are always under the guidance and supervision of village councils.

Financial resources of VDB

The funding condition of VDBs is quite good. Their sources are as follows :

- (i) Public contribution
- (ii) Earning from fixed deposits
- (iii) Grant-in-aid from State Rural Development Department
- (iv) Grant under some centrally sponsored schemes

Further, VDB can also borrow money from the bank against its fixed deposits when required.

Reservation of women seats and the role of women

The formulation of village council and VDB is different from that of *Panchayati Raj* institutions. Under the VDB Model Rules 1980, clause 4(b) laid a provision that 25 per cent of the total members of the management committee should include at least 5 women members. However, the ratio of women members are quite less but they play a crucial role in the development both socially and economically such as taking part in policy making, planning and implementation of various development programmes. At times it has been found the women VDB members come up with schemes like poultry, knitting, granaries, etc. Most popular schemes as Nagaland is concerned appear to be weaving, tree plantation and purchase of yarn. The departments like Industries and Social Welfare are the one who lend their timely support so that more economic schemes could be implemented by taking up their schemes under the rural development programmes.

In addition to the fund raised by the village for its VDB, the state government allot some fund from community development head @ Rs.750/- per tax paying household in the village with the condition that 25% of such allotted fund will be spent on women welfare schemes. To make use of 25% allocated fund, every village women had reorganized themselves and called women society, women association, women welfare, etc., with proper executive members and conduct meeting for various programmes according to their decision without any hindrance or interference from any male members. The women priority sector programmes are like, training of village health care, procurement of sewing machines, knitting machines, wool, yarn, installation of rice mill, purchase of weaving loom, kitchen gardens, cultivation of maize, potato, pineapple, coffee, mushroom, soybeans, cotton, beans, banana, mustard, farming such as piggery and poultry, women welfare centre, embroidery, bee keeping, etc. Some women associations also started constructing community building in villages and towns and rented them out for earning for their future security and to carry out further programmes. Even the women had to decide to do productive work out of the grant-in-aid amount.

Naga women are denied of property rights

In Naga society the women are not entitled to inherit any ancestral property or share of their father's immovable property. Women virtually inherit nothing.

Property involves house, agricultural land, forest, domestic animals, furniture, utensils, etc. A man having no male heir divides his property among his nearest male relatives. However, man may gift a property to his daughter, this property remains with her till marriage, or death, then the property goes back to her brothers or nearest male cousins. A woman owns movable properties like animals, jewellery and cloths, etc. Traditionally female's personal ornaments belong to the daughters. If the husband dies, the wife is entitled to maintain herself from her husband's property till death or re-marry. Since the customary practices are very strong the women cannot voice out their grievances about the inheritance of properties from the deceased parents.

Political and other status

In village polity of religious hierarchy and ritual performance women have no place. This is because of animistic religion, only village priest performs all religious rituals. Women are prohibited to take part in any form in the society. The male members dominate whether in religious matter or in judiciary matter in the council. They are not allowed to act as religious head or perform religious rites where it is a taboo for a woman to participate and women can never become a priest.

Unrecognised / at times unpaid job the women performed

In agriculture both women and men work together, but in many cases these are not recognized even at times they are not paid. Society feels that women are mainly to take care of their children, cooking, weaving cloths at home, fetch water, carrying firewood from jungles, etc. All these are family oriented occupations. As a young girl she is constantly taught by her mother and thus prepares for herself for the adult life. There are institutions, which pervade the similar culture throughout the life and living of Naga women. It is no denying the fact that Naga women do maximum work both at home and in the field whereas the men only give company. Apparently it looks the Naga women enjoy more freedom but with numerous problems and restrictions which are generally not reflected. They have to bear it due to conservative social customs as prescribed.

Conclusions

The present study on 'Self-Governance in Scheduled Areas' is confined only to two states, namely Meghalaya and Nagaland. In case of Meghalaya it

is found that the conflict between traditional institutions and the institution created out of the Sixth Schedule does not lead to any progressive change in the society. The progress and development also shunted due to inadequate and irregular flow of funds from the government sources. Even the functionaries of local government of Meghalaya are unable to mobilize resources to strengthen their local institutions. On the contrary, they are busy in fighting to establish their rights in order to exercise it over the larger community (civil society). Naturally the common people are quite confused and do not know really on whom they will depend. Moreover, the local institution in Meghalaya is not involved in any development work either centrally sponsored or state owned. Consequently, the projects launched directly by the concerned department of the state government/central government are considered as *sarkari* assets and not to be bothered about. Hence, people's participation as regards development schemes related to people is totally absent. Even if it is there, it is passive, and once the assets are created, their participation evaporates. This generally happens because people are not involved in any stage of project planning and implementation and obviously cannot develop belongingness to the project.

Further, the functionaries of local institutions depend solely on government grant-in-aid but do not keep any other functional relation with the government functionaries. In many cases state functionaries feel that their legitimate claim is unjust, unwanted and unrealistic. So they are always at loggerheads. On the other hand, the functionaries of local government feel that things are given either mercifully or by force and not out of good intention.

Forest was the great source of revenue to these local institutions, which is now stopped due to Supreme Court's injunction. Share of income from minor or major minerals was to the tune of 75:25 as ratio of allocation between local government and the state, which is now changed to 40:60. It is also reported that due to shortage of skilled manpower, the council is unable to generate their own resources.

In the name of preserving customary practices and traditions women of Meghalaya become merely custodian of property. But they are unable to take decision on property matters, they cannot enter the *darbar* where the property matters are settled by the decision of male members only.

In Nagaland, however, the situation is slightly better. The VDB is a strong body and they do respect their traditional institution, i.e. the village council. There is hardly any dispute between these two institutions. Apart from executive, administrative and judicial functions, they do numerous welfare activities for

their people. Hence they get more respect from among the people. Even they are totally involved in executing the centrally sponsored development schemes. It is almost functioning like *gram sabha* in *panchayati raj* system.

Financially also VDB is quite strong. Apart from government grants they raise their funds from public contribution, fixed deposits, etc.

As regards Naga women, they get good support from VDB. In fact there are funds exclusively kept for the women scheme. Specifically, the women take decision on their scheme independently and the male member cannot intervene. But women are controlled in other ways too, for example, they cannot claim property right. Even women are unable to claim immovable property of her parents. This goes to the male members only. If male member is absent it goes to nearest male relations. They have a very low politico-religious status. As per the customary practices the priest is sitting on the helm of affairs that takes lot many decisions. Since the priest is always a male, naturally the women are deprived of such privilege. Moreover, in order to prevent the women getting into the politico-religious activities, the women involvement is termed as taboo. Hence they are bound with domestic and family oriented activities only. However, it is better among the worse situations as in the case of women in Meghalaya. At least in case of Naga women they enter VDB as member but not as overall decision maker. They definitely enjoy freedom but with numerous restrictions. This situation will continue unless they amend the customary practices and recognize the women as equal partner.

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Autonomy and development of the tribals in sixth schedule areas of North-east India

R.P. Athparia

The administration of the tribal areas of the North-eastern region, which were earlier known as "Backward Tracts" has a history of its own. Prior to the taking over of the territories by the British Sovereign in 1858, following the sepoy mutiny of 1857, the making of laws was entrusted to the Governor General – in Council by the Government of India Acts of 1823 and 1853. In the subsequent years, many Acts and regulations were passed which affected North-eastern region in diverse ways – like the Inner Line Regulation of 1873, the Schedule Districts Act 1874, the Government of India Acts 1919 and 1935. Under the scheme of Provincial Autonomy, the hill areas of the then Province of Assam fell into categories, namely the excluded and partially excluded areas, as scheduled in the Government of India Act 1935. The main purpose of the administration at that time was more static than dynamic. Thus, the administration contributed to the prolongation of backwardness of the whole North-eastern region specially the areas which were inhabited by the tribals with non tribals for the evolution of a spirit of common identity superseding ethnic diversities. The British Government also attempted to keep the North-eastern tribals aloof from the Indian dominion. After Independence, the Constitution of India provided for protection of the interests of the tribal peoples of the hill areas of North-eastern region allowed autonomy in land, forest resources and also in social and political development. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution provided the legal framework for this protection. Under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, Autonomous District Councils were set up in the North Cachar and Mikir Hills (now known as North Cachar Hills & Karbi Anglong), Lushai Hills (present-day Mizoram), United Khasi and Jaintia Hills, and Garo Hills. The Nagas rejected this scheme. The United Khasi & Jaintia Hills District Autonomous Council was set up on 27 June 1951. All the tribal chiefs and headmen were placed under the jurisdiction of the Autonomous District Council of the Hill areas of the Sixth Schedule. On 1st October 1964, the United Khasi

& Jaintia Hills District Council was bifurcated into two now covered by the three Autonomous District Councils, namely the Khasi Hills District Council, the Jaintia Hills District Council and the Garo Hills District Council. From 1952 to 1972 there was only one District Council and one Regional Council in Mizoram. In 1972, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was split up into three Regional Councils. Later on, the three Regional Councils were converted into three District Councils, the Pawi (Lai), the Lakher (Mara) and the Chakma. Tripura having its legacy of tribal insurgency for freedom and autonomy acceded to the Indian Union in 1948 according to the will of the last king who died immediately before Independence. Soon after accession followed by the ratification of agreement of merger in 1949, Tripura became 'C' category of State in 1950 and in 1956, Tripura was declared centrally administered Union Territory with 33 members of Tripura Tribal Council (TTC) or Legislature in the parliamentary system. Before the introduction of the Sixth Schedule, the Tripura, that is, the Seventh Schedule was introduced in June 1982. With a view to fulfilling the aspirations of the tribal people of Tripura to have an autonomy to administer themselves and improve their economy in the pre-dominantly tribal areas of the State, the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council as an autonomous body was set up in June 19 by the TTAADC Act 1979 under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution vide provision of Article 246(3). In Manipur the situation was different. The Rules for the Administration of the Hill Tribes of Manipur was first framed in 1908 which were modified in 1916. As a Native State, Manipur was outside the purview of the Government of India Act 1935. Nevertheless, on the eve of the grant of statehood to Manipur, the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act was passed in 1971. But this did not come under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The nature of powers, functions and the scope of the District Council of Manipur are quite different from those under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. In the year 1972, the District Council Rules were framed. The first election of the District Council was held in 1973. It took no time to realize the strong limitations of the powers and functions of the District Council in Manipur. In 1973, the Manipur Hill Union and the Kuki National Assembly in a resolution stated that though the conferment of district autonomy opened up a new chapter in the political history of the tribes of Manipur, the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act 1971 failed to fulfil the aspirations of the tribal people and hence demanded a greater autonomy by amending the said act (Ray Asok Kumar, 1997 : 261).

The Karbi Anglong District Council had its inception from June 1952 as provided under para 2 of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The Karbi Anglong District Council is a corporate body consisting of a specified number of members both elected and nominated. The Karbi Anglong District Council is the highest administration body in the district. It is the focal point of the political aspiration of the people. The North Cachar Autonomous District Council is the product of the Sixth Schedule provisions enshrined in the Constitution of India. It was inaugurated on April 29, 1952. For many centuries, the hill areas of North Cachar were inhabited by a 'tribal trinity' consisting of Dimasas, Jemes, Hmars and Kukis. When the Sub-Committee led by Gopinath Bordoloi was investigating the future political set-up for the hills after the independence of the country, a delegation awaited to it. The delegation wanted the preservation of tribal interests, their rights to follow their own cultures and traditions. They demanded abolition of forced labour and beggary and total prohibition on the right of non tribals to purchase lands in the district. Only the bonafide tribals of the hills should be permitted to participate in the political life of the district. There were many other demands and a large part of them were included in the Sixth Schedule provisions.

The Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in certain Hill Districts (except Naga Hills now Nagaland) of the then composite state of Assam were first introduced in 1952 and in 1953 Regional Councils (now District Councils) were introduced in the then Lushai Hills District (now Mizoram) as per the Sixth Schedule. The Autonomous District Councils have been functioning in their respective autonomous districts for more than fifty years. Many of these Autonomous District Councils have passed from time to time a number of laws, regulations, acts, etc., dealing with and affecting the people of their respective areas in diverse ways – relating to the issues like land, forest, primary school education, planning processes, markets, trade development activities. Some Acts have direct effects on the traditional institutions like chiefs, tribal councils, etc.

Many changes have taken place since 1952 in the sixth schedule areas in matters of land, forest and traditional councils. The functions and workings of these constitutional institutions have been studied from time to time by the scholars of the region. A number of criticisms have been leveled against the working and effective functioning of these District Councils. The relevance of the

Autonomous District Council has been questioned from time to time especially after the creation of full fledged states where District Councils are in existence. Lyngdoh (1997 : 188) states that the sixth schedule in Meghalaya has failed to satisfy the political, social and economic aspirations of the people. As far back as 1949, Syed Mahamad Saadulla said, 'the regulation of the Khasi States under the Sixth Schedule was a constitutional anomaly.' Although this needs a constitutional interpretation, it may be mentioned here that on 15th August, 1947, India and Pakistan got their Independence vide the Indian Independence Act passed by the British Parliament. The Constituent Assembly was constituted in 1946, but till 26th January, 1950, there was no Constitution of India. The administration was run according to the Government of India Act 1935 with certain amendments. Through Act No. 1 Government of India (Amendment) Act 1949, two sections were included, Section 290-A and Section 290-B. According to the Section-A, the surrounding Indian States can be merged with the Province. Under Section-B, the surrounding British India can be merged with the Indian State. The Khasi States were not merged with the Indian Province under Section 290-A as they did not sign the Instrument of Merger. The Khasi-Jaintia Hills District which was British India was not merged with the Khasi States under Section 290-B. Thus the Khasi States were merged with the surrounding Province of Assam without signing the Instrument of Merger, and this paved the way for the inclusion of the Khasi States under the Autonomous District, named as the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District. The Khasi States were put within Assam by an Act of State, namely the promulgation of the Constitution of India as appeared in the First Schedule to the Constitution of India. Today, the Khasi people need a detailed study of proper impartial assessment and review of the district council so that the aim, purposes and objects of the Sixth Schedule can serve the interest and aspiration of the people. The people may be able to look up with confidence and pride to the District Council as real guardian of all round development of the tribals in the Khasi Hills.

Baruah (1997:141) states that the Karbi Anglong District Council was constituted to promote friendship and cooperation among the hill people and the plains people. But in practice, it has been acting as an agent for the growth of ethnic assertions among different sections of the hill people. Although economic and development factors have played the prime roles in the secession of the hill districts from Assam leading to the formation of the separate states of Nagaland,

Mizoram and Meghalaya, political and administrative factors engineered through the Sixth Schedule cannot be ruled out.

Exactly what has happened in Karbi Anglong is that the tussle between the State Government and the District Council made the Karbis feel that the Sixth Schedule is not adequate enough to fulfil their socio-economic and socio-political aspirations. The Karbis are consistently complaining that the Government of Assam by its various acts and amendments had reduced the District Council's autonomy to such a state that the latter has no other option but to raise the demand for an autonomous state as provided under the Article 244(A) of the Constitution. High-handedness of the State Government in the exercise of autonomy of the District Council is borne out by the fact that it dissolves the council if it apprehends of not getting its loyalty.

The chief areas of discord between the District Council of Karbi Anglong and the Government of Assam centres round the provisions relating to the executive functions of the District Council, its dissolution, matters relating to Planning and Budget, nomination of members, relationship of the District Council with the Governor, and above all the overwhelming exercise of power, the alleged sinister design of the State Government to 'frustrate the process of devolution of powers in real terms' to the District Council.

Examining the role of the Autonomous District Council from other angle, it is noted that it was an institutional innovation of effecting decentralization of power at the district level covering under its general framework the problems and issues down to the village as developed under the Constitution of India. However, soon after creation and setting up of Autonomous District Councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of North-east India, they have been persistently meted out to them by different State Governments in the matters of provision of grants, according to the approval of the Legislative Proposals of the Autonomous District Councils. Before the re-organization of the undivided State of Assam such gr̄evances were directed against that State. The situation is not so different today even after the re-organization of Assam which gave way to the formation of full-fledged States like Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. In Meghalaya, today, a tug of war is still continuing between the State Government and the Autonomous District Councils of the Sixth Schedule. The Autonomous District Councils in Meghalaya,

Mizoram, Tripura, the hill districts of Assam (Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills) are unhappy and dissatisfied with the decisions of their respective State Governments.

The Autonomous District Councils were created in the hill areas of North-east India in response to the demands of the tribal people for the development of the areas, preservation of their ethnic identity and their rights over land, natural resources, customary laws, traditions, etc. They were conceived to ensure the right of self-rule of the tribal people, to manage their affairs according to their own genius, to enable them to preserve their ethnic identity and to face the forces of assimilation from their more advanced neighbours in the plains.

Whatever achievements have been made by the Autonomous District Councils were the tribal people's emotional attachment in asserting their rights over self-rule by their own representatives. The Autonomous District Council is the basic model for asserting the rights of the tribal people on their land and natural resources which are so dear and near to their hearts.

The Sixth Schedule has conferred new developmental functions on the Autonomous District Councils, there is an enabling clause whereby the State Governments can entrust such functions with them. In the event of the re-organization of States in North-east in 1971, there was sort of understanding at the political level as a result of which a number of developmental functions were conferred on the Autonomous District Councils. Lacking in statutory support, the Autonomous District Councils had to depend on the changing political relations with the State leadership. The developmental activities of the Autonomous District Councils, therefore, depend very much on the political party or parties that run the state administration. The state administration may create a number of hurdles to jeopardize the developmental programmes of the tribal people in the Sixth Schedule areas.

The modern political system that came about in the post-Independence period in the Karbi hills did not go against the spirit of the Karbi traditional system. It speeded up the tempo of politicization among the Karbis. The Karbi Anglong District Council, a very vital organ of the modern political norm, ushered in a

new era in the political behaviour of the people. It began to provide people with new political ideology and political professionalism. It also began to provide incentive to the people to go for national sphere of political life.

Before the British rule in North-east India, the Karbis lived in a sovereign State. The people did not have any taste of subordination and the people did not feel any autonomy. During the British period the Karbis more or less had virtually the same experience of sovereignty as the British did not have any effective interference in the tribal life-ways. In post-Independence period, the Karbis became a part of the sovereign State of India. As a subordinate nationality for the Karbis now there appears a sense for autonomy. And that was offered under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. This provision of autonomy has helped the Karbis to continue the tradition and old practices side by side with the new developmental activities in land, natural resources, customary laws and in other spheres of day-to-day life of the people.

It is observed that the modern democratic system in Karbi land has opened up a new vista for modern maiden leadership to stage a debut in the modern political set-up. The new system under the headmanship of Khorsing Terang in early fifties could arouse the political aspirations of the Karbis. He was instrumental in bringing about a total mobilization of the people and socio-economic development in the Karbi land. Political aspirations grew among the Karbis and it resulted in the formation of the district of their own in early fifties, the very living symbol of the political aspirations in the backward tract of the Karbis.

To sum up, it can be said that the Sixth Schedule could provide the tribal people in North-east India some kind of socio-political and socio-economic developmental benefit. It is for the tribal people who ultimately determine whether the purpose for which the District Councils were formed under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India the laws, amendments and acts are to be made which could serve the tribal people as well as the State Governments without overlapping or conflict of jurisdiction and power equation.

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Development of the tribes in a tribal model

Dilip Kumar Kalita

Before discussing the problems and prospects of tribal development in North-east India, let us examine what is a tribe and what is development. Though we often speak of all round development, economic development has acquired almost a synonymous status with the term development. Development according to the popular definition advanced by one of the popular encyclopedias is "fostering the progress of living standards and economic activity in a nation or local area, often by means of construction or more intensive use of land." But we cannot ignore the aspect of social development in the context of the tribes of the North-eastern region. Sociological theories consider development as a change from a lower state of social order to a higher state, it being assumed that the model of the higher state is the harmony present in nature. At the same time, we have to be very careful to maintain the tradition of the tribal people devoid of which they will not remain tribal in the real sense of the term. Of course, they will not cease to enjoy the constitutional safeguards granted for the tribal people.

Though the concept of a tribe is well defined by the policy formulators of our country, let us try to find out some basic notions prevalent worldwide about the concept of a tribe. The Encarta encyclopedia, which has become very popular along with the expansion of computer literacy, has recorded Tribe as a "group of people sharing customs, language, and territory such as the Apache people of North America. Anthropologists stress the importance of kinship in tribes. Usually a tribe has a leader, a religion teaching that all its people are descended from a common ancestor, and a common language and culture. A tribe is often small in size, is fairly limited in its contacts with other societies, and is correspondingly ethnocentric in its view of the world. Experts disagree about the relative importance of linguistic, political, and geographical boundaries for defining tribal groups. Whatever definition of tribe is chosen, however, exceptions

to it abound. The most important criteria for a tribe continue to be linguistic and cultural resemblances.

The word tribe has long been used by both anthropologists and laypersons, but recently it has come under attack as a derogatory term implying an inferior way of life. Moreover, its use is inconsistent ; it is not, for instance, applied to modern European groups that meet the criteria of the definition. The designations people or ethnic group are generally preferred today."

The encyclopedia Britannica, on the other hand, has the entry on tribe in the following words, "In cultural anthropology, theoretical type of human social organization based on small groups defined by traditions of common descent and having temporary or permanent political integration above the family level and a shared language, culture, and ideology. In the ideal model of a tribe, members typically share a tribal name and a contiguous territory; they work together in such joint endeavours as trade, agriculture, house construction, warfare, and ceremonial activities. Tribes are usually composed of a number of smaller local communities (e.g., bands, villages, or neighbourhoods) and may be aggregated into higher-order clusters, called nations.

As an ideal type, the tribe is regarded by cultural evolutionists as the form of social organization that developed into a stratified society and, eventually, into the type of social organization known as the primitive state. As an ideal type, the tribe derives its unity not from a territorial identity but from a sense of extended kinship.

Few ethnographically known tribes possess all the characteristics of the ideal, or model, tribe. The Amba of Uganda are considered to be one tribe although they speak two mutually unintelligible languages ; the Zuni "tribe" consists of only one community ; the Dorobo of Kenya live scattered among the Nandi and Masai, for whom they hunt and perform ritual services.

As an anthropological term, the word tribe fell out of favour in the latter part of the 20th century. Some anthropologists rejected the term itself, on the grounds that it could not be precisely defined. Others objected to the negative connotations

the word acquired in the colonial context. African scholars, in particular, felt that the term was pejorative as well as inaccurate. Thus, many modern anthropologists replaced it with the designation ethnic group, usually defined as a group of people with a common ancestry and language, a shared cultural and historical tradition, and an identifiable territory. The use of the term ethnic group is particularly appropriate in the discussion of modernizing countries, where a person's extended kinship ties may be less important than his village or region of origin in establishing his identity and claim to landownership."

Both the encyclopedias are authoritative in their own way. One thing they have commonly observed is that the term "tribe" has fallen out of favour among academics around the world. But peculiarly enough the term tribe has acquired more acceptance day by day in the Indian context. Ethnic groups are trying to be designated as tribes even today. In their efforts to get branded as tribes people have resorted to various movements throughout post independent era.

In this paper it is not intended to estimate the justifications for calling a certain ethnic group a tribe or not but to look into the problems and prospects of tribal development from a realistic point of view. The Constitution of India provided for certain measures for uplift of the tribal people who were regarded to be backward and downtrodden. After sixty years of Independence, another ethnic group raises the demand for being declared to be a tribe. This is apparently not a very serious issue in a country of hundred odd crore population and a few thousands of languages. But the implication deserves great attention. We have to look into the whole issue of not only tribal development but development in general anew. Development in a country like India, which is regarded to be an epitome of the world, cannot be thought of in a corner or a group of people. The development of people as a whole has suffered a serious setback for which people are still below poverty line though the gross national income has increased tremendously. The per capita income also has shown a considerable increase. But the distribution of wealth has not been equitable, for which the rich have become richer, the poor poorer. The same is the case with tribal development also. The benefits of various constitutional safeguards have not reached the poorest of the poor among the tribal people also.

Therefore the immediate necessity seems to be the empowerment of the poorest of the poor among the tribal people. And the tool for empowerment is

definitely regarded to be education. But will that help in all round tribal development. Dwelling upon the theory of development Nagendra (1994 : 21) wrote, "Having been brainwashed for over a century and a half to believe that we had so far belonged to a bad society which we must now discard, we started destroying one by one all our traditional institutions, almost with a vengeance, soon after becoming independent. And alongside of this process of detraditionalisation, went also modernization : legitimization of the colonial institutions and autocolonisation of our own institutions."

Haimendorf also observed that, "the vulnerability of tribal populations to exploitation by minor government officials, as well as moneylenders, landlords, and other agents of vested interests, can largely be traced to their illiteracy and general ignorance of the world outside the narrow confinements of their traditional environment."

We have replaced our good old systems with western models and have never examined the viability of the traditional institutions. One such institution was the bachelors' dormitory. Bachelors' dormitory was a common institution among almost all the tribes of the North-east. The Karbis call it *Terang*. The *Terang* was a part of greater institution called the *Jirkedam*. The *Jirkedam* was the association of the village youths, which was run by a twenty-six-member committee. The roles of each of the members were categorically defined. The village youths slept together in the *Terang* and they not only carried out cultivation of the fields on a cooperative basis but also learned many of the basic requirements for their future lives. Two of the members used to collect the midday meal packed in leaves from the houses of the members and used to carry them to the field. The agricultural produce was kept in a common granary and every household used to get their share from it. Apart from cultivating the fields the youths learned various handicrafts like bamboo and cane works, fishing, hunting, etc. The youths thus got prepared for their future as responsible members of the society.

The Tiwas call their bachelors' dormitory *Samadi* or *Chhamadi*. The Dimasas call it *Nodrang*. Among the Garos it is called *Nokpante* while the Misings call it *Morung*. The Assamese term for such dormitories is

Dekachang. Of course, this institution is not to be found among the plains tribes of Assam such as the Bodos and the Rabhas. The potentiality of this institution of the tribal people was never examined by the policy makers of the country. This institution was not only an educational institution but also an infallible cooperative society, which survived for centuries, and even now, it is existent in some societies. Instead the English system of education which is a colonial legacy has been uniformly imposed all over the country ignoring age-old systems of education like the *Gurukul* system and the various tribal institutions. This has a hegemonic effect on all the earlier institutions. Though it is not advisable to be revivalistic in such matters yet one cannot but be nostalgic at times to think that these systems of yore would have served better purpose of not only educating the tribals as well as other communities but also would have been in the line of Gandhiji's concept of basic education.

The agencies involved in research on the tribal people have a great role to play in bringing in development of the tribes. The ethos of the tribes should be fully understood in order to find out a model of development as well as a path conducive for a kind of development, which will be able to keep the identity of the tribes intact and they will not have to feel that they had to pay the price of development with their identity. The government will have to pay heed to the findings of the researchers and make extensive use of the models as well as the path of development, so that the colourful variety of our people is preserved. Only then we don't have to lament every other day that one of our languages or one of our cultures has become extinct from the world.

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Tribal development in North-east : empowerment through information and communication

Abhijit Bora

Development

Development, in the simplest form is 'positive change'. Now let us consider a few facts in this regard. We all know that India, more so the North-east is a land of so many ethnic groups - large, medium and small.

Today, we can witness a twofold distinct movement all over the world. On one side there has been a distinct movement towards integration of smaller nations into a bigger, stronger national identity with the scope for becoming an economic superpower. On the other side, there is a clamouring among the smaller nations which were earlier part of bigger national identity to establish themselves as nation states in the world. And incidentally, we can find adequate examples of both these developments in the continent of Europe itself.

In the same way, development of educational and other forms of modernization, most of the tribal and ethnic populations or groups all over the world are starting to crave for projecting their individual identities. There is nothing unusual or odd in it.

Individual identity of ethnic / tribal communities

Now, to project their own self what are the problems they usually encounter in the practical world, I personally believe that illiteracy, isolation - both geographical and social - from the society or the modern world, problems in preservation of own culture, non documentation of their traditional culture and heritage are among the most important problems crippling their development. And stemming from this last factor, there is also the danger of foreign agencies coming and collecting these knowledge base and then patenting them to their advantage.

Today, it is the age of 'information and communication'. Information is power. Let me cite a few very crude and basic examples. When the colonial powers including the British settled in Kolkata and Mumbai first, the local community became familiar with them and had at least some amount of interaction with them. And that is why, as those people acquired an advantageous position by getting to know many new things from a comparatively-developed nation, those places were developed far better than us. Even now, only when we acquired information we become 'empowered' which means nothing but making ourselves logical thinkers and looking for the better things in life.

Development of human resources

Today, all over the world, the buzz word is that much above industrial or economic development, it is the development of 'empowered human beings' which can actually bring in development to the society in the true sense of the term. And to make this actually happen, information and communication is one of the most important tools. That is because if we can properly communicate and inform a person about positive things in life he or she would be able to live a better life.

Of course, this information must not only be stale or straightforward ones. It has to be communicated in such a way that the person actually processes the information and applies and utilizes it to his or her advantage.

The question is how to achieve this. We know that by the Government of India's statistics about 60% of the country's population is actually literate, i.e. people who can just sign their names, nothing else. So proper literate people must be in the range of about 30 – 40 %. So we can't put much faith upon formal education which had failed to keep pace with the growing population of the nation. More so for the interior places and regions like the North-east where even today, some places are not linked by motorable roads and it takes two-three days to reach and in some others the only link is through air routes.

Media of development

Here we believe that a different form of mass media can play the saviour in a befitting manner. A different form because popular mass media will not serve the specific purpose here. This is because we all know that barring a few ethnic or tribal communities the population of most of these communities is

quite small. This renders commercial media broadcasting or publishing an unviable option for the bigger mass media establishments.

What we urgently need here is small-calibre community media which also includes Community FM Radio centres. Now let us see what this specific system can achieve for the community.

First of all, it is a mass media for the community, by the community and of the community. The members of the community through a panel of representatives actually run this system. And thus they have exclusive control over the media content which can't be said of the larger organizations depending upon big gun advertisers.

Secondly, in this age of economic liberalization major nations of the world often indulge in the form of 'information warfare'. By this method they try to overwhelm the cultural attitudes of the other nations by powerful and round-the-clock beaming of their culture through mass media. The USA comfortably leads others in this direction. Also, the lion's share of the media contents in modern bigger corporations are of such nature which are hardly of any developmental or positive value to anyone in general. So if we have a community media in our control we would be able to counter this to a big extent and empower our community members with useful information to help them lead a better life.

One major crisis in our societies stems from the ignorance about own culture, heritage and identity. So if we can utilize this media for this purpose will it not lead to a better understanding of ourselves and thereby help us indirectly in establishing us in the world platform.

Modern bigger mass media corporations are basically interested in enlarging their audience base for business interests which hardly allows them to devote adequate time for philanthropic or socially-beneficial broadcasting or publications.

These media including Community FM are not very expensive. A small-calibre Community FM can be set up just in about 8 – 10 lakhs of rupees. For the communities living in difficult terrains like the North-east this is a very ideal medium which can easily solve the problem of geographical barriers.

For practical examples in this connection, we don't have to go far. Nepal has a very effective and vibrant Community Radio system which has been

revolutionizing the life of the people living in remote and poorer parts of this Himalayan kingdom.

Similarly, Phillipines which also has a strife-torn history and is not that developed, can boast of a nice network of Community Radio-based development programme which has been bringing adequate positive results for the community.

Even though there would be some cultural and other differences in adopting their strategies, yet we can take lessons from them in this regard.

Further, having such a media will also help very much in documenting and formally preserving the various heritage and cultural practices of the tribal and ethnic groups for future usage. This will also help in making them popular by broadcasting or publishing them through a series of bigger mass media corporations or a network of these smaller media set ups.

I personally believe that this aspect should be given a top priority because very often we are being flooded with news reports about a big threat to these heritage processes from foreign agencies trying to patent them. The problem is heightened by a lack of proper support for adequate preservation of them through scientific means. Of course, some efforts are being made by a few agencies on their own including the Chennai-based Folklore Research Support Centre. But on a large scale I don't think anything much has been done. At least I am not aware of though I am not actually authorized to comment on this aspect.

For example, except some Bihu song dance sequences in VCDs / DVDs do we find proper documentation and preservation of dance forms, grammar, styles, etc., about it by authorities or people concerned. I believe same is the case with heritage and folklore traditions of various tribal and ethnic communities of the region. When these are broadcast and published in mass media they will remain documented for future and such an audio-visual document will help us showcase it to the world community and deliberate on the newer developments in future.

Due to various factors most of the tribal and ethnic communities of the region are making a big hue and cry for political solution for the ills plaguing them. They believe that having an autonomous administration, a separate state or council, land will bring them the much coveted 'empowerment' and development in a matter of time. At least the leaders of those communities try to impress upon the members about this.

But personally, we strongly feel that for proper development the first priority must be given to an adequate 'empowerment' of the human resources of the tribal communities so that intellectual development can bring in an all-round balanced improvement in the living standard of these people. In a way, this is true not only for the tribal or ethnic populace of the region, but also for all others.

Media as an informal open university

And in creating this awareness and empowering the people, the role of mass media is a must as this is an 'informal open university' that enjoys reach of even the remotest corners of the country and delivers the goods in a desired manner. With smaller mass media control in our hands, this information dissemination exercise can be controlled to the extent we would like it to be. Therein lies the importance of the exercise.

We have mentioned earlier that the population or numerical strength of a majority of the tribal communities is hardly enough to support a conventional bigger set up mass media agency. And due to the costs, it might not be feasible for one individual community to set up one such media. In such a case, several communities living nearby can share their airtime or resources and pool in programmes to be beamed to their target audiences in a network.

And for those communities having their people in sufficient numbers at more than one location across the state or the region, a sort of a relay-like transmission can be taken up in understanding with such set ups by other communities.

In an ideal situation, I envision a vibrant network of such community media set ups crisscrossing the region and sharing of good programmes with a common interest.

This will also achieve a much better cohesion at two levels. First, among the members of an individual community to be followed by such a fraternizing spirit among the various ethnic / tribal groups of the state. And then the region in due course of time. This will also contribute towards a better diplomatic relationship among the communities over a period of time.

In addition to these, the community members will also be exposed to the outside world that will develop their understanding about various things in life.

The IEC strategy

After all, the 'in thing' and the 'buzz word' is empowerment through 'information and education and communication (IEC)'. Once these aspects are taken care of an all-round development will follow automatically. This emancipation will not come through political segregation irrespective of how much political power a new state or community is allowed to enjoy through creation of a state or an autonomous district council. In our six decades of Independence we have realized this deeply that this is not the only way for striving for development of a society or community as a whole.

The most important question is how to achieve this goal of 'empowerment' through information. Of course, while endeavouring to do this, every effort must be put to make the individual members of the society 'a thinking person' who can receive, accept, analyze these information. And then utilize them to his or her own advantage, at the same time not harming other citizens' interests. The trick is to change their mentality and attitude towards this mode from the one largely prevailing at present which is not receptive to new ideas as well as too programmed in one sense of direction and becoming mute spectators to everything happening around us.

At a time while the government and the society are directing all of their energy towards formal education, ground realities have demonstrated that an equal emphasis upon fold of 'informal education' is also highly long overdue by now. This is because for circumstances mentioned at the outset and due to poverty, a majority of the population – whether tribal or others alike – in rural and remote places of the country are still left out of the 'formal education'. And, if this discrepancy is to be remedied we must utilize the informal and alternative forms of communication also. In this regard, several new initiatives and developments are coming up from the government as well as other sectors.

For example, a special scheme to be implemented by the Department of Information Technology (DIT) under the Union Ministry of Communication & Information Technology proposes to set up 1,00,000 information centres for rendering various services of the government and the private sector available to the people. This will minimize the need to visit government offices for any and every work.

These centres or Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-enabled access points would be known as Common Service Centres (CSCs) which would endeavour to extend a whole range of high-quality and cost-effective services relating to video, voice and data content through a single communication channel using appropriate terminal equipment. This opens up an immense potential for facilitating e-government, entertainment, education, telemedicine, e-commerce, info-services, etc., to remotest corners of the country. In a way, it is an extension of the much-talked about and ambitious 'e-service' project for delivering services which can be used for educating the people through information sharing.

Fight against dominant culture

These systems and services also need to be utilized for fighting against the aggression of dominant culture of the dominant communities and groups over smaller and remote ethnic and tribal communities.

The same thing is being done at the national and international levels also where even a single nation or several nations have formed consortiums for fighting against culturally aggressive designs of the First World countries from time to time.

Public service information

Of course, in the present scenario of fast-developing economic liberalization in the country today, the government seems to be interested in withdrawing from providing all essential services to the masses. For example – Public Service Broadcasting (PSB). In the words of Dr Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant Director General of UNESCO's Communication & Information Division, "A PSB is one of the most important and powerful instruments for promoting citizens' democratic participation".

Though it is definitely difficult to define what a PSB is, in simple terms it is that sort of broadcasting, mainly with Radio which does not emphasize more upon entertainment. But it focuses on providing information useful for the public along with encouraging participation of the audience in its programmes. Its control is usually neither with the government nor with any specific organization. It is supposed to treat its target audiences as 'partners in progress' rather than 'consumers'.

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While All India Radio (AIR) is a good example of a PSB, yet in the recent past few years it also seems to be neglected with an ever-increasing emphasis upon generating their own revenues. This is putting a major strain on the programmes of public utility of its contents. This is an important cause of concern as specially AIR airs programmes in 21 languages and 146 dialects covering all sorts of developmental issues including environmental preservation, women and children's health, adult literacy, agriculture in addition to its normal duties of news and entertainment. Even in case of popularizing our cultural heritage, right from classical to modern, its role has been quite commendable.

Yet, in the absence of any other such an effective medium AIR must be revitalized for the PSB purpose.

Conclusion

So we see that in the absence of effective governmental or state support the tribal and ethnic communities will have to take care of themselves in their own innovative manners. And being a man from mass communication, I personally strongly believe and reiterate here again that the secret of success in their development is 'emancipation and empowerment through information' dissemination through formal and informal means, more so for the latter.

Perspectives on tribal development in North-east India with special reference to the Rabhas

Malina Devi Rabha and M. Gopal Singha

Introduction

The word tribal is not easy to define. Till today, no entirely satisfactory definition of a "tribe" has been given by social scientists or anthropologists. However, the definition formulated by Dr. D.N Majumdar is found to be acceptable one. According to him, "a tribe is a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations" (Dube, 1977), such as (i) their roots in the soil dates back to a very early period ; (ii) they live in relative isolation of the hill and forests ; their sense of history is shallow in the sense that after some generations, the remembered history tends to shade off into mythology ; (iv) they have a low level of techno-economic development ; (v) in terms of their cultural ethos (language, institution, beliefs and customs) they stand out from the other section of the society and (vi) even if they are not egalitarian, they are atleast non-hierarchic and undifferentiated. These characteristics are only the rough indicators and may not be considered in rigidity. Neither all the tribes are original inhabitants of the soil nor all of them live in isolation. Moreover, there are many tribes, which are divided into wide ranging numbers of endogamous sub-divisions which have the characteristics like that of castes. On the basis of some of these characteristics, the government of India has specified 427 communities and has included them in the scheduled list of tribes. These tribes are known as Scheduled Tribes and are entitled to special protection and privileges under the Constitution of India (Chand and Puri, 1983).

So far the term 'tribe' is concerned, anthropologists have different opinions. Some of the anthropologists have rejected the term itself on the

ground that the term has not been precisely defined. The modern anthropologists replaced the term with the designation 'ethnic group', which is usually defined as a group of people with common ancestry and language, shared cultural and historical tradition and identifiable territory (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

The scheduled tribe population constituted a substantial proportion of India's total population. According to 1991 census the total scheduled tribe population was 6.78 crores which constitutes 8.08 per cent of the country's total population. Some of the tribal groups are numerically high among them. Mention may be made of the Gonds, the Bhills, the Santhals, the Minas, the Mindas, the Oraons, the Khonds and the Kols, etc. Besides, a large number of smaller tribes and sub-tribes also represent the ST population in India. The Great Andamanese, for example, is the smallest tribal community with a numerical strength of 18 in 1971 and 23 in 1976. The tribals are concentrated mainly in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and West Bengal. In North-east India tribal population is concentrated in almost all the states with high percentages to the states such as Mizoram (94.75%), Nagaland (87.70%), Meghalaya (85.53%), Arunachal Pradesh (67.66%), Manipur (34.41%), Tripura (30.95%) and Assam (12.82%) (Census of India, 1991). The major tribal groups and sub-groups in Mizoram are the Lushais, Hmars, Pawis, Raltes, Khawhring Khiangle, Ruthlei, Paithe or Vuite, Thado, Chawnte, Zengte, Lakhers and the Chakmas, etc. All these clans initially had their distinct ethnic characteristics and differences in respect of their original abode, dialect and way of living, but now, they have by and large formed their common identity as the Mizos. Nagaland is the abode of the Nagas, one of the earliest inhabitants of North-east India. The Nagas are divided into more than twenty major tribes and sub-tribes and clans with their own distinct languages or dialects and cultural heritages. The well-known among them are the Angamis, the Kanyaks, the Zeliangs, the Rengmas, the Aos, the Semas, the Kukis. Besides, Chakhesang, Sangtam, Chang, Latha, Phom, Yimchunger, Khemnungam, etc., are the tribes having their own dialects. Meghalaya is the homeland of three most ancient hill tribes of India, namely the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos. Besides these, a number of indigenous sub-groups like the Koches, the Hajongs, the Rabhas, the Dalus, the Mons, the Banais, etc., are concentrated in Meghalaya especially in Garo Hills. Arunachal Pradesh has about twenty major tribes which can be divided into

a number of sub-tribes. The principal tribes are—Adi, Nishi, Apatani, Tagin, Mishmi, Khampti, Nocte, Wancho, Tangsha, Singpho, Monpa, Sherdukpen and Aka. Manipur has 32 recognised tribes. In Tripura, 19 hill tribes are inhabiting in four districts.

In Assam the scheduled tribe population forms an important demographic component. There are 23 tribes and a number of sub-tribes of Mongoloid stock. Some of the tribes settled in the hilly parts which form the Hill Tribes. The Barmans (in Cachar), Dimasa, Deori, Chakma, Garo, Hajong, Hmar, Hojai, Sonowal Kachari, Khasi and Jaintia, Kuki, Lakher, Lalung (Tiwa), Man (Tai speaking), Mech, Mikir (Karbi), Miri, Mizo (Lushai), Naga, Pawi, Rabha, Synteng and Boro-Boro-Kachari are the scheduled tribes of Assam. These tribes are sporadically inhabiting in various parts of Assam according to their ethnic adjustability to the environment.

Tribal development is a constitutional obligation. The tribals of India have been brought under two schedules of Indian Constitution such as Fifth and Sixth Schedules. The tribals of India mainland have been covered under Fifth Schedule, while the tribals of North-eastern region come under Sixth Schedule especially the hill tribes. So far many states having tribal majority are under self-governance apart from having separate administrative structure at regional, district, and village levels. Mizoram, for example, has eight districts and 681 village councils. There are three Autonomous District Councils. In Assam, the Autonomous Hill Districts of North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong are administered as per provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. Nagaland is sometimes described as a conglomeration of 'Village Republics'.

The crux of the problems of the tribal people is that of poverty, problem of low level of living, hunger, starvation, malnutrition, illiteracy, poor sanitation, poor housing, etc. Tribals continue to be subjected to exploitation as they are reluctant to move out from their immediate environment. Besides, tribals are also subjected to exploitation by the forest contractors, traders, landlords, money lenders, politicians, etc. Development of tribals and tribal inhabited areas is an arduous task as the tribals occupy wide spectrum of diversities of geographical location, rugged terrain and inaccessible remote areas.

The Rabhas are a distinct tribal community of greater Mongoloid ethnic group of Assam. The early settlement of this tribe was said to be found in different historic time in Yangtsekiang and Howangho valley and Myanmar, although in due course of time they used to settle in North-east India, particularly in Assam. Since then, this ethnic group has been inhabiting in Assam, Meghalaya, Coach-Bihar and Jalpaiguri districts in West Bengal. Like other tribal groups and sub-groups of North-east India the Rabhas, since the historic time have been trying to develop their socio-cultural and economic personality. The socio-cultural and economic structure of the Rabhas is basically based on agrarian economy. A large proportion of households of this tribe are exclusively based on agriculture as main subsistence. But the possession of land for different uses is an important aspect in the sphere of economic development of the tribal community like the Rabhas. Lack of cultivable land causes a major problem of development. Besides, one of the important factors contributing to poverty is alienation of land. As a result about 58.0 per cent of them are below poverty line.

The Rabhas are also having their distinct language, literature and culture. But despite having rich language foundation, it has not been able to use its own language, literature in extensive scale as medium of instruction. The language has been introduced as a subject language only in 70 Primary Schools of Rabha inhabited areas way back in 1988, yet it has to make much headway. In the sphere of educational development and literacy, the community is lagging behind time. The literacy rate and educational development, which are the important indicators for measuring the socio-cultural and economic development are below the desired level. The poor infrastructure and educational facilities in the Rabha inhabited areas and also other socio-cultural and economic factors may be attributed to this low level of development.

Apart from the socio-cultural and economic problems the Rabha community is beset with many social evils and taboos, which have far reaching detrimental effects in the overall socio-cultural and economic pace of development. Such social evils and taboos among others mention may be made of excessive use of alcohols, practice of witch-craft (*Daini*), etc.

The society of Rabha community has to remain in backward state of affair due to lack of political safeguard, negligence towards the community, lack of belongingness to the community, exploitation over the years, lack of consciousness among the people and also the host of other reasons.

In the view of the Rabha developmental aspect, it is high time for the people of the community in general, social organizations including the students' organization and the government in particular to embark upon ways and means for the uplift of the community.

Conclusion

Keeping all these problems of tribal development, the government of India initiated special welfare schemes for the development of tribal areas under four headings - (i) Communications, (ii) Education and culture, (iii) Development of tribal economy, and (iv) Health, housing and water supply. In order to carry out all these welfare programmes Tribal Development Blocks, Tribal Sub-plans, etc., have been formulated. These plans are supposed to bring forth development by improving the quality of life of the tribal people.

The basic concern of tribal development is how to ensure the command over resources which the tribal people had enjoyed in the beginning when these areas were opened up for the first time is not disrupted. It is a matter of grave concern that the increasing trend towards appropriation of land and forest where it has been traditionally owned by tribal community have resulted in depriving a large section of tribals from their original roots and lands.

It is pertinent to point out that there is need to protect the rights of the tribal people over their ancestral land, prevent further exploitation by others and bring about overall development of these protected areas.

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Female literacy in tribal society of Assam and communication gap

Anamika Ray and Ankuran Dutta

No country can progress if half of the population is left with residuary functions and subsidiary status in work participation. It is sheer wastage of human resources. Subordinate status for women with low level literacy, skills and income earning capabilities is a base in society that seriously hampers economic growth and overall progress of mankind. Still worse, when bulk of their activities go unrecognized and underestimated in the man's world. Denial of equal participation, access and control of productive resources had placed women as unequal partners in developmental process. Despite enactments of several socio-economic legislations and the Indian Constitution declaring gender equality, the patriarchal values and normative structure established some two thousand years ago hinder women's emancipations and empowerment. Although the problems are well recognized and better appreciated, it takes about three and a half decades of Independence to design policies and programmes that placed women as active partners in developmental activities from the 'dependent beneficiary status'. The progress, no doubt, grossly inadequate, yet has shown impact of women involvement in decision-making process and occupying prominent positions in different forms like Legislature, *Panchayati Raj* and educational institutions. Welfare of women living in rural areas, slums and tribal areas, women (divorced/separated and migrant), physically and mentally handicapped women, widows and destitutes constitute the hardcore of the problem. This paper is an attempt to highlight female literacy in tribal society of Assam. The emphasis has been given here on the communication gap which is one of the main causal factors for the same.

The Indian Constitution allots particular status to the scheduled tribes (STs). The scheduled tribes constitute about 8% of the Indian population. There are 573 scheduled tribes existing in different parts of the country having their own languages different from the one mostly spoken in the state where they live. There are more than 270 such languages in India. Lacking opportunities for educational, social and economic growth, they could not integrate with rest of

the society. The scheduled tribe people are also referred to as *Adivasis* (India Education Report, 2002).

Tribals are not homogeneous groups. Scheduled tribes can be considered as people who assert them as native to the soil and believe in common ancestry. They generally dwell in jungle and mountainous province and having strong group bonding. Fundamentally following a survival level financial system they have regard for traditional religious and cultural practices.

India is the second densely inhabited country in the world with 6.77 crore of tribal people. Most of them are poor, uneducated and dwell in unreachable jungle and mountainous areas. They pause at the back in all spheres of life in contrast with the mainstream. The Government of India launches various development schemes for the endorsement of education and benefit. Literacy is the key for socio-economic development of any section or region. Despite of all the attempt the tempo of literacy has not been enhanced. Tribal women case is very vulnerable.

Assam is merged with mount and plain. A list of tribes of Assam has been mentioned below :

In the Autonomous Districts

1. Chakma
2. Dimasa Kachari
3. Garo
4. Hmar
5. Khasi, Jaintia, Synteng, Pnar, War, Bhoi, Lyngngam
6. Any Kuki tribes including
 - (i) Biate, Biete
 - (ii) Changsan
 - (iii) Chongloi
 - (iv) Doungel
 - (v) Gamalhou
 - (vi) Gangte
 - (vii) Guite
 - (viii) Hanneng

- (ix) Haokip, Haupt
 - (x) Haolai
 - (xi) Hengna
 - (xii) Hongsung
 - (xiii) Hrangkhwal, Rangkhoh
 - (xiv) Jongbe
 - (xv) Khawchung
 - (xvi) Khawathlang, Khothalong
 - (xvii) Khelma
 - (xviii) Kholhou
 - (xix) Kipgen
 - (xx) Kuki
 - (xxi) Lengthang
 - (xxii) Lhangum
 - (xxiii) Lhoujem
 - (xxiv) Lhouvun
 - (xxv) Lupheng
 - (xxvi) Mangjel
 - (xxvii) Misao
 - (xxviii) Riang
 - (xxix) Sairhem
 - (xxx) Selnam
 - (xxxi) Singson
 - (xxxii) Sithou
 - (xxxiii) Sukte
 - (xxxiv) Thado
 - (xxxv) Thangngeu
 - (xxxvi) Uibuh
 - (xxxvii) Vaiphei
7. Hajong
 8. Lakher
 9. Man (Tai speaking)
 10. Any Mizo (Lushai) tribes
 11. Mikir
 12. Any Naga tribes

13. Pawi

14. Syntheng

In the rest of Assam excluding the autonomous districts

1. Barmans in Cachar
2. Bodo
3. Deori
4. Hojai
5. Sonowal
6. Lalung
7. Mech
8. Mishing
9. Rabha

An analysis on literacy

Tribal communities of India exhibit a profile of racial diversity. Belonging to diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious groups they differ in terms of rites, rituals, devotion, attitude and financial detection. Most of the tribal people live in remote terrain. The livelihood is closely associated with their milieu. A few of them are nomadic. India perhaps has the largest tribal population in the world.

It may be noted at the outset that, prior to the 1991 census, the Indian census was excluding only children aged 0-4 years in counting the literate population. The literacy rates were computed by taking the total population in the denominator. On the eve of the 1991 census it was decided that all children in the 0-6 age group will be treated as illiterate by definition and literacy rates would be computed for population aged 7 years and above. In comparison to such (net) literacy rates, those computed by taking the total population in the denominator are called "crude literacy rates". And it is not possible to work out net literacy rates right from 1901 onward.

Table 1. Basic literacy rates by sex, India, 1901-2001

Census year	Crude literacy rates			Decadal change (in percentage points)		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
1901	5.4	9.8	0.6	—	—	—
1911	5.9	10.6	1.0	0.5	0.8	0.4
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8	1.3	1.6	0.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9	2.3	3.4	1.1
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3	6.6	9.3	4.4
1951	16.7	25.0	7.9	0.6	0.1	0.6
1961	24.0	34.4	13.0	7.3	9.4	5.1
1971	29.4	39.4	18.7	5.4	5.0	5.7
1981	36.2	45.9	24.8	6.8	6.5	6.1
1991	42.8	52.7	32.2	6.6	7.8	7.4
2001	55.3	64.1	45.8	12.5	11.4	13.6

Source : Selected Educational Statistics 1999-2000

ST literacy

The literacy rate for ST has gone up from 8.5% (male – 13.8%, female – 3.2%) in 1961 to 29.6% (male – 40.6%, female – 18.2%) in 1991 and to 40% (male – 59%, female – 37%) in 1999-2000.

Table 2. Literacy rates – ST vs. All Castes (in %)

Year	Scheduled Tribes			All Castes		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	13.8	3.2	8.5	34.4	12.9	24.0
1971	17.6	4.9	11.3	39.4	18.7	29.4
1981	24.5	8.0	16.4	56.5	29.9	43.7
1991	40.7	18.2	29.6	64.1	39.3	52.2
*1999-00	59.0	37.0	49.0	73.0	51.0	62.0
2001	NA	NA	NA	75.9	54.2	65.4

Source : Selected Educational Statistics 1999-2000

Table 3. Literacy rate of SCs, STs compared to the other categories

Particulars	SC	ST	Other than SC/ST	Co-efficient of Equality	
Male	49.9	40.7	69.5	71.8	58.5
Female	23.8	18.2	44.8	53.0	40.6
Total	37.4	29.6	57.7	64.9	51.3

Source : Selected Educational Statistics 1999-2000

Literacy is still very low among tribes in comparison to other segments of population. In 1991, less than one-third of the tribal population above 6 years of age was literate of total population and 37.4 per cent of scheduled castes population. Male-female difference in literacy is very extensive. Only 18.2 per cent of tribal females were literate as against 40.7 per cent of males. The tribal literacy varies greatly from state to state. It is more than 40% in Kerala and in North-eastern states of Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. Low level of literacy is a major obstruction in progress of the community.

Table 4. Assam scenario

Population		Decadal Growth 1991 – 2001	
Persons	26,638,407	Persons	(+) 18.85%
Males	13,787,799	Males	(+) 18.27%
Females	12,850,608	Females	(+) 19.47%
Sex ratio	932		
Population (0 – 6 years)		% of population (0 – 6) to total population	
Persons	4,350,248	Persons	16.33%
Males	2,215,104	Males	16.07%
Females	2,135,144	Females	16.62%
Sex ratio	964 (0 – 6 years)		
Number of literates		% of literates of total population	
Persons	14,327,540	Persons	64.28%
Males	8,324,077	Males	71.93%
Females	6,003,463	Females	56.03%

Source : Provisional population totals : India. Census of India 2001, paper 1 of 2001) Education for all India_com2.htm

The total population of Assam as at 0:00 hours of 1st March, 2001 stood at 26,638,407 as per the provisional results of the Census of India, 2001. As against decadal growth rate of 21.34% at the national level, the population of the State has grown by 18.85% over the period 1991-2001. The sex ratio of Assam at 932 females to 1000 males has increased from 923 during 1991 census. Similarly, the literacy rate has increased to 64.28% from 52.89% in 1991.

Table 5. Population : size & distribution (Districtwise ST population)

Sl. No.	State/district	% of STs to total population of the state/district	% of STs to total state's ST population
1	Assam	12.4	100
2	Kokrajhar	33.7	92
3	Dhubri	2.0	1.0
4	Goalpara	16.0	40
5	Bongaigaon	12.2	33
6	Barpeta	7.5	3.7
7	Kamrup	9.9	7.6
8	Nalbari	17.6	6.1
9	Darrang	16.6	7.6
10	Marigaon	15.6	3.6
11	Nagaon	3.9	2.7
12	Sonitpur	11.6	5.9
13	Lakhimpur	23.5	6.3
14	Dhemaji	47.3	8.2
15	Tinsukia	5.8	2.0
16	Dibrugarh	7.5	2.7
17	Sivasagar	3.9	1.3
18	Jorhat	12.3	3.7
19	Golaghat	9.9	2.8
20	Karbi Anglong	55.7	13.7
21	North Cachar Hills	68.3	3.9
22	Cachar	1.3	0.6
23	Karimganj	0.3	0.1
24	Hailakandi	0.2	0.0

Source : Census of India 2001, R.G.Office, Govt. of India
(www.censusindia.net)

The ST population in Assam is mainly rural with 95.3 per cent rural and only 4.7 per cent urban population. Of the eight major STs, Dimasa have recorded the highest 10.4 per cent urban population, followed by Karbi (8.3 per cent). On the other hand, Miri (Mishing) have recorded the lowest 1.8 per cent urban population. North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong, the two autonomous hill districts of Assam are predominantly tribal housing two important STs of Assam – the Dimasa and Mikir (now recognized as Karbi). As per 2001 census, the North Cachar Hills has got the highest 68.3 per cent ST population, followed by Karbi Anglong (55.7 per cent). In absolute number Karbi Anglong is on top sharing 13.7 per cent of the total ST population of the state. Hailakandi, Karimganj, and Cachar districts have a negligible presence of ST population.

Assam ST literacy scenario

It is well known that literacy is important for just about every aspect of development and the environment is no exception. For instance, women's literacy reduces fertility rates and thereby reduces population pressures. Literacy is essential to reducing poverty as it provides people more opportunities to earn as well as increase their productivity and ability to earn. It also allows people to become more receptive towards alternative technologies and environmental management. People's ability to manage environmental resources like water, soil, and forests improves with literacy. All in all, literacy helps reduce pollution as the added awareness allows people to link the health of the environment with their own health and well-being. In Assam, literacy rates are growing steadily but the tribal literacy is still far from adequate.

The ST population of Assam has recorded 62.5 per cent literacy rate, which is well above the national average for STs (47.1 per cent). The male and female literacy rates of 72.3 per cent and 52.4 per cent respectively show that women are lagging behind by 19.9 percentage points. Kachari (Sonowal) with 81.4 per cent literacy rate are well ahead of others. On the other hand, it is low among Mikir, i.e. Karbi (53.7 per cent). Among Kachari (Sonowal), the female literacy rate of 74.4 per cent is quite close to male (88.2 per cent). Gender gap in literacy among Miri (Mishing), however, has been recorded to be the highest. With 71.4 per cent male and 48.3 per cent female literacy, the Miri (Mishing) women are lagging way behind by as much as 23.1 per cent points.

Table 6. Literacy rate among major STs in Assam

Name of the scheduled tribe	Literacy rate (7 years and above)		
	Total	Male	Female
All scheduled tribes	62.5	72.3	52.4
Dimasa	59.6	69.4	49.3
Mikir	53.7	64.1	43.0
Boro	61.3	71.4	51.1
Deori	76.2	84.8	67.5
Kachari (Sonowal)	81.4	88.2	74.4
Lalung	61.8	72.0	51.6
Miri	60.1	71.4	48.3
Rabha	66.7	76.2	57.0

Source : Census of India 2001, Office of the Registrar General, India

A two-third (65.4 per cent) of the ST population in the age group 5-14 years has been attending schools or any other educational institutions. Of the eight major STs, it is the highest among Kachari (Sonowal) with 80.2 per cent of their population of this age group attending educational institutions. In addition Deori (79.8 per cent), Rabha (70.2 per cent), and Boro (68.2 per cent) have also registered this proportion above state average for STs, while Mikir, i.e. Karbi have registered below the state average (54.9 per cent). Almost half of the Mikir (Karbi) population in the age group of 5-14 years – the category of potential students – has not been attending schools.

Literates among STs who are having educational level graduation and above are 2.3 per cent only. Deori is well ahead, among the eight major STs in Assam, with 4.9 per cent graduate and above. Karbi, Rabha, and Lalung are at the bottom, each having less than two per cent of their literate population with educational level graduation and above.

Communication gap and low level of tribal female literacy in Assam

Communication is the function of life and it is inextricably linked with it. As a function it is rooted in human survival. It is also unthinkable that any human movement can be planned or demeanor without communication. It is, therefore, said that communication begins with life and ends only when life ceases to exist. In other words, it is coterminous with life.

Man cannot be concerned unless the entire procedure of progress is conversed to him as a satisfactory & acceptable objective. Communicator is back bone of

the process of development. Communicator, thus, becomes a key factor in the process. To a communicator, development appears to centre around four 'M's : 1. Money, 2. Men, 3. Means and 4. Method. All objectives of change are to build man exist as human being, with better food, clothing, shelter, health and education. This cannot be achieved without the man's involvement.

Literacy is unanimously acknowledged as the most influential and prevailing contrivance of societal transformation and its stage is certainly one of the most significant pointers of communal, cultural and health development of a state. Tribal literacy is vital for the progress of tribal society because it has a close connection with the survival and endurance. Tribal population in India has high levels of morbidity taking place because of poor diet, coupled with high infant, child and maternal mortality.

The common tribal people living in the remote inside areas of the state, actually, have no clear commencement as to the benefits that might be derived in future by having the girls education. After marriage earning from an educated girl does not anyhow assist the concerned family. Therefore, to expend money for girl's schooling has no importance at all. Because of such pre imagined thoughts, the tribal guardians do not normally like to send their girls for education. Rather than going to school, it is more essential to be taught spin yarn and housework to become perfect in marriage market. In reality, a tribal woman does not have any spare time since leaving her cot early in the morning and till going to bed at night. She has to keep herself full of activity in performing not only the interior household works, but also outdoor works whole day. It is compulsory to cook food, clean garments, weave cloth, bring water from the adjacent source, gather logs and eatables from the close by jungle, go for harvesting, etc. In the hill terrain of Assam the women generally leave for *jhum* (shifting cultivation) early in the morning and return home in the evening. A teenager of school-going age has to take care of her mother and other elderly women in the family unit along her younger brothers and sisters, as well as by helping the women of the family in the performance of day-to-day household works. Under such circumstances the girls of the family even from their younger age have to take care of entire household.

There is a big educational problem in primary and nursery stages only because of the failure of communication system. When the children (tribal) go to school first, they only know the tribal language. In the school they cannot communicate with other students and teachers also. For ignorance of the teachers, they become the backbenchers. After someday they do not want to go to school. This type of communication gap is creating a major problem for their future and causing the high level of school dropouts.

Another factor that stands in the way of women's education in Assam is the absence of girls' hostels in the school level. The question of educating larger number of tribal girls depends on several factors like school timings, adjustment of summer vacation timings to the busy agricultural season, necessary implements for imparting training, environment for proper education, required recreational facilities for girl students, trained teachers, facilities for imparting education to the tribal girls through their mother tongues at the primary stages, girls' hostels, etc.

So far as the spread of literacy amongst the tribal women is concerned, much cannot be expected from the adult literacy centres located in the tribal areas. The tribal women remain busy throughout the whole day and as such, they could hardly make any time to go to the adult literacy centres to learn. Moreover, male teachers mostly manage these centres. The elderly women find it rather embarrassing to learn their lessons from the male teachers who are generally younger than them because of social inhibition.

Assam has an acute terrorism problem. Teachers are the important communicators in the society. But they could not do anything. They want to stay only in the city for this problem. The insurgent groups are also important communicators who are helping to create communication distance between the tribal people and the mainstream. In anthropological point of view it is called sub nationalism, which is the way now to keep the demand of a particular group in front of Government. Teachers have the great responsibility to give the primary knowledge to the students. But survey reveals that most of the primary, nursery, *anganwadi* schools are closed (especially in many tribal belts though there are the exceptions) because of the absence of the teachers. The reason for absence is the appointment of teacher from the outside of the locality. The *bandh* culture is also one of the causal factors there.

On the other hand, the tribal families are still following the old traditional methods. It is not very easy for those children to get rid of the problems. Sometimes the teachers are less interested to disseminate the information about the sanitation, health and hygiene programme, mother's nutrition during pregnancy periods, child nutrition, pulse polio, family planning, etc. They think the tribal people will not come out from the traditional point of view. The tribal community has lived for generation as images of their forefathers. The air of change has never blown their way. Their daily life is based on superstition, ignorance, and narrow vision, tradition as well. Most of them spend their lives within a stagnant radius. Like other part of our country the tribes are still suffering

from many diverse problems. Obviously one of the major aspects is health with weak medical system. Different kinds of NGOs are working there but they are not effective for many reasons. The whole system seems to be well conducted but the big hole is clearly seen.

Politicians are one of the influential communicators of the society. In spite of the great deal of powers the autonomous councils (in many tribal dominated areas) have failed almost on all fronts. The dreams and aspirations of the people remain unfulfilled. The government often launches ambitious plans and programmes but the favour does not reach to the needy people because of the unwillingness of some politicians. People's ignorance, poverty, less enthusiasm in the participation of district development are the reflection of the lack of responsibility of those politicians. Being important communicators, they are helping to create the communication gap in the society. People's welfare is secondary to them. The tribal clan is usually very vulnerable section. The tribal exploitation and restraint have cut them off from the mainstream and the term development still is the far cry.

Suggestions

The tribal female education is lagging behind and is needed to be recognized at first. In the far-flung pockets the level of women's literacy is very weak. That is why first identification of the problem is necessary. On the other hand, appointment of qualified local trained female teachers will surely improve the situation. The guardians will like to send them to schools when they come to know that there are female teachers in the schools where the girls could express their thoughts and ideas freely. Textbooks in mother tongue for children at the beginning of the primary education cycle, when they do not understand the regional language is very essential step. Suitably adapt the curriculum and make available locally relevant teaching learning materials for tribal students. Then again the help of National Council of Educational Research and Training and the constituted State Council of Educational Research and Training will be needed to prepare study material in tribal languages. The summer vacation should be matched with the farming time so that the day-to-day works in cultivation will not be hampered. Adult education centres for tribal women should be started separately and only local educated tribal female teachers should manage these. These centres should function only during the slack agricultural season. This will ensure confidence among the tribal women and also ensure regular attendance.

Supply of textbooks, uniforms and midday meals in the primary schools although has made some headway in the schools located in tribal areas of

Assam, all schools as well as all tribal students are yet to be covered. More coverage will surely help to further advancement of the level of literacy among the tribal girls because of the fact that such amenities serve as incentives.

However, much depends on the motivation of the guardians, and parents of the girls. Unless they are motivated through proper and appropriate campaigns, no amount of extraneous effort will improve the situations. The State Education Department and the Tribal Welfare Department, should make a joint venture in this regard. The voluntary organizations and the various tribal youth associations should also be involved so that it becomes their own affairs.

Setting up schools, education guarantee centres and alternative schools in tribal habitations for non-enrolled and dropout children, special training for non tribal teachers to work in tribal areas, including knowledge of tribal dialect and special support to teachers as per need can improve the female education scenario of tribal community.

Conclusion

Education, in the present-day context, is perhaps the single most significant way for individuals to progress personal endowment, build capability levels, conquer restraints and in the process, enlarge their available set of opportunities and choices for a sustained improvement in well-being. It boosts human capital, productivity and the recompense to labour. It is even essential for allowing the development of gaining, absorption and communication of information and knowledge. It is a serious enveloping instrument for conveying about social, economic and political inclusion and a tough assimilation of people, particularly those 'excluded' from the mainstream of any society. The process of education and achievement has an impact on all facets of life. At the same time it will be correct to say that women education is undoubtedly a basic component of human development. Improvements in female educational attainments have invariably been accompanied by improvement in health and longevity of the population and in their economic well-being. Educated people are likely to be more productive. They are also likely to contribute more to a country's economic growth. Simultaneously women education reinforces the socio-economic dynamics of a society towards equality in attainments and opportunities for its people. Women education is the best social investment. It is also a priority for countries seeking to develop and sustain their level and pace of development.

While considering the socio-economic development of the tribes in Assam, it is observed that comprehensive area education studies are lacking and it has

not covered various dimensions related to education. Therefore, special efforts should be made to advise a better literacy rate among the tribal population. Education, source of mental pabulum, plays a key role in providing individuals with knowledge, skill and competencies to enable them to participate more efficiently in productive activities. Increasing female literacy can be considered a sovereign remedy for all social and economic problems.

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Karbi traditional method of cultivation

N.N. Sarma

The hill zone of Assam is composed of two hill districts, viz, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. The zone is characterized by undulating topography. North Cachar Hills are characterized by high hills and with steep slope, whereas Karbi Anglong is dominantly having low hills with gentle slope. Shifting cultivation (*jhuming*) is an age-old practice popularly adopted by the hill tribes of Assam and is confined to the hill zone of Assam.

In the zone, an area of 70,000 hectares is brought under shifting cultivation annually involving 58,000 farming families (Das, 2001). About 70% of population of the region depends on shifting cultivation which is locally known as *jhuming*. It is a typical slash and burn method of land clearing of hill slope for cultivation of mixed crops for a consecutive three years before abandoning the land for a period ranging from 3 to 7 years. Shifting cultivation is not practised uniformly in the region. It differs from hill to hill and even tribes adopted differently. The important crops included in the shifting cultivation are rice (*Oryza sativa* L.), maize (*Zea mays* L), sesame (*Sesamum indicum* L.), cotton (*Gossypium arboreum* L.), tapioca (*Manihot esculenta* Crantz), ginger (*Zingiber officinale* L.), turmeric (*Curcuma longa* Linn.), arum (*Colocasia esculenta* Schott.), cucurbits, etc. Crops are sown mixed after receipt of rain in the month of April/ May and cultivation is restricted to rainy season (*kharif*). Shifting cultivation is confined to a cycle of 2-3 years, thereafter, the land is abandoned. The longer the time of return to any part, the better it is for total regeneration and total fertility of land. In earlier days long term *jhum* cycle of 20-30 years was followed but presently due to increased population pressure, the cycle has been reduced to 3-6 years.

Jhum is a natural farming system. It uses no chemical fertilizer and no pesticides, and therefore, there is little danger from chemical hazards. Everything

is organically produced food and so is mostly healthy. Shifting cultivation thus may also be termed as organic farming system. The system is unique in its own way.

Characteristics of shifting cultivation

1. Selection of hill slopes for cultivation
2. Cutting and burning of vegetation (slash and burn)
3. Rotation of field rather than crops
4. Keeping the land fallow for a number of years for regeneration of forest
5. Use of human labour as chief input
6. Non employment of draught animal
7. Use of simple and traditional implements like dibble sticks, scrappers, etc.

Shifting cultivation is not practised uniformly. It differs from hill to hill and even among tribes adopting it. Important crops included in the *jhum* are rice, maize, sesame, cotton, tapioca, ginger, turmeric, arum, cucurbits, beans, etc. As many as 57 different crops ranging from cereals to leafy vegetables can be included in a single *jhum* field (Keitzar, 2001). The crops are sown mixed after receipt of rains in the month of April / May and cultivation is restricted to rainy season only.

Important features of *jhuming* in North-east India

- i. Land is owned by the community but each family cultivates their own field after selecting the same jointly with the help of headman.
- ii. Fire is employed to clear the cut and dried debris. *Jhuming* is not done without burning.
- iii. Soil is not cultivated.
- iv. Community approach in certain broad operation - jungle clearance, burning vegetation, protection from animals
- v. Yield goes down rapidly hence field is abandoned after two to three years.

- vi. Field remains with *jhumia* as long as he continues to use it (Goswami, 1994).

Present annual area under shifting cultivation, fallow period, minimum area under shifting cultivation at one time or other and number of families practising shifting cultivation in North-east India are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Annual area under shifting cultivation, fallow period, minimum area under shifting cultivation and number of families practising shifting cultivation in North-east India

Sl. No.	State	Annual area under shifting cultivation (000 ha)	Fallow period (years)	Number of families practising shifting cultivation
1	Arunachal Pradesh	70	3-10	54000
2	Assam	69.6	2-10	58000
3	Manipur	90	4-7	70000
4	Meghalaya	53	5-7	52290
5	Mizoram	63	3-4	50000
6	Nagaland	19	5-8	116046
7	Tripura	22.3	5-9	43000
8	Sikkim	-	-	3000
	Total	386.9	-	446336

Source : Das, 2001

The table shows that the annual area under shifting cultivation is highest in Manipur and lowest in Nagaland. Fallow period varies from 2-10 years. The minimum area under shifting cultivation at one time or other is maximum in Manipur and minimum in Tripura.

Problems of shifting cultivation

The shifting cultivation in the present context has become not only unproductive but also hazardous to the environment. It leads fast to ecological disequilibria by depleting forest cover, encouraging chances of soil erosion to

cause removal of top soils, exposure of rocks, heavy silt load in the streams and rivers, drying of perennial water sources, loss of plant nutrients, loss of forestry resources, loss of flora of human and animal importance. Moreover, it has numerous damaging effects on soil and climate ultimately affecting the crop production and economy of the hill people.

Table 2 clearly indicates the extent of soil erosion associated with different stages of shifting cultivation (Ram and Singh, 1994).

Table 2. Effect of *jhuming* on soil erosion and nutrient loss

Farming practice	Soil/ nutrient loss (t / ha / year)
<i>Jhuming</i> : 1 year (35-40%) slope	147.00
2 year (35-40%) slope	170.00
Abandoned <i>jhum</i> (35-40%) slope	30.02
Plantation along the slope: 1 year	25.63
Bamboo forest	8.00
Bench terrace	3.30-7.70
Mixed natural forest	0.55
Loss of organic carbon	6.00
Loss of available P	7.90
Loss of available K	56.90

Source : ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Shillong, 1994.

Cultivation in the hill slope encourages soil erosion and run-off. To overcome these problems Sarma *et al.* (1995) evaluated rice (direct seeded Summer) – greengram (*Kharij*) sequence raised in between contour grass hedges, viz, Kazangula grass (*Setaria sphacelata*), guinea grass (*Penicum maximum*) and citronella (*Cymbopogon winterianus*) found to increase production with minimum run-off and soil erosion and available nutrients in 25% hill slope. The use of guinea grass as contour hedge not only recorded the highest rice equivalent yield but also showed lowest run-off and soil erosion.

Table 3. Yield of rice, greengram and grasses, run-off, soil loss and soil characteristics as affected by the different treatments (Average of years, i.e. 1990 – 1993)

Treatment	Yield (kg/ha)				Run-off (m ³ /ha/year)	Soil erosion (t/ha/year)	Organic matter (%)	Available nutrient (kg/ha)		
	Rice	Green gram	Grass	REV*				N	P	K
Natural vegetation	-	-	-	-	646	0.74	1.50	153	10	302
Without grass	669	520	-	2618	1765	16.55	1.27	153	15	123
Guinea grass	331	267	34600	7388	1037	2.84	1.43	298	21	202
Citronella grass	337	370	16600	5915	1091	4.08	1.30	262	15	160
Setaria grass	405	227	19200	4618	1276	6.08	1.30	189	15	140

Price (Rs/q) : Rice, 200 ; Greengram, 750 ; Guinea grass, 35 ; Setaria, 35 and Citronella, 50.

Effort to control shifting cultivation

Since shifting cultivation is detrimental process, Government of Assam has taken up some projects to combat shifting cultivation and divert *jhumias* to settled cultivation. Such projects are : a) Integrated *Jhumia* Development Project, b) Compact Area Development Project, c) Mini Compact Area Programme, d) Wasteland Development Project for shifting cultivation area, e) Integrated Wasteland Development project. These were launched and implemented by the Autonomous District Councils for both the districts.

In spite of all these efforts and facilities available none have attracted the *jhumias* to keep away from shifting cultivation. The *jhumias* are practising *jhuming* with variation in *jhum* cycle till today and would continue in future also if an acceptable attractive technology is not provided.

Motivating the *jhumias* to settled cultivation is very hard job as they do not give up easily this age-old practice. However, efforts are to be made to develop improved technology in place of shifting cultivation which should be identical to *jhuming* with better utilization and management of *jhum* land to minimize the possible damages.

Regional Agricultural Research Station, Diphu has already conducted some experiments relevant to hill agriculture with special reference to shifting cultivation. Efforts are being made to find out improved practices identical to *jhuming*, but more productive and less injurious to soil and environment. Based on experimental results (1996-97 to 1999-2000) a *jhum* model has been developed for *jhum* land up to 25% hill slope, the technologies included in the *jhum* model are : i) Replacing traditional varieties by improved varieties, ii) Use of manures and fertilizers to maintain soil fertility, iii) Inclusion of perennial horticultural crops along with field crops to encourage settled cultivation, iv) Placing various crops in scientific manner for better production and land utilization, v) Mixed sowing of field crops as practised in the traditional shifting cultivation, vi) Inclusion of perennial grass in the form of hedge across the slope to minimize the loss of soils and water in the hill slope. The important technologies included in the *jhum* model are :

1. Grow two rows of pineapple across the slope at 60 cm x 30 cm spacing.
2. Raise one line guinea grass (*Panicum maximum*) at 10 cm apart across the slope.
3. Maintain a spacing of 1m between 2nd line of pineapple and grass strip to accommodate orange/arecanut and turmeric/ginger.
4. Grow mandarin orange/arecanut at 5m/2.75m spacing in line.
5. Grow one row ginger/turmeric in the interspaces along the line of orange/arecanut.
6. Grass strip is followed by a strip of rice, sesame and maize where rice & sesame are raised mixed broadcast and maize is dibbled in the same strip.
7. The width of the field crop should be 6-7 metres on 20-25% slope.
8. The same pattern of growing is to be repeated along entire slope.
9. The grasses are to be cut at 10 cm above ground level at 60 days and subsequently after 45 days from the first cut.
10. All horticultural crops are to be fertilized as per package of practices.
11. Field crops are to be fertilized at common fertility level of 40:20:20 N:P₂O₅:K₂O kg/ha.
12. Broadcast greengram/blackgram after harvest of rice, sesame and maize.

The highest rice equivalent yield (4322.6 q/ha) was recorded in T1 (Across the slope planting of 2 rows of pineapple followed by 1 row of guinea grass. In between guinea grass and 2nd line of pineapple, 1 row of turmeric is accommodated. Along the turmeric line mandarin orange is planted. Guinea

grass strip is followed by strip of field crops where rice, maize and sesame are sown in line across the slope), as against traditional *jhum* yield of 1500.7 q/ha (the yield of areca nut/mandarin was not included). The results also revealed that the model II has developed natural terrace across the slope along the grass line (Sarma *et al.* 2003).

Table 4. Rice-equivalent yield, cost of cultivation, Net return, benefit:cost ratio and residual characteristics as affected by improved cultivation method and traditional shifting cultivation, Model II (average of 4 years)

	Rice-equivalent yield (kg/ha)	Cost of cultivation (Rs/ha)	Net return (Rs/ha)	Benefit:cost ratio	Residual soil characteristics				
					PH (1:2.5)	EC (dS/m)	Organic matter (%)	Available nutrient (kg/ha)	
								P	K
T1	4322.6	8343	12255	2.47	5.49	0.060	0.50	15	207
T2	4259.8	8343	11822	2.42	6.07	0.062	0.55	18	206
T3	4033.0	8343	10725	2.29	5.78	0.056	0.76	10	216
T4	3847.8	8343	9716	2.16	6.01	0.088	0.65	21	198
T5	1500.7	7244	-223	0.97	6.00	0.083	0.71	6	180
Initial					6.11	0.254	1.16	26	357

The price of commodities for calculating REV (Rs/q): rice 400.00, maize 550.00, sesame 1600.00, cotton 1000.00, arum 250.00, ginger 600.00, turmeric 300.00, greengram 1800.00, cucumber 300.00, grass 35.00, pineapple 350.00

***Treatments :** T1 = Across the slope planting of 2 rows of pineapple followed by 1 row of guinea grass. In between guinea grass and 2nd line of pineapple, 1 row of turmeric is accommodated. Along the turmeric line mandarin orange is planted. Guinea grass strip is followed by strip of field crops where rice, maize and sesame are sown in line across the slope.

T2 = As in T1 but rice and sesame are mixed broadcast whereas maize is dibbled.

T3 = As in T1 but two rows of grasses are accommodated by replacing one row of rice.

T4 = As in T2, but two rows of grasses are accommodated.

T5 = Traditional *jhum*, where mixed crops are sown by broadcast and dibbling without any strip crop.

Sustainability of *jhum* cultivation depends on duration of forest fallow following 2 years of cultivation. Forest fallow allows natural regeneration of soil fertility. Longer the period of forest fallow, greater the chance of regeneration of soil. Forest fallow is, therefore, very important part of *jhuming*/shifting cultivation. Since population pressure has led to shortening of forest fallow period all throughout the North-eastern hill region, there is thus need to adopt low input technology to quicken the process of regeneration of *jhum* land. Agricultural scientists of Nagaland led by Dr. Supong Keitzar (2005) had evolved some innovative technique for fast restoration of soil health of abandoned *jhum* land. These are based on introduction of some leguminous tree/crop, green manuring and erosion control measure in *jhum* field with physical and Live barrier as detailed below:

Alder *jhum* system

In the Angami dominated Khonoma village of Nagaland, tribal farmers had evolved an indigenous technique for fast regeneration of *jhum* land by cultivating leguminous tree named Alder (*Alnus nepalensis*) in fallow *jhum* land. In this practice soil restoration is quite fast. Alder tree has facilitated the farmers to intensification of *jhuming* to 2 years cropping and 2 years fallow cycle against prevailing 2 years cropping and 5 to 7 years fallow cycle. The Alder tree adds high biomass in addition to high nitrogen fixation. The advantage of Alder system is confirmed by the data presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Crop yield under normal *jhuming* and Alder *jhuming* system

Crop	Alder system (q/ha)	Normal <i>jhum</i> (q/ha)
Rice	18.0	16.2
Maize	16.8	14.4
Potato	200	120

Cultivation of leguminous crops

Cultivation of annual leguminous crops such as Velvet bean, Rice bean, etc., were found enrich soil in the *jhum* land. These dense foliage crops are grown mainly to:

- i) Cover and protect the soil
- ii) Fix nitrogen
- iii) Stimulate soil micro-organism
- iv) Add bio-mass to soils and improve soil fertility
- v) Improve soil structure
- vi) Maintain soil temperature and conserve micro-organism and earthworm

It was found that by introduction of these leguminous crops in the *jhum* land the cropping period can be extended from 2 years to 4 years as observed in Nagaland.

Conclusion

Improved *jhum* model developed by Regional Agricultural Research Station, Diphu is found suitable to *jhum* land up to 25% hill slope and is applicable to areas with annual rainfall of 1000 to 1200 mm. The model is comprised of important technologies leading to increased productivity and production through scientific managements of soil and water conservation and maintenance of soil fertility in the *jhum* land.

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Land alienation and the tribal condition in Assam with special reference to the Bodos

Luke Daimary

Land problem among the tribals is a burning problem and it has been identified as one of the important causes for the tribal unrest in many parts of India including Assam. Tribals by profession are agriculturist and depend their livelihood on agriculture but for agriculture land has gone scarce. According to a survey conducted by All Bodo Students Union 70% of them have become practically landless¹. Their lives have become miserable. It may be noted that since the last part of the 19th century they have been facing the problem of land alienation in alarming magnitude. Large-scale migration from the erstwhile East Bengal later East Pakistan now Bangladesh, Nepal as well as from the mainland of the country and their settlement in the tribal areas has adversely affected the economy of the tribals. This large-scale migration of the outsiders not only changed the demography of the region but also dislocated the socio-economic and political scenario of the tribal areas. Besides, the non tribal traders, businessmen and money lenders have grabbed a large area of land belonging to the tribals exploiting their honesty and simplicity. This alarming land situation in Assam was foreseen by the colonialist government and the leaders of Assam. Mr. Lloyd, in the Census Report of 1921 described the immigration of the outsiders to Assam in this manner, "In 1911, few cultivators from Eastern Bengal had gone to Goalpara... In the last decade (1911-21) the movement had extended far up the valley and the colonialists now form an appreciable element in population of all the four lower and central districts... In Goalpara nearly 20% of the population is made up of these settlers. The next favourite district is Nowgong where they form about 14% of the whole population. In Kamrup, wastelands are being taken up rapidly, especially in the Barpeta sub-division. In Darrang exploration and settlement by the colonialists are in an earlier stage. They have not yet penetrated far from the banks of the Brahmaputra... Almost every train and steamer brings parties of these settlers, and it seems likely that their march will extend further up the Brahmaputra valley and away from the river before long."²

wasteland were to be divided into blocks and allotted to different communities including immigrants on payment of a premium of Rs. 5/- per *bigha*. This action of the government aggravated the situations since many immigrants were allowed to settle in the areas belonging to the tribals. There was a strong resentment among the public and the ministry of Sadulla collapsed on 25th December, 1941. The administration of Assam then came under the Governor Sir Robert Reid under section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935. He immediately scrapped the "Development Scheme" of Sadulla Ministry by a resolution on 6th March, 1942 in view of the likely clash of interests between the immigrants and the local people and the dangers to the internal life and habits of the indigenous people. He also supported the Line System and directed the District Administrations to check the inflow of the immigrants so that indiscriminate squatting in the province could be prevented. The Governor also observed that the immigrants were unwelcome neighbours. The tribals, of course, did not like any immigrant in their neighbourhood and fearing loss of their culture, religion, society, etc., moved to the mountain areas leaving behind their land to be occupied by the immigrants.

The period was witnessing a terrible political turmoil. It was the time when the Second World War had begun. Japan was advancing against the Allied Forces in the South-east Asia. Governor of Assam at that point of time was Sir Andrew Clow. He approached different political parties to support the war efforts. This gave an opportunity to Md. Sadulla to capitalize the situation to come to power. He personally contributed Rs. 1 Lakh towards the war fund and assured the Britishers in India of whole-hearted cooperation. And accordingly Sadulla was invited to form a ministry in August, 1942. He revoked the section 93 of the government of India Act, 1935 and revived the "Development Scheme" and colonized more areas in the districts of Kamrup and Darrang by opening more lands for the immigrant population. In the name of "grow more food" campaign he encouraged settlements of the immigrants even in the sub-mountain areas inhabited by the tribals. Lord Wavel in his capacity of Viceroy remarked on the actions of the Sadulla Ministry... "the chief political problem is the desire of the Muslim ministers to increase this immigration into the uncultivated government lands under the slogan of 'grow more food', but what they are really after is "Grow more Muslims". The Muslim League dominated Sadulla Ministry's encouragement to Muslim immigration from Eastern Bengal

was kept in cold storage and introduced a development scheme by which all the land policy of the Bordoioi Ministry. The Line System committee's report on 17th November, 1939. His ministry passed a resolution in June, 1940 reversing Md. Sadulla forming a coalition with different political parties came to power

The words of Mr. Lloyd came true. The following table will reveal the startling figures.

Table 1. Immigration to Assam

District	1911	1921	1931
Goalpara	77 (MS - 34)	151 (MS - 78)	170 (MS - 80)
Kamrup	4 (MS - 1)	44 (MS - 30)	134 (MS - 91)
Darrang	7 (MS - 1)	20 (MS - 12)	41 (MS - 30)
Nowgong	4 (MS - 1)	58 (MS - 52)	120 (MS - 108)
Sibsagar	14 (MS - Nil)	14 (MS - Nil)	12 (MS - Nil)
Lakimpur	14 (MS - Nil)	14 (MS - Nil)	19 (MS - 2)

MS = Myensingh

Source: J.N. Das, "Genesis of Tribal Belts & Blocks of Assam" in *Alienation of Tribal Land and Indebtedness* by B.N. Bordoioi, Tribal Research Institute Assam, 1986, p. 28.

They first occupied the *char* areas of the Brahmaputra which were vacant. When the *char* areas were exhausted they began to encroach the government reserves and the land belonging to the tribals. Sometimes the tribal villages were forcibly occupied by the immigrants leading to frictions between the two which created law and order problems.³

Line system

The colonial officers seeing the alarming situation struck a method to prohibit the occupation of the tribal land. This method came to be known as Line System. Under the system villages were divided into three categories, viz, (i) 'Open Village' where the immigrants might settle freely, (ii) 'Closed Villages' where the immigrants could not settle at all and (iii) 'Mixed Villages' where a line was drawn and immigrants could settle only on one side of it. But this system though ideal could not withstand the encroaches. In Barpeta sub-division alone 50 tribal villages were wiped out of existence.⁴

objectively contributed to the expulsion of the local tribal and their lands were passing into the hands of the outsiders...”⁸

The Muslim League Ministry of Sadulla again fell in March, 1945 and again a new coalition government headed by Sadulla came to power on 25th March, 1945. On the formation of a new ministry it adopted a new resolution on 13th July, 1945 the four main objectives of which were (a) Planned settlement of wasteland (b) Recognition of landless immigrants from other provinces who came to Assam before 1st January, 1938 as being equally entitled with landless indigenous persons to wasteland settlement (c) Protection of tribal classes in areas predominantly occupied by them against aggressive elements which are up to endanger the normal economy and social life of village life and (d) Maintenance of grazing and other reserves by evicting encroachers.⁹

Here our main concern is with object (c) which provides protection of tribal classes. A relevant portion of the resolution is reproduced below :

“At the same time as statistics are being compiled of areas cultivable waste, additional information will be collected of all villages in which the percentage of persons of the tribal classes exceeds 50 percent and of the areas in those villages occupied by tribals and others. These villages will be marked on maps, and when the enquiries have been completed, a Tribal Belt or Belts in the sub-mountain areas will be notified. The boundaries being fixed with regard either to easily recognizable geographical features or following the boundaries of *Mauzas*. Within this area, a reservation which will not be less than the areas occupied by the tribal people plus the stipulated reservation for general future expansion will be made for safeguarding the tribals and others at present living there and no future settlement will be made with others... provision will also be made for creation of Tribal Blocks side by side with the blocks of other communities in the Planned Settlement Areas where tribal people have their villages and houses.”¹⁰

Constitution of tribal belts and blocks

The coalition government of Sadulla could not carry out the provision of the resolution as it had to be dissolved for general election in 1946. In the ensuing election the Congress Party won absolute majority and formed its own ministry

with Gopinath Bordoloi as its Chief Minister. The new government immediately began to implement the resolution. It also evicted the encroachers from reserves. The special officer appointed for the purpose went round the areas inhabited by the tribals and backward classes of people and identified the villages having tribal population of 50% and above and prepared a guide map. It was found that the tribal and backward classes of people didn't constitute compact areas. So, in order to keep the proposed belts and blocks many non tribal majority areas had to be included in the tribal belts and blocks. Non tribals who have been settling before the constitution of the tribal belts and blocks would be treated on equal footing with the tribals as far as their future settlement of wasteland and transfer of *patta* land. But from the date of the creation of belts and blocks none other than the tribals could settle within the belts and blocks. On the aforesaid step, legislation was drafted amending the provisions of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886 by adding Chapter-X in 1947. Under the provision of the Chapter-X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation 1886, 35 belts and blocks – 11 belts and 24 blocks were created in Assam till 1964 covering an area of 1,18,25,842 *bighas* or 15,76,778 hectares.¹¹

Implementation

In spite of the efforts on the part of government of Assam, the implementation of the provisions was far from requirement. Illegal transfer of tribal land to ineligible persons through sale, mortgage, lease, etc., encroachment on unsettled government land within the belts and blocks have been continuing unabated. The percentage of landless villagers is on the increase. A total of 1,24,47,355 *bighas* of land was secluded primarily to safeguard the interest of the tribal land. But it is a matter of regret that though at the initial stage, the plains tribals were the majority inhabitants within the belts and blocks but due to the large-scale influx of people from outside and inside the country to Assam and their illegal intrusion into the belts and blocks the indigenous tribals have been reduced to a minority.¹² In the year 1976 the government of Assam constituted a sub-committee with the tribal MLAs of Assam to study the problems of belts and blocks headed by Sri Malchandra Pegu, MLA. On the spot verification the committee submitted a comprehensive report to the government of Assam regarding the land problem in the belts and blocks. But the government of Assam did not do anything to implement the recommendation of the sub-committee. The benchmark survey conducted by the government of Assam in the year 1977-78 also revealed that out of 1,79,395 tribal families, 13,029 households or

7.3% had transferred land to non tribals during the period from 1967 to 1977.¹³ However, to intensify the implementation of the provisions of the Chapter X the government of Assam vide its notification no. RSD. 36/79/84 dtd. 30th July, 1983 created 6 posts of Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) and subsequently 3 more posts of Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) were created with specific duties on land revenue matters in the belts and blocks for the notified classes of persons and posted at the District Headquarters of Guwahati, Goalpara, Tezpur, Nagaon, Dibrugarh, Mangaldoi, Barpeta, North Lakhimpur and Kokrajhar.

The specified duties of the Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) are quoted below :

- Vigilance in respect of total prevention of encroachment in tribal belts and blocks
- Ejectment of all ineligible persons in tribal belts and blocks with a time bound programme and submission of quarterly reports therein
- Restoration of alienated land to the original *patta* holders in tribal belts and blocks
- Total prevention of transfer and alienation of land to ineligible persons
- Restoration of alienated and transferred *patta* land if it was mutated
- Preparation of two lists of genuine landless persons in each of the belts and blocks – one for the protected classes and another for the eligible non-protected classes for consideration of their cases for allotment/settlement of land
- Maintenance of a separate register for flood and erosion affected people in tribal belts and blocks whose *patta* lands have been eroded away.¹⁴

But inspite of the creation of 9 (nine) posts of Additional Deputy Commissioners (Revenue) and 19 (nineteen) posts of Sub-Deputy Commissioners posted one each at Kokrajhar, Goalpara, Dhubri, Gossaigaon, Guwahati, Rangia, Nalbari, Barpeta, Nagaon, Morigaon, Hojai, Tezpur, Mangaldoi, Udalguri, North Lakhimpur, Jonai, Biswanath Chariali, Sadiya and Tinsukia no reduction is seen in the alienation of tribal land. Rather it is becoming more alarming day by day. During the AGP regime the then Revenue Minister Mr. Thaneswar Boro admitted that 2 lakh 13 thousand and 40 *bighas* of land in the tribal belts and blocks are under the illegal occupation of the non tribal encroachers.¹⁵ Due to this tens and thousands of tribal mass have become landless in their own land.

Survey of the villages within and outside tribal belts and blocks

The following table shows the unit of area of land. For our purpose the unit of area used are *kathas* and *bighas* as the terms are prevalent in Assam.

Table 2. Unit of area of land

Unit of Area	Conversion
1 <i>Katha</i>	2880 sq. ft.
1 <i>Bigha</i>	5 <i>Kathas</i> or 14400 sq.ft.
1 Acre	3.08 <i>Bigha</i> or 44352 sq.ft.
1 Hectare	7.56 <i>Bigha</i> or 2.455 Acre or 108900 sq.ft.

Source: Assam Revenue Administration, Government of Assam 1990.

Table 3 shows the details of the land holding positions, extent of land alienation, to whom alienated and their sources of income in the families within the tribal belts and blocks.

Table 3. Land holding positions, extent of land alienation and sources of income

VILLAGE	LAND HOLDING			LAND ALIENATION	TO WHOM			EMPLOYEES	DAILY WAGE INCOME	CULTIVATORS	PETTY BUSINESS
	BIGHAS	KATHAS	NIL (NO LAND)		TRIBAL	NON-TRIBAL	IMMIGRANT				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Bajugaon No.2	9	4	7	32.2K	4	Nil	11	1	13	3	3
Balamguri	6	9	5	29.8K	13	Nil	8	Nil	10	9	Nil
Sahajuri	9	9	2	26	10	Nil	5	Nil	8	12	Nil
Borshijhora	7	7	6	15.1	8	Nil	5	Nil	8	11	Nil
Tulsibil	7	Nil	3	16	Nil	Nil	5	1	4	4	Nil
Ouguri	10	5	5	18	7	Nil	4	1	1	14	2
Hatipota	10	5	5	16	8	Nil	Nil	2	10	7	Nil
Pashim Bilaspur	14	6	Nil	8.25	Nil	Nil	4	Nil	6	14	Nil
Bhabanipur	14	2	4	4	Nil	Nil	2	2	Nil	Nil	Nil

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Amgui	10	7	3	24	2	2	9	Nil	13	7	Nil
Mameka	6	7	7	38	Nil	2	17	Nil	15	14	Nil
Bhogpur	6	7	7	27	10	Nil	6	Nil	20	Nil	Nil
Kaljhar No.2	5	9	6	36	9	11	Nil	Nil	19	Nil	Nil
Barkharua	6	7	7	21	7	8	Nil	Nil	11	9	Nil
Gerun Swibari	9	5	6	41	10	7	Nil	Nil	9	8	Nil
Fasia Joita	6	7	7	23	12	12	Nil	Nil	12	8	Nil
Uhubari	8	6	6	17	Nil	12	Nil	Nil	19	1	Nil
Pukhripur	6	7	7	11	1	3	Nil	2	1	9	Nil
Sanglabari	8	6	6	15	3	5	Nil	2	9	9	2
Niz Mangal Besha	6	9	5	20	4	3	Nil	1	5	15	1
Gelabil Thenglari	6	9	5	34	9	7	Nil	2	7	11	1
Chilabandha	10	5	5	18	9	Nil	Nil	8	3	14	3
Kacharipara	10	5	5	17	6	1	Nil	4	Nil	15	1
Mazgaon	10	5	5	13	6	Nil	Nil	3	Nil	15	2
Moholiapara	5	10	5	17	6	8	Nil	Nil	20	Nil	1
Batabari	7	1	12	68	Nil	2	18	Nil	19	1	Nil
Gerua Lailangpara	5	8	7	36	8	12	Nil	Nil	20	Nil	Nil
Bhuiyakhat	7	7	6	35	2	17	Nil	Nil	20	Nil	Nil
Maduligaon	9	5	6	36	1	18	Nil	Nil	7	12	Nil
Hatibandha	3	3	4	11.3	6	8	Nil	Nil	20	Nil	1
Tezailpara	10	6	4	23	5	7	Nil	Nil	7	12	Nil
Naktipara	4	8	8	28	Nil	10	Nil	Nil	20	Nil	Nil
Butiamani	7	9	4	26	4	3	Nil	Nil	14	5	Nil
Naharbari	7	6	7	25.5	3	11	Nil	Nil	15	4	Nil
Baluk Maripathar	7	7	6	26	3	11	Nil	Nil	17	3	1
Gerekigaon	8	6	6	29	5	13	Nil	Nil	11	7	Nil
Kalapani	10	5	6	34	6	11	Nil	Nil	6	13	1
Derikigaon	10	5	5	25	6	15	Nil	Nil	8	12	Nil
Udalguri	10	5	5	26	1	12	Nil	Nil	7	13	Nil
Bhogpur	10	7	7	36	6	14	Nil	Nil	6	14	Nil
Dalhousi	10	7	3	32.5	6	11	Nil	Nil	15	5	Nil
Tipukhial	9	11	2	27	3	11	Nil	Nil	3	17	Nil

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	... 9	10	11	12
Borimori	7	9	4	27	9	7	Nil	Nil	8	12	Nil
Gulchuk No.2	7	9	4	24.1	5	10	2	Nil	11	9	Nil
Uttar Kulabali	10	8	2	36	Nil	13	Nil	Nil	7	13	Nil
South Kulabali	8	6	7	28	5	11	Nil	Nil	4	16	Nil
Mainapara	6	13	1	23	6	8	Nil	Nil	12	6	Nil
Betbari	12	7	1	24	4	11	Nil	Nil	11	9	Nil
Kodonguri No.1	11	7	2	23	4	11	Nil	Nil	9	11	Nil
Jaraigaon	7	8	5	28	7	8	Nil	Nil	8	12	Nil
Thekeraguri	7	10	3	25	5	9	Nil	Nil	7	13	Nil
Athakpara	6	9	7	35.1	5	13	Nil	Nil	12	8	Nil
Durapara	6	7	7	18	6	11	Nil	Nil	10	10	Nil
Bhehua	7	8	5	20.1	6	8	Nil	Nil	5	15	Nil
TOTAL	430	365	275	1314	271	375	96	29	523	460	22

Table 4 shows the position of the land holding, the extent of alienation, to whom alienated and the sources of income of the Bodo families outside tribal belts and blocks.

Table 4. Land holding positions, extent of land alienation and sources of income of Bodo families

VILLAGE	LAND HOLDING				TO WHOM			EMPLOYEES	DAILY WAGE INCOME	CULTIVATORS	PETTY BUSINESS
	BIGHAS	KATHAS	NIL	LAND ALIENATION	TRIBAL	NON-TRIBAL	IMMIGRANT				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Mechpara	8	6	6	19	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	15	2	Nil
Mallaguri	6	8	6	26	1	7	7	2	15	1	Nil
Kachukata	7	4	4	9.5	Nil	Nil	8	2	15	Nil	Nil
Ujani	10	5	5	18	5	1	Nil	2	11	6	Nil
Engkurguri	10	3	7	13	1	Nil	4	Nil	4	16	Nil
Bhatipara	13	2	5	17	7	Nil	2	5	4	9	Nil
Guriapathar	1	12	7	29	9	3	2	Nil	14	6	Nil
Pirakata No. I	10	6	6	20.5	5	12	Nil	3	15	5	Nil

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Bogaribari	11	3	6	14.5	5	7	Nil	Nil	13	7	Nil
Sengahali	8	7	5	18.5	5	9	2	Nil	10	10	Nil
Amguri	8	8	4	24.5	Nil	6	13	Nil	12	8	Nil
Simaluguri No.2	10	6	4	20.5	4	10	Nil	Nil	9	10	Nil
Bathabari	6	9	5	26.2	1	13	Nil	Nil	6	11	3
Borpukhuri	6	10	4	29.4	10	Nil	Nil	Nil	12	6	1
TOTAL	114	87	74	285.6	54	68	49	15	155	97	4

In the preceding tables in all 54 villages within the tribal belts and blocks and 14 villages outside it are taken as samples to study the cases of land alienations, their present land holdings, sources of income and their economic status. Survey reveals that 1345 families (1070 within the tribal belts and blocks and 275 outside it) were surveyed. In the belts and blocks out of 1070, 430 families possess land from 1-4 *bighas*, 365 families possess less than one *bigha* and 275 families possess no land at all. Percentage wise 40.18% families own land ranging from 1 *bigha* to 4 *bighas*, 34.11% less than one *bigha* and 25.70% with no land at all. The situation in the Bodo pockets outside tribal belts and blocks is no better where out of 275 families surveyed only 114 (41.45%) families own land from 1 *bigha* to 4 *bighas*, 87 (31.63%) families possess land less than one *bigha* and 74 (26.90%) families have neither wetland nor homestead.

In determining the cases of land alienation the size of the land holding has relevance as individuals possess land in small sizes on which they solely depend for their survival. It is the small size land holders who became victims of land alienation as their produce from the small size of land is less and to meet the urgent needs or to meet the food consumptions of the whole year they take recourse to sale of their land, the only alternative for their survival. 365 families possessing less than 1 *bigha* of land are all homestead land. They all depend on daily wage labour for their sustenance.

Extent of alienation

In Table 3 the incidence of alienation of tribal land in 54 surveyed Bodo villages within the tribal belts and blocks are shown village wise. In formulating this table the facts like how many *bighas* of land in each family are alienated and to whom alienated and in what form – whether as sale, mortgage or encroachment are taken into account. It is to be mentioned that the alienation of land among the

tribals is not illegal according to the provisions of the Chapter X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Amendment Act, 1947. But whether the land is alienated to the tribals or non tribals the result is the poverty of the dispossessed. In all 54 villages surveyed within the tribal belts and blocks the total extent of tribal land alienation is 1314 *bighas* (Table 3). In this connection a case of Batabari Revenue village under Dalgaon circle in Dalgaon Tribal Block in Darrang district may be mentioned. This is a village with 207 families. A few years ago it was predominantly a Bodo village but now Bodo families' number is 68 only. Sales and mortgages of their land have been going on unchecked. Approximately above 1000 *bighas* of tribal land have been transferred into the hands of the immigrants and around 200 *bighas* only remain with the Bodos. Likewise there are several villages where the tribals (Bodos) have been reduced to a small minority due to the unchecked influx of the immigrants and occupation of their land.

In the Bodo pockets outside the tribal belts and blocks the situation is no better whatsoever. In all, 14 villages were selected and surveyed and the extent of tribal land alienation in the surveyed villages came to 285.6 *bighas*. The land situation outside the tribal belts and blocks is also alarming. For example, in a Bodo village No. 1 Borpukhuri under Thelamara Circle in Sonitpur district 300 *bighas* of land is owned by Mr. Markan Singh who originally hails from Bihar. Similarly an ex-Revenue Minister of Assam owns 150 *bighas* of *myadi patta* land in the same village. Yet another one Gangaram Nath also possesses over 30 *bighas* of land in the same village. These individuals have reduced many tribal families into landlessness and abject poverty. Since sale and transfer of land from one individual to another or tribals to non tribals are not restricted outside the tribal belts and blocks the cases of tribal land alienation is rampant. The small size tribal land holders are the victims as land being their only alternative to meet the requirement. Once dispossessed of their land they are reduced to daily wage labourers. The cases of Bodos being reduced to landlessness and daily wage labourers are on the increase.

To whom alienated

In the 54 surveyed Bodo villages within the tribal belts and blocks out of 1070 families surveyed there are 742 cases of land alienation; 271 cases went into the hands of the fellow tribals; 375 cases went into the hands of the non tribals from Assam and 96 cases went into the hands of the immigrants. The land transfer to the immigrants is more in the Lower Assam districts as their settlement in the districts of Lower Assam is more. Their presence in the Upper Assam is marginal. However,

the illegal transfer of tribal land is more with the non tribals from the state as the survey reveals the cases being 375. According to the provisions of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Amendment Act, 1947 transfer of land from a tribal to another fellow tribal is not illegal. The tribals who have been dispossessed of their land are left with no means of survival. The result is that many of the fellow tribals have either become daily wage earners or have migrated to other parts of the state to try their fortune.

In the Bodo pockets outside the tribal belts and blocks the transfer of Bodo tribal land into the hands of non tribals is alarming. In the village of Mechpara in the district of Dhubri a total of 19 *bighas* of land have been alienated of which 11 cases of transfer took place with the immigrants, and one case with the fellow tribal. Similarly in the village of Amguri in Bongaigaon district the maximum extent of tribal land transfer took place with the immigrants, the number of cases being 13 out of the 20 families surveyed. But the maximum cases of land alienation in the survey covered outside the belts and blocks took place with the non tribals from Assam which is 68 in all followed by the fellow tribals (54) and the immigrants (49).

Families below the poverty line

Out of the 1070 families within the belts and blocks 925 (86.45%) families are living below the poverty line. In the Bodo pockets outside the belts and blocks also out of 275 families 155 (56.36%) families are living below the poverty line.

Source of income

Within the belts and blocks out of 1070 families 523 families are solely depending on daily wage labour as they have land of very small size which are mainly homesteads. Another 460 families depend on agriculture but out of it only 145 families have land more than 4 *bighas*. The income from the employees accounts for only 2.89%, i.e. 29 families have employees in public or private sectors and a very marginal 2.17% or just 22 families out of 1070 families have petty business for their survival. Again, among the Bodos living outside the tribal belts and blocks out of 275 families 155 (56.36%) families struggle with daily wage labour. Only 97 (35.29%) families depend on agriculture. Those employed in jobs number only 15 (5.45%) persons and just 4 (1.45%) families make their living with petty business.

Economic situation

In the belts and blocks out of 1070 families surveyed 430 families possess land ranging from 1 - 4 *bighas* and above. But out of 430 families only 145 (13.55%) families have land more than 4 *bighas* and are self sufficient. The other 285 families take to daily wage labour to supplement their meagre agricultural product. The 365 families who have less than 1 *bigha* of land also depend on daily wage labour as their supply of land is insufficient for wet cultivation. The 275 families who have no land at all solely depend on daily wage labour. Therefore, families having less than 1 *bigha* of land and having no land number about 925 (86.45%) in all. They depend on daily wage labour. The daily wage in rural Assam ranges from Rs. 45/- to Rs. 50/-. The annual income also ranges from Rs. 16200/- to Rs. 18000/-. Similarly out of 275 families in 14 villages outside belts and blocks only 97 families depend on cultivation; 155 families depend on daily wage labour and just 15 persons are employed in different sectors and a nominal 4 families have petty business as their means of livelihood. Out of 97 families only 25 families have land ranging from 3 *bighas* to 4 *bighas*. Those dependent on daily wage labour are living below the poverty line as their annual incomes do not exceed Rs. 16200/- to Rs. 18000/-.

This situation is worsened by the absence of irrigational facilities, alternative jobs in off season and lack of mindset for business. Government schemes and aids also do not reach the poor mass due to the corrupt government officials and a few selfish fellow tribals. The creamy layers of the tribals are also responsible for depriving the vast majority of the poor tribals. They connive with the corrupt officials and mismanage the schemes meant for the tribals. Social habits are also responsible for their backwardness. Tribals generally use wine on social functions. But often they give into excess intake which make them lazy, idle and unproductive. Unless such practices are given a check the tribals cannot come up economically.

Why do the tribals/Bodos feel alienated with the land situation in Assam ?

The conscious tribals had foreseen the turn of events that would come to such a pass. The Tribal League, the only tribal organization tried hard to stop this onslaught even politically. That is why in 1938 the Tribal League struck a deal with the Assam Congress Committee to effect better implementation of the Line System which divided the areas inhabited by the tribals from those non tribal East Bengal refugees.¹⁶ Even with the Muslim League the Tribal League joined hands to form a coalition

government on condition that Sir Sadulla Ministry would agree to respect the line system and take steps to ensure the protection of the tribal land. It was also agreed that the land would be given to the landless tribals.

In 1946 the Tribal League again joined the Congress and got amended the provisions of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act 1886 by adding Chapter X which created the tribal belts and blocks primarily to protect the tribal land though only a total of 1,24,47,355 *bighas* of land.¹⁷ But it is a matter of regret that the government did not include all the tribal areas into the tribal belts and blocks. Even though predominantly inhabited by the tribals several tribal areas were excluded from the secluded areas. The result was that in a few years time these places were encroached and the tribals outnumbered and often forced to vacate the places and seek their fortune elsewhere. The encroachment did not stop there. The belts and blocks meant exclusively to protect tribal land also proved farce because though the tribals were majority in the secluded areas in the initial stages, these also became minority due to the unchecked influx of the non tribals from inside and outside the country.

The Tribal Cultural Organization - The Tribal Sangha reminded the government how ineligible persons encroached the tribal land and opposed the settlements of the ineligible persons within the tribal belts and blocks when the genuine landless tribals were living in extreme poverty for want of cultivable land. The government instead of protecting the tribal land facilitated the non tribals to settle in them. For example, in May 1952 the government of Assam carved out a total area of 44,691 *bighas* and 4 *kathas* for constituting Panbari and Kukling Reserved Forests.¹⁸ Again in 1961 an area of about 1000 *bighas* of cultivable land was alienated from the same Bijni Block to settle the refugees from East Pakistan. In 1964 again another 11,253 *bighas* were excluded for rehabilitation of the refugees in Bishnupur colonies.¹⁹ Assam Tribal Sangha and District Tribal Sanghas criticized the action of the government and opposed the issue of *pattas* and registration of land to the immigrants. For example, in the Bijni Tribal Block at Barpathar village the following persons were detected holding *pattas*²⁰

Harendra Roy	Patta No 95	Area	10 <i>bigha</i> -0 <i>k</i> -0 <i>l</i>
Debchandra Roy	Patta No 96	Area	10 <i>bigha</i> -0 <i>k</i> -0 <i>l</i>
Prasanna Roy	Patta No 69	Area	93 <i>bigha</i> -4 <i>k</i> -1 <i>l</i>
Parashu Ram Roy	Patta No 94	Area	12 <i>bigha</i> -0 <i>k</i> -0 <i>l</i>

In response to the memorandum submitted by the Kokrajhar District Tribal Sangha

to the Chief Minister an enquiry was conducted by the Assistant Director of Land Records and it was found that the act of the issue of illegal *pattas* was going on without any restriction and more than 20 thousand outsiders from East Pakistan were in illegal possession of land belonging to the tribals. The Tribal Sangha demanded cancellation of the issue of *pattas* and their immediate eviction.

In the district of Darrang under Shyamabari *Mauza* of Mangaldoi sub-division illegal possession of land had taken place in villages like Maradegirpar, Bardaopar, and Tetelibhanguri. Even under Borshilajhar *Mauza* under Mangaldoi subdivision illegal transfer of tribal land to the non tribals took place in the villages of Medhipar, Ranipukhuri and Dhipbisara.²¹ Several memoranda were submitted by the District Tribal Sangha demanding their eviction from the secluded areas but there was no action from the government's end.

In South Kamrup (Guwahati) Tribal Belt also there was alienation of land by the Allied Industries and in the name of the expansion of the capital city. This Tribal Belt was dereserved of 7, 72, 864 *bighas* of land at the cost of the means of survival of the local tribals.²² Similarly in Borolia in Tamulpur area some 1000 *bighas* of land was taken away from the tribals to settle the illegal immigrants.²³

In this way the government of Assam took away the land of the tribals because of which compactness of the tribal population have been destroyed. The Chapter X of Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886 provides for ejection and eviction of the illegal encroachers. The section 165(1) states that in case of unsettled land any person who without valid authority has encroached upon or occupied it shall be liable to ejection forthwith.

The Dhebar Commission Report also recommended eviction of all illegal settlers within the tribal belts and blocks with retrospective effect from the 26th January, 1950.²⁴ But the Assam government was indifferent while at the same time enabled lakhs of refugees to take illegal possession of the tribal land in all the tribal belts and blocks of the state. In many cases the tribals do not know whether any legislation exists prohibiting transfer of land from the tribals to the non tribals. Infact many non tribals capitalized their ignorance and got possession of their land. The implementing machineries were also not honest to implement the provisions sincerely. Cases of rioting between the indigenous tribals and the encroachers did not make the state government think it necessary to rectify the wrong, instead kept violating the provisions of the belts and blocks.

The net result was that in several villages the immigrants / non tribals outnumbered the tribals and ultimately wiped out the tribals from those villages. For example, Mwkhribil (Mokhrabil), Thengna (Thengarbitha), Banderbuwa, Sattabilw (Ushatari), Goibari (Guwabari) in the Parbatjhora area of Gossaigaon Sub-division of Kokrajhar district and Mwirajhar, Bilasipara, Bajegaon, Katajhar, etc., in the Bajali circle of Barpeta district are without any tribal population as these villages have been completely occupied by the immigrants. Tribals from such areas have been reduced to landlessness and abject poverty.

In the tribal belts and blocks there were sufficient vacant land to accommodate the future growth of the tribal population. But the government of Assam rehabilitated tens and thousands of East Pakistanis and several thousand others encroached upon such land connived with the departmental officials. This happened in Tamulpur Tribal Belt, Ripu Tribal Belt, Porbotjhora Tribal Belt, Kalaigaon Tribal Belt, Dalgaon Tribal Block, Kacharipara Tribal Block, Bhuiyaghat Tribal Block, Tezialpara Tribal Block, Bijni Tribal Block, South Kamrup (Guwahati) Tribal Belt and South Kamrup (Chaygaon) Tribal Belt. Due to this tens and thousands of tribal mass have become landless in their own land.

Suggestions

1. Legislation prohibition of transfer of land from tribals to non tribals within the tribal belts and blocks is quite satisfactory. But the implementation hardly takes place. The machineries entrusted with the implementation task are insincere. Therefore, it is felt that a state level committee with the members from the administration, law and tribal leadership be set up to look into the implementation of the provisions of the Chapter X of Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886.
2. There is transfer of land within the tribal belts and blocks and outside the tribal belts and blocks from the poor tribals to the rich tribals. Though the transfer of land between the same protected class of people is not illegal, the poorer tribals become deprived of their means of livelihood. It is, therefore, suggested that the richer section of the tribals be restricted to buy land if they possess land above 17 acres. If they want to buy land above 17 acres, permission of the Deputy Commissioner should be made

mandatory. If the situation compels a poor tribal to sell his/her land, let organizations like NGO, co-operative society, etc., buy the land in a way that the seller is able to get back the land when he/she returns the amount of the sale proceeds.

3. Almost all cases of alienation of tribal land took place due to poverty. Therefore, there is the urgency to improve the economic condition of the tribals. Financial assistance through the family beneficiary schemes should reach the poor at the right time. Implementing machineries should be kept on vigil as not to enable them to snatch away the scheme meant for the poor conniving with a few selfish rich tribals.
4. Almost all cases of land alienation are through sale or mortgage. In most cases ownership only has changed while registration remaining the same. It is suggested that legal and financial assistance be provided by the government to recover their alienated land.
5. Bodos are of agricultural background and as such, agro-based industries like fishery, poultry farm, banana plantation and piggery, etc., should be encouraged with financial help from the government in the form of loans.
6. Vocational training should be held at intervals on skill developments in the tribal areas so that once equipped with skill they are in position to start a programme of their own besides agro-based enterprises such as barbers shop, coblering, mechanism, etc.
7. Most of the tribals depend upon the wet cultivation. Cultivation of dry crops and cash crops applying modern agricultural techniques should be encouraged even if they possess small size of land.
8. The objectives of the PMRY is a self employment scheme for the educated unemployed youth. The minimum educational qualification required under the scheme is matric passed or failed or ITI passed. There are hundreds of Bodo youth with such qualifications and the government should facilitate such schemes to the unemployed youth by removing the obstacles such as corruption on the part of the official and the hesitation of the banks.
9. NGOs are nearer to the local community and have roots in the life of the people. They are more sensitive to the needs of the community. Several NGOs have enabled the people to become self-reliant by delivering basic services to the poor especially in the tribal areas. They create

The net result was that in several villages the immigrants / non tribals outnumbered the tribals and ultimately wiped out the tribals from those villages. For example, Mwkhrabil (Mokhrabil), Thengna (Thengarbitha), Banderbuwa, Sattabilw (Ushatari), Goibari (Guwabari) in the Parbatjhora area of Gossaigaon Sub-division of Kokrajhar district and Mwirajhar, Bilasipara, Bajegaon, Katajhar, etc., in the Bajali circle of Barpeta district are without any tribal population as these villages have been completely occupied by the immigrants. Tribals from such areas have been reduced to landlessness and abject poverty.

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9. NGOs are nearer to the local community and have roots in the life of the people. They are more sensitive to the needs of the community. Several NGOs have enabled the people to become self-reliant by delivering basic services to the poor especially in the tribal areas. They create

awareness regarding the new ways of availability of funds outside the formal credit channel. They also form Self Help Groups and take up income generating activities to support themselves, save money in a group to fulfil their monetary needs later.

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Tribal development in the North-east : status, problems and measures

Saponti Borthakur

India has the second largest tribal population in the world next to African countries. As many as two hundred and fifty tribal groups live in isolated regions of the country. The scheduled tribes account for 67.76 million or 8.08% of India's total population. Of these, 1.32 million or 1.92 per cent are primitive tribals. The tribal decadal growth during the period 1981-91 was 3.12%. The actual increase was from 7.53% in 1981 to 8.08% in 1991. The tribal people differ considerably from other people in race, language, culture and belief in their myths and customs. These groups are speaking about 105 languages and 225 subsidiary languages. They inhabit in all the states except in Haryana, Punjab, Pandicherry, Chandigarh, and Delhi. The highest concentration of scheduled tribes is found in the North-eastern states of Mizoram (94.75%), Nagaland (87.70%), Meghalaya (85.53%), Arunachal Pradesh (63.66%) and in the Lakshadweep (98.15%), and Dadra and Nagar Haveli (78.99%), while there is high concentration in the states of Madhya Pradesh (23.27%), Orissa (22.21%), Gujarat (14.92%), Maharashtra (9.27%), and Bihar (7.66%). The tribals mainly depend on agriculture, forest and livestock. The dwindling natural resources including forest and shrinking water and fodder supply have jeopardized their agricultural and livestock productivity.

Table 1. Distribution of Tribal population (1991 census)

Predominantly tribal state	Percentage of ST	States with large pockets of tribals	Percentage of ST
1. Mizoram	94.75	7. Madhya Pradesh	23.27
2. Nagaland	87.70	8. Orissa	22.21
3. Meghalaya	85.53	9. Gujarat	14.92
4. Arunachal Pradesh	63.66	10. Assam	12.82
5. Manipur	34.41	11. Rajasthan	12.44
6. Tripura	30.95	12. Maharashtra	9.27
		13. Bihar	7.66
		14. Andhra Pradesh	6.31
		15. West Bengal	5.59

The Indian constitution has made special provisions for protecting tribals in the country. To assess the performance of various tribal development

programmes, the government of India appointed the Verrier Elwin Committee in 1959. After Elwin Committee, the government appointed the Dhebar Commission in 1961 to study the whole gamut of tribal development. The commission recommendations on planning and development were more specific for solving the problems of land alienation, indebtedness, education, protecting tribal interest in forest and sectoral development. The Dhebar commission also recommended the establishment of Tribal Culture and Research Institute in states for training and research of tribal issues, so that their results can be used as feedback in planning and administration.

The task force on the development of the tribal area, constituted in 1972, suggested that ecological, occupational and social parameters of development of tribal population should be properly assessed for the formulation of a policy and its implementation so that a steady flow of benefits could be assured to the tribal people. The Dube committee in 1972 tried to design a unique approach for tribal development and suggested that the problems of tribal development should be defined at the national level. It also suggested an integrated area development approach keeping in mind the sentiments and aspirations of the tribal population.

A brief review of tribal development under five year plans

Special priority for tribal development has been given since the inception of the first five year plan. The plan outlay allocation indicates extent of the priority received on the tribals for their development.

Table 2. Plan outlay

Plan	Total plan outlay (Rs. in crores)	% of share of tribal development
1 st Plan (1951-56)	1,960	1.00
2 nd Plan (1956-61)	4,672	0.90
3 rd Plan (1961-66)	8,577	0.60
Annual Plan (1966-69)	6,756	0.50
4 th Plan (1969-74)	15,902	0.50
5 th Plan (1974-79)	39,322	3.001
6 th Plan (1980-85)	97,500	5.67
7 th Plan (1985-90)	1,80,000	6.67
8 th Plan (1992-1997)		8.00
9 th Plan (1997-2001)		9.97

Source : Plan Documents, Planning Commission, GOI.

The tribal development was given right place in the first five year plan with the allocation of Rs. 1,960 crores. In the second five year plan, a special multipurpose tribal project was implemented in certain selected tribal areas. Third plan witnessed the implementation of tribal development block system at not only improving conditions in tribal areas but also involving tribals.

On the basis of working group reports of 1959 & 1969, 4th plan envisaged essential integration of the tribal economy with the mainstream economy. However, tribal development block based on 3 special multipurpose blocks of fifties came into existence and new identity in the 4th plan. The 5th plan brought out a new strategy of tribal development by formulating tribal sub plans. It included all the schedule areas and blocks with more than 50% tribal population. However, dispersed tribals were also taken care of by special implementation of family oriented programmes. The sixth plan was sought to ensure a higher degree of devolution of funds so that at least 50% of the tribal families were provided assistance to cross the poverty line. In this plan, the emphasis was on family oriented economic activities rather than infrastructure development schemes. Though the tribal sub plan approach remained the main instrument of tribal planning, infact, in the 7th plan a special approach called cluster approach to develop 73 primitive tribes, numerically 13.95 lakh tribals since 1987-88 included in 47 clusters with population of 5,000 having 50% or more tribal concentration was undertaken. In the 8th five year plan, efforts were intensified to bridge the gap between the levels of development of the STs and those of other sections of society, so that by the turn of the century, this section is brought at par with the rest of the society. A major share of money was devolved to the tribals of the total plan outlay of Rs.1,81,735 crores, STs were allocated Rs.14873.43 crores, i.e. around 8.81%. The government's real concern towards tribal development can easily be visualized. The 9th five year plan envisages advancement of STs through a process of empowerment. This encompasses 3 vital components, viz, (i) Social empowerment (ii) Economic empowerment and (iii) Social justice.

The North-eastern states consist of the seven states, viz, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura. There is wide diversity across the states in terms of population density, geographical extent, resource endowments and ethnicity. Two more or less homogeneous groups of states can be identified in this region, viz, the hills and the plains. Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram constitute the hills. Manipur, Assam and Tripura constitute the plains except in few hill districts. All these seven states are special

category states whose development Plans are financed by the government of India, on the basis of 90 per cent grant and 10 per cent loan, on a preferential basis. The region is basically pre industrial and is a late comer to the development experience. The region is geographically a remote area. The poor connectivity of the region with the rest of country is an important feature of backwardness. Rural poverty in the North-east is well below the national average. The rural poverty population in India in the early seventies was estimated to be over 56 per cent and that of the North-east as a whole was over 52 per cent. Poverty alleviation programmes have not made much of an impact on the rural poor, because of the attitude of the political leaders, bureaucrats and the elite tribals. After the implementation of Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and other programmes the early eighties show the poverty population in the country to be around 46 per cent and that of the North-east to be around 42 per cent. In the early nineties, poverty in India was estimated to have declined to about 37 per cent of the population and that in the North-east at about 45 per cent. While a decline was registered at the all India level, the North-east was estimated to have seen a rise from about 42 per cent to about 45 per cent during the period of about a decade.

The tribal majority states in the North-east are compact and viable units whose plans, in fact, are plans for tribal development. No separate area development plans for tribals for these states are necessary as Expert Committee and Task Force on tribal development have stated.

Despite the efforts taken by the government the recent growth performance of these states have not been encouraging. During the period 1993-94 to 1999-2000, only the economy of Tripura grew at a rate higher than the national average. All the other states had lower growth rates.

Tribal development scenario of the NE states

(a) Poverty reduction

Table 3. Poverty ratio of the NE states (1973-74 and 1999-2000)

States	1973-74	1999-2000
Mizoram	50.32	19.47
Manipur	49.96	28.54
Nagaland	50.81	32.67
Meghalaya	50.20	33.87
Tripura	51.00	34.44
Arunachal Pradesh	51.93	33.47
Assam	51.21	36.09
All India	54.9	26.1

Source : Compiled from planning commission.

The growth performance of states has crucial implications in poverty reduction, which is an important objective of our economic policy. Table 3 shows that reduction of poverty in the tribal dominant states like Mizoram recorded a steep decline during the period 1973-74 to 1999-2000. On the other hand, in Assam where majority are general caste people the reduction of poverty is much lower during the period.

(b) Human Development

Table 4. Human Development index of the NE states of India 1981, 1991.

States	1981		1991	
	Value	Rank	Value	Rank
Mizoram	0.411	8	0.548	7
Nagaland	0.328	20	0.486	11
Tripura	0.287	24	0.389	22
Meghalaya	0.317	21	0.365	24
Arunachal Pradesh	0.242	31	0.328	29
Manipur	0.461	4	0.536	9
Assam	0.0272	26	0.348	27
All India			0.439	

Source : Compiled from Human Development Report 2001, Planning Commission.

Human Development Index (HDI) is the best measure to see the level of socio-economic development. This is broadly an average of social aggregates/averages of longevity, knowledge and access to resources. It is an equi-weighted average of:

1. Life expectancy index (LEI) (Life expectancy at birth)
2. Education attainment index (EAI)
3. Standard of living index (SLI)

Education

Education is important in the development process for two reasons. Firstly, education can be viewed as an end in itself as it improves the perception and quality of life of people. Secondly, education leads to formations of human capital and is an important investment for the development process.

Though the level and quality of education can be measured in a number of ways, literacy figures are essential in any measurement of educational attainment. The level of literacy is an important and the most basic index of the educational achievements of an economy. Besides overall education, female education has a special role in the development process.

Table 5 reflects the percentage of literacy to total population of North-eastern states according to 2001 census. Among these states Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are predominantly tribal populated states.

Table 5. Percentage of literacy to total population (2001 census)

State	Persons	Male	Female
Arunachal Pradesh	54.74	64.1	44.2
Assam	64.28	71.97	56.0
Manipur	68.87	77.98	51.95
Meghalaya	63.31	53.03	48.42
Mizoram	88.49	90.71	86.1
Nagaland	67.11	62.00	52.88
Tripura	73.66	70.70	56.55
All India	65.38	63.98	45.75

Source : Census of India 2001.

The table shows that the literacy rates of the tribal dominated states like Mizoram and Nagaland are higher than the national average and the other states in the region. On the other hand, Mizoram which has the highest concentration of tribal population in the country shows the 2nd highest literacy rate of 88.49 per cent. Besides all these the female literacy in Mizoram is the second highest in the country followed by Kerala of 87.9 per cent. Similarly, the female literacy rate in the tribal dominated states like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Meghalaya are higher than the national average and many other states in the country.

Health

Improvement in the health status of the population has been one of the major thrust areas in the social development programmes of the country. This was to be achieved through improving the access to health services to the common population.

Two basic indicators used in analyzing health status are infant mortality rate and the life expectancy at birth.

Infant mortality rate

The infant mortality rate (IMR), measured in terms of death per thousand of children below 6 years, is considered to be a sensitive indicator of not only the health status of the population but also the level of human development in the context of education, economic conditions, nutrition, etc. Poverty, malnutrition, decline in breast-feeding and inadequacy or lack of sanitation are all associated with high infant mortality. High infant mortality and high fertility are related concepts. There is evidence that in the short run infant mortality reduces overall population growth, other things remaining constant. However, the indirect and long run effect of reduced mortality is probably to reduce fertility by more than a compensating amount as, with greater certainty about child survival, parents insurance birth and shift to child quality investments.

Almost all the states in India have registered declining infant mortality rates over the period 1971 to 1998, yet some states have done better than the others.

Table 6: Statewise infant mortality rate

States	1961	1981	2001
Mizoram	69	53	23
Manipur	32	28	25
Arunachal Pradesh	126	91	44
Tripura	111	82	49
Meghalaya	79	80	52
Assam	NA	92	78
Nagaland	68	51	NA
All India	115	77	71

Source : Office of the Registrar General of India, Ministry of Home Affairs.

The table shows that the infant mortality rate is declining in all the states as well as at all India level. However, the infant mortality rate for Mizoram is one of the lowest in the country followed by Kerala and Pandicherry, which has IMR of 16 and 21 respectively. The infant mortality of all the North-eastern states is lower than the national average other than Assam as shown on the table.

Problems of tribal development

The major problems of tribal development are as follows :

- (i) Extensive areas in the North-east are still having poor connectivity. Rail connectivity is still a dream in majority areas in the region including Assam. Due to poor connectivity the region is still lagging behind many other states in the country.
- (ii) The burning insurgency problems in the North-east retards development. Due to insurgency there is low FDI flow in the region, which causes slow industrial development.
- (iii) *Jhum* cultivation is one of the important problems arising in the tribal areas. Though the tribals argue in favour of *jhum* cultivation, it creates ecological imbalances in the region due to massive cutting down of trees and burning of forest. Moreover, *jhum* cultivation causes low productivity.
- (iv) The Inner Line Permit (ILP) exists in most of the tribal majority states in the region which causes itself a barrier of development.

The ILP existing in these states reduces free movement of goods and people. The state government now uses it as a means of revenue collection. The travellers are often harassed by police, student organizations, etc. This retards economic as well as social development in these states.

- (v) Most of the development schemes, special assistance, reservation, etc., given in the name of tribals go to the tribal elite only. Poor people get less access of it. In many cases the poor are deprived of by the elite in all segments of development. The attitude of tribal elite causes hindrance for development of poor tribals.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the above discussion that the traditional concept of "backward" of tribal is not justified. In the North-eastern region tribals are emerging as one of forward communities. It will be accurate to say that at present only the "poor" are backward all over the country, but not on caste and community wise. Over the years a huge sum of money has been flowing in the name of tribal development. They have been given special provision on job reservation, seat in educational institutions, scholarships etc. However, the overall conditions of the 'poor' are remaining same. Government has many schemes/programmes for upliftment of tribals. A large share of these goes to tribal elite only. Poor tribals are deprived by the elite tribals. In India all development plans are designed on caste and tribe basis. This is the unfortunate part of our development endeavour. There is no any demarcation of rich and poor. So, poor tribals are remaining poor and an opportunist class among the tribals is emerging as an elite class. Poor people can not compete with them. The elite among the tribals are blocking the benefits reaching to the poor. The tribal elite, bureaucrats and the politicians want to continue the system for their vested interest. If there is any good will for upliftment of backward poor tribal, then there is an urgent need to change the mindset. Development plans as well as reservation policy and other facilities meant for tribals must be limited to the poor only.

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Socio-economic status of tribal people of Manamjang hill range of Senapati district, Manipur : a case study

K. Sharatchandra Singh

Manamjang hill range is located within the jurisdictions of Saitu Gamphazol subdivision of Senapati district of Manipur. The hill range is about 22 km away from Imphal city, capital of Manipur state. There are four villages on this hill range. The villages are (i) Manamjang (ii) Khoripok (iii) Haibung and (iv) Tuinom. The total population of the villages is 750, the males and females being 410 and 340 respectively.

Manamjang village

It has twenty households with a total population of 180. The males are 100 while the females are 80. The villagers have possessed 30 hectares of land. It is found that the total number of educated persons in the village is 120. There are 6 male employees in this village. Although a middle level school was established in the village in the past, it was later on shifted to other place four years back due to political interference. It is an unfortunate incident for the people. A unit of SSA is started for imparting education in this village.

Khoripok

The village is located in the low lying area of the hill range. It was shifted from the high level mountain of the range twelve years back due to— (i) communication bottleneck and (ii) lack of communal harmony among the Naga-Kuki. There are 33 households with a total population of 230 out of which the female population is 90. There are 150 educated people and the number of educated females is more than that of the males. The villagers occupy 50 hectares of land. There are only two hectares of irrigated land. The village is having a middle school with an enrolment of 120 students.

Haibung

It is also located in the low lying area of the hill range near the Khoripok and Manamjang villages. The people migrated from the high level mountain of the range ten years back due to lack of communication and communal harmony. There is no separate land for the villagers. They have been utilizing the land available in Khoripok as brothers. There are 20 households with a total population of 130. There are 12 government employees in this village.

Tuinom

The villagers occupied the foothills of this range six years back. They have migrated from Saikul block of Senapati district. There are 22 households in the village with a total population of 210. They have 2 hectares of land. There are 2 employees in this village.

Table 1. Population of the hill range

Sl. No.	Name of the village	Population	No. of household	Sex Ratio
1	Manamjang	180	20	800:1000
2	Tuinom	210	22	850:1000
3	Khoripok	230	33	900:1000
4	Haibung	130	27	910:1000
	Total	750	102	

Table 2. Area of land occupied by the villagers (in hectare)

Sl. No.	Name of the village	Total area of land	Area of Agricultural land	Area of Forest
1	Manamjang	30	5	-
2	Tuinom	2	-	-
3	Khoripok	50	12	38
4	Haibung			
	Total land area	82	17	38

Occupation of the villagers

The main occupations of the villagers of the hill range are :

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| (a) Cultivation | (b) Timber |
| (c) Vegetable Grower | (d) Charcoal making |

The villagers can earn Rs. 10,000/- to 30,000/- per annum for their livelihood. Most of the cultivation are done in the non irrigated land area. Irrigated land areas are used for paddy cultivation only. Vegetables are grown in the *jhum* fields which are far away from the village. The main vegetables produced by the villagers are cabbage, mustard and beans. The main forest product for food item is bamboo shoot. Firewood and house construction timbers are collected from this hill range.

Tuinom has no agricultural and forest land. The people have to pay rent for use of land available in other villages.

Table 3. Main occupation of the family members

Sl.No.	Occupation	Total population
1	Cultivation	200
2	Forest Labour	150
3	Government Employee	14
	Total	364

Assistance from other schemes

DoNER has given financial assistance for socio-economic development of the people through NEC under the project IFAD. The scheme has been implemented in 2 out of 4 villages. They provide the following assistance :

- Micro-finance to SHG
- Construction of low cost latrine
- Implementation of agriculture and allied firms
- Construction of inter village road
- Implementation of water supply scheme for drinking and domestic purposes

Table 4. Assistance of micro-finance through SHG ...

Village	No. of SHG	Amount of loan	Subsidy
Manamjang	1 (20)	Rs. 10,000/-	Rs. 20,000/-
Khoripok	2 (15)	Rs. 15,000/-	Rs. 30,000/-

Figures in parenthesis is No. of Member

From the two villages 3 women SHGs can get financial assistance for this project. All the members of SHGs got loan and subsidy.

The two village chiefs have started cultivation of (i) Passion fruit and (ii) Allovera. They could earn Rs.10,000/- and Rs. 14,000/- from the two firms of passion fruit and allovera respectively during the last year. It is the first batch cropping of the firms.

Every family can construct low cost latrine from the assistance of IFAD. It is made by locally available materials.

The villagers have also constructed 2 km. length of road for inter connectivity of the villagers under the project,

Water resources

Manipur is a highly rainfall area. The rainfall is the only resource of the water. But rainwater available is seasonal. Most probably the rainwater are run off during the rainy season. There is acute problem for availability of good quality of water in off season in Manipur from the last decade. The same problem is faced by the people of these villages. There are two main streams which can be utilized as the water resources of the villages of this hill range. The streams are (i) Sajirok stream (Mahadung) and (ii) Sanathongmanbi stream. Water flow of Sanathongmanbi stream is mainly used for drinking and domestic consumption by the people of three villages, viz, Manamjang, Khoripok and Haibung. The stream is very small during the off rainy season. It is becoming smaller and smaller every year. The villagers have constructed their own water supply by fitting pipe from stream to village water tank. The cost incurred is managed by the contribution of the village people. The following table shows the amount of expenditure involved in construction of water supply.

Table 5. Expenditure statement for construction of water supply

Name of the village	Amount
Manamjang	Under PHED Govt. of Manipur
Khoripok	Rs. 30,000/-
Haibung	Rs.21,000/-
Tuinom	Not implemented

The processing of water for drinking and domestic purposes is not a scientific one. There is no provision of water treatment. Simply the stream water is carried

to the village with the help of a tap. The Sanathongmanbi stream has covered 20 hectares of catchment area.

The Sajirok stream is also facing the same problem of drying up of water resource in the off rainy season. It covers about 50 hectares of catchment area. The people of the newly established village Tuinom use that stream for drinking and domestic purposes. The Sajirok stream is most important to the valley area of the Imphal West. It is used for irrigation and drinking water supply to the surrounding areas.

Major Problems of the villagers

- Lack of road connectivity to other village or town.
- Non availability of health care for health & hygiene.
- Marketing problems of agricultural and forest products due to non-availability of transport facility.
- Lack of proper educational facilities.
- Non availability of scientific treatment of drinking water.
- Lack of abundant quantity of water for drinking and domestic uses.
- Decrease of forest resources in the area.

Suggestion measures and conclusion

- Construction of road connectivity with nearest market place for improving marketing of forest, agricultural products.
- Provision of financial assistance to implement private agricultural firm in large area of hills.
- Protection of water resource by developing catchment area of Sanathongmanbi stream.
- Plantation and formation of protected forest area of Sanathongmanbi catchment area.
- Establishment of school and giving free education system upto XII standard.

6. Development of forest area under the scheme joint forest development.
7. Provision of training, seminar and conference for generating awareness for forest skill development inputs.
8. Construction of health care centre and implementation of periodical health checkup in the villages.

Problems and prospects of enhancing income and employment of tribal farmers in the hill zone of Assam through scientific cultivation and efficient marketing of fruit crops

R. K. Sarma

The hill zone of Assam comprises two hill districts, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills with a geographical area of 15,222 sq. km (15,22,200 ha). This corresponds to 19.4 per cent of the geographical area of Assam. As per 2001 census, the total population of the zone is 10,01,390 out of which the scheduled tribes constitute 58.06 per cent. Agriculture is the backbone of economy in the zone. More than 90 per cent of tribal people live in interior hills practising agriculture as their main source of livelihood. Hence, development of agriculture is a prerequisite for the economic development of tribal farmers of the zone.

The diverse climatic conditions, soil and topography favour the cultivation of wide range of crops in the zone. The major food grains are rice, maize, wheat and different pulses. Among oil seeds, *toria* and sesame are dominating crops. Jute and cotton are important fibre crops. Sugarcane is an important cash crop grown both in hill slope and in plains. Turmeric and ginger are major spices while yam, tapioca, colocasia and sweet potato are important tuber crops in the zone. However, cultivation of fruits and vegetables in the hilly areas is of vital importance for nutritional security as it provides several times more calories of energy per unit land than cereals and other food grain crops. Fruits form an essential ingredient of our diet and contain all essential nutrients required for a balanced diet and have medicinal and aesthetic values. Cultivation of fruits is, therefore, a most potent source of meeting the nutritional requirements of the people and even earning foreign exchange as there is a big demand from other countries.

In hilly areas, cultivation of fruits is also important for conservation of soil and water for sustainable agriculture. Shifting cultivation, an age-old practice

of hill farmers, is still practised by the tribal farmers of the zone. The detrimental effect of shifting cultivation on soils and environment is well documented. It leads to rapid depletion of perennial soil cover and encourages soil erosion, fast removal of top soil, silting of river beds and consequent flooding in riverine areas. The cultivation of horticultural and plantation crops in *jhum* land promotes settled cultivation and thereby contributes to environmental sustainability.

Another important aspect of cultivation of fruits is its higher yield than that of food grain crops. The employment generation potentiality is also quite high in fruits cultivation. Thus, the scientific cultivation of fruits is one of the best ways to meet up the nutritional security of hill people, conservation of nature, increasing income and employment opportunities of the farmers and thereby foster economic growth. The zone provides suitable climate for growing fruits and vegetables. There are certain pockets in the zone where fruits are grown on commercial basis by the tribal farmers of the zone. Pineapple, oranges, banana and papaya are widely cultivated fruit crops of the zone.

However, the impact of new production technology for fruits and vegetables can not be sustained unless simultaneous efforts are made to develop an efficient marketing system as a whole. Better returns, stable prices and attractive terms of trade induce the cultivators to produce more, market an increasing proportion of their product and thereby improve their economic condition.

In the above context, it is important to know the existing system of production and marketing of major fruits grown by the tribal farmers of the zone so that due care could be taken for its improvement. This study has, therefore, been undertaken in the tribal farms of hill zone of Assam with the following objectives :

Objectives

- 1) To examine the existing production, productivity and marketed surplus of important fruit crops in tribal farms of the zone
- 2) To examine the income and employment generation from fruit cultivation
- 3) To study the existing pattern of marketing of important fruit crops and its efficiency

- 4) To find out the production and marketing constraints of tribal fruits growers in the zone
- 5) To find the need for improvement

Methodology

The study was conducted in Hill Zone of Assam through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) as well as sample survey method.

PRA : Participatory approaches, viz, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key informant interview and Researcher's discussion with the farmers were conducted to identify the important fruit crops in the area under present study. The major fruit crops identified were pineapple, banana and orange.

Sample Survey : Sample survey was conducted following multistage random sampling procedure. In first stage the villages having area under fruit crops were identified and 10 villages were selected by random sampling procedure without replacement. In second stage fruit growing farmers of selected villages were listed out and 90 farmers (30 farmers for each identified crops) were selected randomly without replacement. Data were also collected from 30 randomly selected traders at different level of marketing and 30 consumers.

Primary data were collected with the help of a specially designed schedule by personal interview method. Secondary data were collected from various published and unpublished sources.

Findings

Area, production and productivity of identified crops

The hill zone of Assam is the richest reservoir of genetic variation of a large number of fruits like citrus, banana, pineapple, papaya and many indigenous minor fruits. The climate of the zone favours the cultivation of a wide range of fruit crops. There are certain areas in the zone where pineapple, banana and oranges are grown on commercial basis. However, the productivity of all the crops in the region is very low. The average area, production and productivity of identified crops in the zone over the years from 2001-02 to 2005-06 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Average area, production and productivity of identified fruit crops in the hill zone of Assam over the years 2001-02 to 2005-06

District/ Zone	Crops	Area (ha)	Production (t/ha)	Yield (t/ha)
Karbi Anglong	Pineapple	1807	26854	14.86
	Banana	1765	26376	14.94
	Orange	919	9155	9.96
N.C.Hills	Pineapple	1692	24529	14.49
	Banana	566	8315	14.69
	Orange	1702	18739	11.01
Zone total	Pineapple	3499	51383	14.69
	Banana	2331	34691	14.88
	Orange	2621	27894	10.64

The average area, production and productivity of identified crops in the sample farms are presented in the following table :

Table 2. Average area, production and yield of identified crops in the sample farms

Name of crops	No. of farms	Average area (ha)	Average production (t)	Average yield (t/ha)
Pineapple	30	0.16	2.84	17.75
Banana	30	0.11	1.78	16.20
Orange	30	0.24	2.48	10.31

The average annual production of pineapple, banana and orange in the zone from the year 2001-02 to 2005-06 were 51383 t, 34691 t and 27894 t from an area of 3499 ha, 2331 ha and 2621 ha, respectively. The average productivity in the same period was only 14.69 t/ha for pineapple, 14.88 t/ha for banana and 10.64 t/ha for orange. Similarly, the average production of pineapple, banana and orange in the selected farms under the present study were 2.84 t, 1.78 t and 2.48 t respectively. The average productivity was 17.75 t/ha for pineapple, 16.20 t/ha for banana and 10.31 t/ha for orange.

This reveals that the average productivity of all the three selected crops in the hill zone of Assam as well as in the selected farms under this study were only 40 - 50 per cent of the yield obtained in the experimental field for the respective crop. Hence, there is a great scope for increasing productivity of all the crops.

Income and employment generation

The returns from fruits and vegetable cultivation are generally higher than that of food grain crops and diversification towards fruits and vegetable cultivation helps even the marginal and small farmers to earn sufficient income. Again, due to its labour intensiveness, the expansion of area under fruits and vegetables would ensure additional employment to rural labour force. However, in the selected tribal farms under present study, the generation of income was far below than the potential level due to lower productivity of crops. Number of factors such as lack of scientific management, lower use of external inputs, age-old practices, lack of scientific knowledge of the farmers, etc., was responsible for the lower yield of the crops, elimination of which may increase the production and productivity of the crops and thereby increase the income of the farmers. Due to lower use of external inputs, generation of employment was also not up to the mark in the selected farms under the study. Hence, both income and employment can be increased following recommended package of cultivation practices. The average income and human labour engaged in the cultivation of selected crops were calculated and are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Average income and employment of identified crops in the sample farms

Crop	Variable cost (Rs./ ha)	Total cost (Rs./ ha)	Gross return (Rs./ ha)	Return over variable cost (Rs./ ha)	Net return (Rs./ ha)	Human labour used (Man-days/ha)
Pineapple	19667.00	33875.00	66750.00	47083.00	32875.00	248
Banana	17845.00	28310.00	56724.00	38879.00	28414.00	225
Orange	20260.00	32655.00	90228.00	69968.00	57573.00	236

Table 3 shows that the average per hectare income over variable cost of cultivation was Rs. 47083.00, Rs.38879.00 and Rs. 69968.00 for pineapple, banana and orange respectively while the average net income per hectare obtained by the farmers was Rs. 32875.00 for pineapple, Rs. 28414.00 for banana and Rs. 57573.00 for orange. The average human labour utilization was found as 248 mandays for pineapple, 225 mandays for banana and 236 mandays for orange.

Marketed and marketable surplus of identified crops

Marketed surplus is the actual amount of produce which the producer sold out of the year's production irrespective of his requirements for family consumption, wastage and other payments. On the other hand, marketable surplus is that quantity of the produce which is sold in the market after meeting the consumption and other farm retentions. The marketed surplus for perishable commodities may be equal to the marketable surplus when the farmers neither retains more or less than his requirement (Acharya and Agarwal, 1987). The marketed surpluses of sample farmers were estimated for all the identified crops and are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Average marketed surplus of sample farmers for identified crops

Crops	Production (t)	Marketable surplus (t)	Proportion of marketable surplus to the total production (%)	Marketed surplus (t)	Proportion of marketed surplus to the total production (%)
Pineapple	2.84	2.67	94.01	2.58	90.85
Banana	1.78	1.55	87.08	1.47	82.58
Orange	2.48	2.35	94.76	2.26	91.13

The above table shows that average marketable surplus of the sample farmers was 2.67 t for pineapple, 1.55 t for banana and 2.35 t for orange. On an average, sample farmers sold 90.85 per cent, 82.58 per cent and 91.13 per cent of their total production for pineapple, banana and orange, respectively.

Existing marketing system

The existing marketing system in the study area was not orderly and efficient. Rural markets were lacking infrastructural facilities like proper market yards, scientific storage, processing plants, etc., for adding value to the product with quality. Being the perishable in nature fruits require cold storage facilities absence of which compelled the farmers to sell their products at a throw away price. No support price and/ or procurement price was available for fruit crops. The market intelligence service was also not prompt. There was considerable variation in awareness amongst farmers regarding demand, supply and prices in the distant market. Traders were the main source of market information.

Disposal pattern

Disposal pattern of agricultural produce depends on the volume of the marketed surplus. In the existing marketing system in the study area, producers generally sold their produces either in the village or in primary market through a chain of middlemen. The major portions of produces in the district were marketed through private channel. Involvements of Government institution in procurement of fruits were not regular.

Grading and Packaging

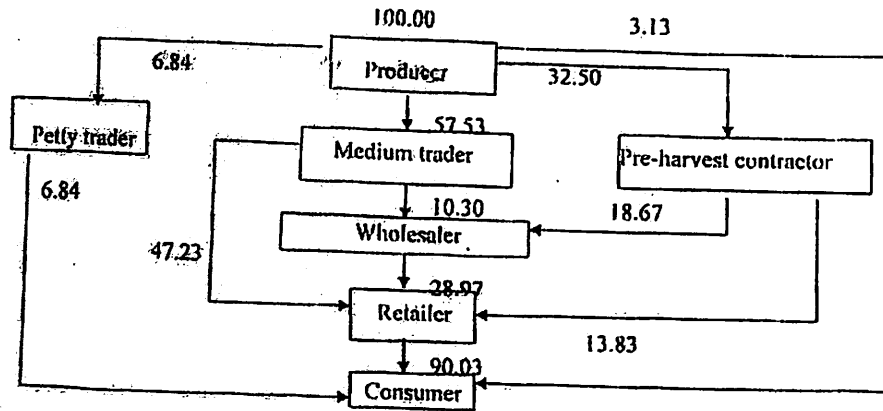
Grading is an essential function for the improvement of marketing as it simplifies the whole buying and selling process. However, in the prevailed marketing system in the study area, no formal method of grading was found. Only informal methods of grading were observed based on physical characteristics and visual observations of products through subjective judgment. It was not proper and scientific. For example, orange, pineapple, and banana were classified in grades mainly based on the size of the fruits. Ripeness was another criterion for the grading of pineapple and banana. Different varieties of banana were considered as different grades. The freshness of the products which depends on duration after harvesting of the crop was also considered for grading of all the fruit crops selected under the study.

During transportation the products were packed either in gunny bags or in bamboo basket. The packaging materials used were thatch grass, rice straws, newspaper and banana leaf and sheath. Due to lack of proper packaging, a sizable quantity of products got damaged on transit.

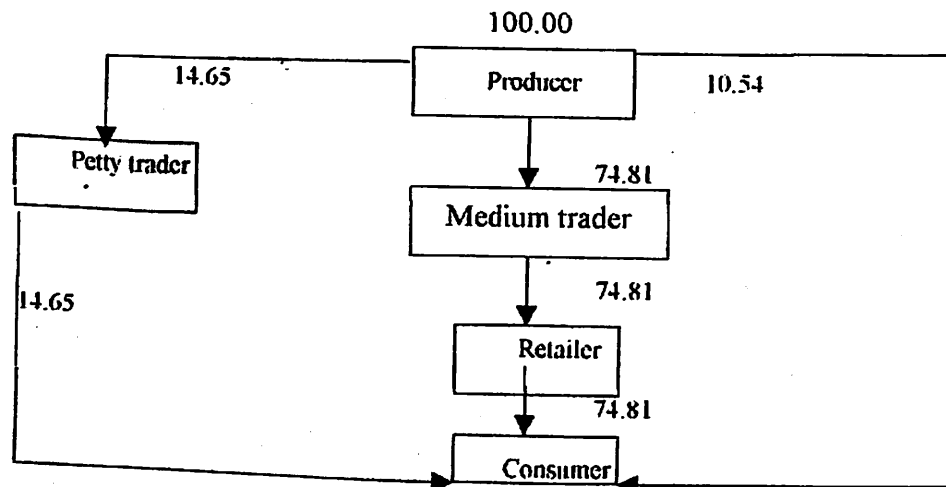
Marketing channels and its effectiveness

Marketing channels are the routes through which the surplus products move from the hands of producers to the hands of ultimate consumers. Effectiveness of a marketing channel is measured by the volume of goods passing through this channel from the hands of producer to the hands of ultimate consumers. The major marketing channels existing in the study area for the identified crops and the effectiveness of different channels are given in the flow charts.

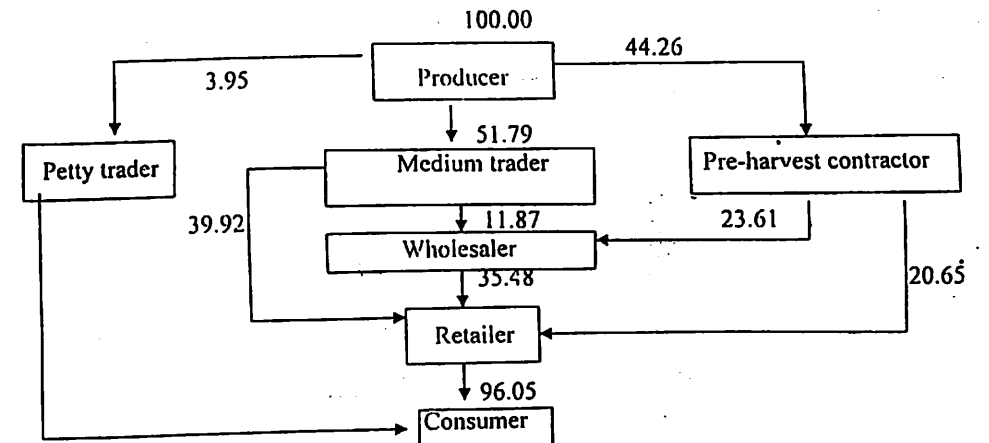
Flow charts



PINEAPPLE



BANANA



ORANGE

Marketing efficiency

Marketing efficiency is the ratio of market output gained (satisfaction) to marketing input used (cost of resources) in the process of marketing (Kohls and Uhl, 1980). In an efficient marketing system, the consumers generally derive the greatest possible satisfaction at the lowest possible cost. Marketing efficiency is studied by estimating the price spread, marketing margins, costs and producer's share in consumer's rupee. Efficiency differs from channel to channel. Involvement of more number of intermediaries generally lowers the efficiency of the marketing channel. In the study area, marketing cost, margin, price spread and efficiency of different channels for different crops were :

Pineapple

Particulars	Rs./ 100 nos.					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Net price received by producer	767	621	587	587	492	492
Marketing cost	168	279	317	438	298	356
Marketing margin	-	302	416	413	530	590
Price spread	168	581	733	851	828	946
Consumer's price	935	1202	1320	1438	1320	1438
Producer's share in consumer's rupee	80.03	51.66	44.47	40.82	37.27	34.21
Effectiveness (%)	3.13	6.84	47.23	10.30	13.83	18.67
Marketing efficiency (ratio)	4.57	1.07	0.80	0.69	0.59	0.52

I : Producer – Consumer ; II : Producer – Petty trader – Consumer ; III : Producer – Medium trader – Retailer – Consumer ; IV : Producer – Medium trader – Wholesaler – Retailer – Consumer ; V : Producer – Pre-harvest contractor – Retailer – Consumer ; VI : Producer – Pre-harvest contractor – Wholesaler – Retailer – Consumer

Orange

Rs./ 100 nos.

Particulars	Rs./ 100 nos.				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Net price received by producer	137	129	129	108	108
Marketing cost	33	61	82	58	84
Marketing margin	54	74	86	98	105
Price spread	87	135	168	156	189
Consumer's price	224	264	297	264	297
Producer's share in consumer's rupee	61.16	48.86	43.43	40.91	36.36
Effectiveness (%)	3.95	39.92	11.87	20.65	23.61
Marketing efficiency (ratio)	1.57	0.96	0.77	0.69	0.57

I : Producer – Petty trader – Consumer ; II : Producer – Medium trader – Retailer – Consumer ; III : Producer – Medium trader – Wholesaler – Retailer – Consumer ; IV : Producer – Pre-harvest contractor – Retailer – Consumer ; V : Producer – Pre-harvest contractor – Wholesaler – Retailer – Consumer

Banana

(Rs./ 100 nos.)

Particulars	(Rs./ 100 nos.)		
	I	II	III
Net price received by producer	56	44	42
Marketing cost	16	28	36
Marketing margin	-	23	44
Price spread	16	51	80
Consumer's price	72	95	122
Producer's share in consumer's rupee	77.78	46.32	34.43
Effectiveness (%)	10.54	14.65	74.81
Marketing efficiency (ratio)	3.50	0.86	0.53

I: Producer – Consumer; II: Producer – Petty trader – Consumer; III: Producer – Medium trader – Retailer – Consumer

The analysis of marketing efficiency for the identified crops reveals that the prevailed marketing system in the study area was not efficient. Producers received only 35 to 50 per cent share of consumers' rupee. Marketing cost was higher due to high storage loss, higher cost of transportation, damage on transit, damage on display, etc. Marketing margin picked up by different middleman was also high due to the absence of market regulation. Thus, there is scope for increasing the net price received by the fruit growers without affecting the consumers' interest.

Consumers' reaction on arrivals and prices

Consumers' views and reaction were collected on arrival and prices of identified crops in the markets to understand the demand and supply scenario of these crops. Altogether 30 farmers were interviewed and their responses were as follows :

- 1) Supply of pineapple and orange were not sufficient in the market.
- 2) Supply of pineapple was not regular.
- 3) Both pineapple and local orange became available only for 3 to 4 months.
- 4) Availability of banana was sufficient but the price was high.

- 5) In off season, prices of banana, pineapple and orange were very high.
- 6) Consumers could not satisfy their demands due to high price.
- 7) There was no standard grade for the product.
- 8) There was no fixed price in the market against the specified product quality. Consumers were compelled to purchase at the dictated price by the retailer.

Constraints of production and marketing of identified crops

In the existing system of production and marketing in the study area, both producers and market intermediaries were confronted with numbers of physical, financial, social and institutional constraints right from production to ultimate disposal to consumers.

Production constraints	Marketing constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Lack of scientific management * Lower use of external inputs * Lack of irrigation facilities * Fruits cultivation is capital intensive * Lack of working capital * Lack of easy and adequate finance * Lack of scientific knowledge and skill * Lack of commercial motivation * Poor extension service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Inadequate facilities in market yard * Lack of scientific storage and processing facilities * Poor and inadequate village road * Damage on transit and display * Lack of proper grading * High cost of transportation * Unlawful charges * Unauthorized deduction * Lack of own capital * Lack of easy and adequate finance

Need for improvement

In order to overcome the problems of production and marketing of fruit crops in the study area some measures for improvement are urgently needed.

The major needs for efficient production and marketing system are as follows :

For efficient production	For efficient marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Use of quality planting material * Use of manures and fertilizers * Appropriate plant protection measures * Scientific cultural management * Post harvest care * Formation of farmers' organization * Creating provision for easy and adequate finance * Training provision for farmers to increase knowledge and skill * Adequate extension facilities * Organic cultivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Creation of market infrastructures * Creation of scientific storage facilities * Improved transportation facilities * Establishment of processing units * Creation of grading facilities * Improved system of market information * Availability of rural credit with lower interest rate * Formation of farmers' organization * Co-operative marketing * Distant market sale * Contact farming * Creating provision for export marketing * Government intervention to reduce unlawful charges

Conclusion

The existing system of production and marketing for identified fruit crops in the study area was not efficient and organized. Due to lack of scientific management, productivity of all the three crops in the sampled tribal farms under the study was very low which leaves the scope for improvement. The existing marketing system was also not orderly and efficient. Tribal fruit growers of the study area received only 35 to 50 per cent share of the consumers' price. Due to lack of scientific storage, transportation and processing facilities a sizable portion of the produces got damaged which increased the marketing cost. Due to absence of cold storage facility in the region farmers could not keep their product to sell it in the off season at a premium price. In most cases producers were exploited by superfluous middlemen. Both producers and market intermediaries were confronted with several constraints removal of which could help improve the production and marketing performance and could ensure higher return to the producers as well as cheaper price to the consumers along with

quality products. Adoption of improved production technology, formation of farmers' organization, adequate extension facilities, imparting training to the farmers, easy credit facilities, scientific storage and transportation facilities, establishment of processing units, improved system of market information, etc., could increase the efficiency of existing production and marketing system. This would benefit the tribal fruit growers by enhancing their household income and creating employment opportunities to the unemployed/underemployed rural tribal population.

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Tribal development, as on today, is a widely discussed subject on the

tribes in the context of India. The concept of tribal development gained importance since the independence of India and by and large started with the multipurpose tribal development blocks in the sporadic regions of the country.

Sachchidananda (1968 : 246) in the above context said that since 1957, 43 such blocks were opened throughout India but the results achieved were meagre.

However, the Government of India did not give any thought to discontinue but on recommendation of the Elwin Committee opened 300 tribal development

blocks in the third plan. The committee further recommended that the policies of development be hastened slowly in the tribal areas as there was a chance of

the tribals being bewildered by the multiplicity of the schemes. On pursuance of the recommendation of the Balwant Roy Mehta Committee democratic

decentralization was introduced in many states through the introduction of *Panchayati Raj*. It was expected that with the introduction of *Panchayati Raj* and with the goodwill of the government officials the tribals will come out

of the clutches of the touts and become the masters of their homes and architects of their own fate. However, it remains a fact that even after so many years of independence one would not find that the members of a tribal community of a

region have uniformly reaped the fruits of the various programmes under the banner of tribal development.

The problems and aspirations of the tribes is never uniform in any region of the country in spite of the fact that the tribal habitats though discreet are largely

homogenous. But, the problems are always different in different areas. As a result, a programme of overall development initiated in a particular tribal area may not be applicable in another tribal location. Hence, it is necessary to study and understand the problems and aspiration of the tribes in their regions of

Bibhash Dhar

Arumachal Pradesh

Tribal development in scarce resource area : a study on the Thingbupas in Tawang district,

habitat and after attaining a full knowledge of a situation, programmes for development may be framed from the very basic and simpler aspects. More importantly, each component of the developmental programme should be linked with the next and none should work independent of each other. If the programmes are not well coordinated the expected results would never be seen. Sharma (1976:236) in the present context rightly observed, "It is clear that planning from below require delicate handling of the finely balanced micro-world of the tribal. The developmental inputs and the instruments of directed change should be so devised that they do not unbalance the basic system but they help it in developing as an organic whole."

After independence many of the tribal communities have become the victims of rapid urbanization and industrialization in our country as it generally happens in newly developing nations. Fortunately or unfortunately many industries were set up right on the tribal habitats because of the easy access to the raw materials. As a result only a few fortunate communities could continue with their long-standing traditional customs and socio-cultural norms as they were not touched by the process of industrialization while many became victims and turned out to be fringe dwellers in the newly set up industrial towns. Tribal scenario hence changed and they could be categorized into a few distinct groups basing on their degree of assimilation with the new traits of created urban environment. Majumdar (1968:98) was of the opinion that the tribal population of India that forms more than two and a half million can be grouped into three or more cultural types : 1) There are those tribes who still cling to their tribal domicile and have maintained their patterns of life, and stick to their pristine moorings. 2) A second group of tribes have adjusted themselves to the impact of dynamic cultures, have taken to plough cultivation and settled villages, but yet preserve their values, songs and dances. They have developed an awareness, but are yet unwilling to adopt newer conditions of life, or to migrate to more hospitable areas. 3) There are again those tribes who have either migrated to urban and semiurban areas, or have been forced to live around centres of industrial life which have raised their ugly heads in tribal areas rich with mines and minerals. Their security has been invaded by the opening up of their countryside by a network of roadways and railways. Their struggles for survival have taught them the adequacy of new patterns of life, and the inadequacy of their quaint and grotesque customs and practices.

The three distinct tribal zones are crowded with specific problems awaiting solution and as has been mentioned earlier, no two areas have similar problems either. In India, the British-India regime can perhaps be held responsible for

creating some specific problems. The British created the 'excluded' and 'partially excluded' areas and hanged separate political tags to the tribes. It may be recalled here that the Inner Line Regulation as imposed by the British-India regime under Pax Britanica still continues un-objected in parts of our country. The tribal population on the other side of the Inner Line had sufficient reasons to feel alienated from the broader cultural systems of India. It mainly happened because the Britishers set foot to this country initially as traders with profit motive. On entering Assam they found it to be a recurring problem and they received consistent complaints against a few marauding tribal members from the hills of NEFA (North East Frontier Agency), today's Arunachal Pradesh, who used to come down from the hills, damaged life and property and again ran back. The British-India officials who were primarily traders thought of restricting the hooliganism by drawing a geographical line of distinction and deployed guards to remain vigilant and drive away the marauders. They never gave a sincere thought to initiate any programme of development for the hills as they found that investment in NEFA would not be rewarding towards their exchequer.

II

To initiate any process of developmental programme by any agency in a particular area, first of all one has to find the local resources available, to see if any infrastructure is available which could be further developed and made feasible. Secondly, a stock-taking has to be done to find the programme of development that have been already implemented in the region and the impact thereof. Thirdly, one has to be extra cautious while chalking out the basic approach. Care has to be taken towards the fact that the fruits of developmental programmes be shared equally by all the members of the community and should not be restricted within a group or influential members only.

The Thingbu administrative circle in the most isolated region in the north, near the MacMohan Line in the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh, is the habitat of the Thingbupas. The Thingbu administrative circle and especially the village Thingbu, located at an altitude of about twelve thousand feet above the mean sea level experiences heavy snow during the winters which is prolonged in the region. Soil condition in and around the habitat of the Thingbupas is extremely poor and do not support grain cultivation due to its sandy and rocky nature. The Thingbupas thus have remained unable to cultivate grains in spite of their sincere efforts every year, whereas, the Monpas, a dominant tribe in the neighbourhood, with their habitats in and around Tawang and West Kameng

districts have distinguished themselves as expert mountain agriculturists. Interestingly, during the short summer the mountain braes in and around Thingbu get swelled up with a luxuriant growth of grass. On a careful observation of the given natural environment added with the disadvantage of road connection with even the nearest urban centre (which is true even today) the people thought of accepting the specialized or nomadic type of animal herding known as transhumance as their means of sustainable economy. Human beings, being the most intelligent being in the animal kingdom are quite expert in altering their means of supporting life in accordance to the natural surroundings around. In this context, Dhar (1997:261) said, "It is universally accepted that human beings are exceptionally capable to adjust or modify or alter their ways of life in accordance to the physical conditions around. Very little attention has been, however, devoted to examine what individuals actually do to adopt themselves in the variegated ecological situations."

The practice of the specialized animal herding where the people involve their whole family as they move out of their homes and rear their animals for about six to seven months every year in the serene mountain meadows with the change of season is carried out by the people since time immemorial. They move upto an altitude of seventeen thousand feet above the mean sea level after making halts at the various pre-allotted mountain meadows and again start descending stage by stage towards their only permanent village, Thingbu, with the onset of snow with the approach of winter. It is important to mention here that the economy of transhumance, as the specialized herding is known, is an invention of the people while altering their economy but they are yet to receive the recognition and logistic support from the authorities concerned. Thus, as mentioned earlier, while framing the developmental programme in such virgin habitats of the tribes the approach should be tuned to attach maximum importance to the local resources and initiate measures to add better infrastructure to boost up the already existing economy of the people without even imagining of altering it which might jeopardize the whole system. Out of the total 38 families that constitute the whole population of the Thingbupas, Table 1 shows that there are ten families that do not have any domesticated animals to rear and the percentage thereof is 26.31. In many cases the people largely remain unable to purchase animals to add to their herds and flocks due to want of money. On the death of their domesticated animals that die both natural death and due to accidents as they slip down the steep braes while moving from one grassland to another during the transhumant movements, the people largely remain unable

to replenish the stock. There are again two reasons behind ; primarily, the people are not able to spend an amount which is substantial as the cost of yaks and sheep are quite high. Secondly, even if they are able to spare the required amount still they remain handicapped due to the absence of yak or sheep breeding farms in the vicinity. Not to speak of the near vicinity but such farms are not available in the whole district even. In the remote past the people used to obtain the animals from Tibet as they had quite an organized indigenous trade relation with the people over there. At present, they purchase yaks and sheep from Bhutan whenever they find it convenient to visit the Kingdom. Had there been breeding farms and sale outlets, the people would have definitely availed of the benefit. Similarly, had the people known about the animal insurance schemes they would have covered their domesticated herds and flocks that are so dear to them under the schemes. Such a plight has largely happened as the people live in isolated habitats away from the coverage of both electronic and the print media and with the added disadvantage of illiteracy. These disadvantages are jointly responsible for their ignorance of the various helpful schemes run by the concerned insurance firms. It is for information that the people never kill animals for meat which is enough to prove their affection for the domesticated animals.

Table 1. Thingbupa economy details

SL No	Head of Family	Yak	Sheep	Horse	No Animal	Govt. Job
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Karma Norbu	10	9	2		Nil
2	Rinchin Ngarup	Nil	Nil	Nil	No animals	Govt. paid labourer
3	Tsering	5	5	Nil		Nil
4	Tsering Jamba	35	12	1		Nil
5	Sangba Norbu	18	5	1		Nil
6	Dorji Samdu	10	15	1		Nil
7	Nawang Namgye	20	6	2		Nil
8	Tsering Dorji	Nil	Nil	Nil	No animals	Govt. paid labourer
9	Choiking Dondrup	Nil	Nil	Nil	No animals	Nil
10	Jamba Tenzin	2	9	Nil		Nil
11	Phurpa Gombu	15	10	1		Govt paid labourer
12	Lobsang Chetan	2	2	1		Nil
13	Leki Chomu	Nil	Nil	Nil	No animals	Nil
14	Lobsang Tsering	10	5	1		Nil
15	Rinchin Wangdi	10	7	Nil		Nil
16	Kesang Gombu	Nil	Nil	Nil	No animals	PWD watchman
17	Kesang Ngema	4	1	1		Nil
18	Lobsang Tashi	16	16	3		Nil
19	Jamba Tsering	10	9	1		Nil
20	Dawa Norbu	10	20	1		Nil

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21	Sange Tsering	10	15	Nil		Nil
22	Gombu Rinchin	5	20	Nil		Nil
23	Thupten Kesang	10	5	2		Nil
24	Lobsang Phunsu	6	6	2		Nil
25	Tashi Dondrup	Nil	Nil	Nil	No animals	PWD labourer
26	Sange Tsering	Nil	Nil	Nil	No animals	PWD labourer
27	Lobsang Norbu	10	3	3		Nil
28	Gombu Dorji	25	30	5		Nil
29	Leki Tsering	Nil	Nil	Nil	No animals	Nil
30	Dorji Khandu	Nil	Nil	Nil	No animals	Nil
31	Kesang Tsering	25	6	1		Nil
32	Pasang Norbu	10	5	Nil		Nil
33	Nima Tashi	20	40	2		Nil
34	Dawa Norbu	Nil	Nil	Nil	No animals	Nil
35	Tashi Dondrup	10	Nil	Nil		Nil
36	Nima Dondrup	25	12	5		Nil
37	Nima Dorji	20	40	3		Govt. Interpreter
38	Pem Choten	Nil	Nil	2		Husband's pension
	Grand Total	353 (49.92)	313 (41.27)	41 (5.80)	10 (26.31)	8 (21.05)

During their transhumance activities the people produce a large quantity of butter that they exchange for millet brought on the horsebacks by the vendors from Bhutan who enter with valid permits. During the winters, soon after their return from the annual transhumant activities, the Thingbupas, mostly the male members, move down to the villages of Thembang, Namchu, Nyikmadung, Chug, etc., in the adjoining Dirang civil sub-division of the West Kameng district where they generally exchange or sell their butter that are largely in demand to procure millet that they need in every of their meals back home.

It may thus be suggested that the programmes for development of the Thingbu area be framed in such a way that the dairy products be marketed in a proper channel or may even be formally exported at least to the mountain Kingdom of Bhutan and the people might be benefited with a share of the profit.

One would be astonished to learn that till date no veterinary care units were ever set up anywhere in the country of the Thingbupas, even though the economy of nomadic pastoralism persisted there since time immemorial. The people are still solely dependent on the traditional herbal medicines for their animals and themselves in absence of human health care units as well.

Following few points may be suggested to the agents of development if ever they think to work for the betterment of the studied population living in the serene isolation in the high altitudes away from the urban centres and motive force. In the Indian context, as is understood today, everything is conceived and weighed in terms of linkages with the dominant patronage around. As the communities under study are dependent on the economy of transhumance and are away from the centres of motive force, combined with the difficulties of access and communications, are left with minimum political clout. They being pastoralists are much poorer in number compared to the national population which, however, is true with all the pastoral groups of the world, as a consequence there are no appropriate institutional framework for the people.

- (i) Orientation and training courses may be arranged for the VLWs (Village Level Workers) and the extension staff members under employment with the Government of Arunachal Pradesh to visit and enlighten the people on the modern pastoral developments and discuss with them the practical problems which may cause to marginalize their economy.
- (ii) To influence and see that the development programmes and development policies be designed to foster sustainable livelihood among the transhumant communities.
- (iii) Improved species of livestock be made available to the people. *Angora* breed may be added along with the other improved varieties.
- (iv) Technological know-how along with the required infrastructure for safe storage of milk and milk products which are perishable items and the formation of the peoples' co-operative societies for proper marketing. Measures also be taken for the marketing of hides and fur (though restricted item), especially of the yaks. Wool industries to be contacted for shearing of sheep from time to time.
- (v) Integrated marketing outlet responsive to the demands of national and international customers and the development of the livestock marketing boards be established. National customers are there for the hides and yak's fur. If people from Bhutan since the long past till date do visit the Pangchenpas and the Thingbupas to exchange their bags of millet for *Churpi* and butter then possibilities are there that such items can be officially exported to the neighbouring nations

and earn foreign exchange in return and would render a steady income to the coffer of the people and help in stabilizing their economy.

- (vi) Introduction of new inputs, medicines and vaccines for disease control for the animals and care for human beings be provided to them through medico-legal practitioners.

In fine, it should be widely thought that the developmental programmes are to be directed towards some commonly shared goals that could be achieved through utilization of a relatively abundant resource.

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Involvement of Karbi women in agricultural activities : a sociological study

Jyoti Pd. Saikia and Ranima Saikia

“Without progress in the situation of women, there can be no true social development. Human rights are not worthy of the name if they exclude the half of humanity. The struggle for women’s equality is part of the struggle for a better world for all human beings and all societies.”

Bautras Bautras Ghali

Introduction

The development and growth of a society or a country greatly depends upon proper utilization and quality of its human resources. So to utilize these resources, there is a need to convert human beings into human resources. The term human beings include both men and women. From the beginning the functions of men and women have been separated based on their daily life ; but for development of the society both are contributing a lot. So, women cannot be undermined from the point of economic development. Statistics also shows that women are the backbone of the agricultural sector, amounting 70% of the agricultural labour responsible for 60% of agricultural production. Thus, recognition of the role played by the women in agriculture sector is fundamental to rural development and more importantly crucial for the development of women and fulfilment of their economic potential.

Significance of the study

The study is aimed at to focus the role played by Karbi women in agricultural activities to raise their economic potentiality, i.e. the economic condition of the family such as income, standard of living, etc. Till date a very less study has been carried out in the state of Assam and specially, considering the tribal groups residing in hilly areas. Moreover, it is very painful that after 60 years of independence also these groups are still lagging behind from their mainstream

counterparts. Thus, footing on the above facts the study was carried out considering the women of the Karbi tribe, a least known ethnic tribal group residing in the hill terrains of Karbi Anglong district of Assam. It is the high time for assessment of the role played by the women in their economy. The findings of the study will give a clear picture regarding the involvement of Karbi women that will help the governmental and non-governmental organizations to take up new developmental policies. This study is unique one in the field of social research.

The Karbis

The Karbis are one of the important components of the hill tribes of Assam. They are also known as *Arlengs*. They are mostly concentrated in the hill district of Karbi Anglong in Assam. They are also residing in small groups in Golaghat, Nagaon, Sivasagar, Kamrup, Darrang and North Cachar Hills districts of Assam. However, it is mentionable that barring the Karbi population living in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills, rest are not given the scheduled tribe status by the Constitution of India under Sixth Schedule. Due to non availability of written records by way of history the origin and exact route of migration of the Karbis is still obscure. It is believed that with many migratory groups from Central Asia, the Karbis entered the North-eastern part of the country. Traditionally, the Karbis are pile dwellers and the houses are built on wooden piles. Now a days changes are developing in type of house and way of living. The main source of livelihood is agriculture. Besides paddy, vegetables and tubers are grown by them in *jhum* fields. Rice is the staple food of the Karbis as like that of the other people of Assam.

Based on their habitation, the Karbis are divided into four broad social groups, namely Amri, Dumrali, Chinthong and Ronghang. Clan wise they are divided into five clans, viz, Inghi, Ingti, Teron, Terang and Timung. Each clan is again divided into a number of sub-clans. These clans are not hierarchical in nature and are of equal status. Karbi clans are exogamous, i.e. marriage within same clan is strictly prohibited as they are considered as brothers and sisters. The Karbis are a patrilocal and patrilineal tribe. A girl does not change her surname after marriage, but her children will use her husband's surname. The female members of the Karbi society use "pi" after their surname.

Basically, the Karbis profess Hinduism. They traditionally worship different benevolent and malevolent deities. According to them every creature of this

world is a kind God. Hemphu is the supreme God among the Karbis. They observe many rites and rituals year round to appease these deities. Sacrifice of animals and birds are inevitable and use of rice beer is indispensable for all religious rites to appease Gods.

Review of literature

Various studies conducted throughout India also revealed and supported that rural women used to play a substantial role in the process of production. Women play a monopolizing and dominating role in various agricultural activities as reported by Sardana et al. (1989) in their study "Women's contribution to India's economic and social development".

Sharma (1992) reported that in Madhya Pradesh, women were found to perform various agricultural activities like seed storage, winnowing, harvesting and weeding, etc.

According to Gulati (1964), female agricultural labour forms the single largest category of working women among the Indian working women. A study conducted by Rani and Singh (1986) showed that female labour utilization was higher than males in agriculture.

Similarly, Masavi (1991) opined that in Gujarat, female participation in agriculture was higher than male participation.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows :

- (i) To study the social background of the respondents.
- (ii) To study the extent of involvement of the respondents in agricultural activities

Method and materials

A multistage purposive-cum-random sampling method was adopted to carry out the study. The study was carried out in Karbi Anglong district of Assam. Out of the total numbers of eleven development blocks, Lumbajong development block was selected purposively. A list consisting of number of villages was collected and two villages were selected purposively where *jhum* cultivation is in practice. Households were selected randomly from the total number of households in the selected villages. Thus, a total of 50 households constituted

the total sample of the study. The women of the selected households were considered as the respondents of the study. Primary data were collected through door to door visit with the help of structured interview schedule. Simple frequency and percentage distribution was employed to analyze the data. Data were presented in tabular form for easy understanding of the findings.

Findings and discussion

Socio-economic background of the respondents

Study of social background of the respondents is important in any sociological study. Table 1 reveals that in the study area half (50.0%) of the women were in the age group of 30-40 years. Majority (78.0%) of the women were having nuclear family. 42.0 per cent of the women have medium size family. Majority of the women do not have formal education. Agriculture is the main source of income for cent per cent of the family. Greater percentage (86.0%) of the women have monthly family income in between Rs 2000/- to 3000/-. Data regarding operational landholding shows that 96 per cent of the families were having more than 5 bighas of cultivable land.

Extent of involvement in agricultural activities

Findings of the study regarding involvement of women in farm activities along with the percentage analysis are presented in Table 2. Activity-wise analysis is as follows :

Selection of seeds including hulling

It is clear from the data presented in Table 2 that majority of the women had shown higher level of participation in selection of seeds (74.0%) and cleaning of seeds (82.0%).

Land preparation activities

A close perusal of Table 2 shows that participation of women in case of cutting and burning of jungles was low, i.e. 68.0 per cent and 82.0 per cent respectively. Further, analysis of the table shows that in case of land leveling

the involvement of women was high (68.0%). Among the total sample 54 per cent of the women had shown medium level of involvement in cleaning of boundaries.

Table 1. Socio-economic background of the respondents

N= 50

Characteristics	F	%
(i) Age		
(a) 20-30 yrs	12	24.0
(b) 30-40 yrs	25	50.0
(c) 40 yrs and above	13	26.0
(ii) Type of family		
(a) Nuclear	39	78.0
(b) Joint	11	22.0
(iii) Size of family		
(a) Small	12	24.0
(b) Medium	21	42.0
(c) Large	17	34.0
(iv) Educational qualification		
(a) Illiterate	45	90.0
(b) Can read and write	5	10.0
(c) Primary School	-	-
(v) Monthly income of the family		
(a) Below Rs. 2000/-	--	-
(b) Rs. 2001-3000/-	43	86.0
(c) Rs. 3001-4000/-	7	14.0
(vi) Operational landholding		
(a) 1-5 bighas	2	4.0
(b) More than 5 bighas	48	96.0

Table 2. Involvement of women in agricultural activities

N=50

Sl. No.	Agricultural activities	Level of involvement		
		High	Medium	Low
1.	Selection of seeds including hulling			
	(i) Selection of seeds	74.0	26.0	-
	(ii) Cleaning of seeds	82.0	18.0	-
2.	Land preparation			
	(i) Cutting of jungle	18.0	28.0	68.0
	(ii) Burning of jungle	-	18.0	82.0
	(iii) Land leveling	68.0	32.0	-
	(iv) Cleaning of boundaries	20.0	54.0	26.0
3.	Sowing activities			
	(i) Mixing of seeds	88.0	12.0	-
	(ii) Broadcasting	94.0	6.0	-
	(iii) Dibbling	94.0	6.0	-
4.	Inter-cultivation activities			
	(i) Care of germination	36.0	64.0	-
	(ii) Weeding	42.0	50.0	8.0
	(iii) Ward and watching of standing crops	18.0	58.0	24.0
5.	Harvest and post harvest activities			
	(i) Reaping of crops	86.0	14.0	-
	(ii) Making bundles	82.0	18.0	-
	(iii) Carrying crops from field	24.0	70.0	6.0
	(iv) Threshing of grains	86.0	14.0	-
	(v) Winnowing	94.0	6.0	-
	(vi) Storage of grains for consumption	100.0	-	-
	(vii) Storage for seed purpose	84.0	16.0	-
	(viii) Drying of grains	100.0	-	-
	(ix) De-husking of grains	58.0	42.0	-
	(x) Cleaning of grains	58.0	42.0	-

Sowing activities

Sowing activities comprise of three activities. It is clear from the findings of the study that in all the activities related to sowing women had shown high level of involvement, i.e. in case of mixing of seeds 88.0 per cent and 94.0 per cent

in case of broadcasting and dibbling. This shows that sowing is mostly done by women in Karbi society.

Inter-cultivation activities

Further analysis of data presented in Table 2 shows that majority of the women were in medium level of involvement in care of germination (64.0%), weeding (50.0%) and ward and watching of standing crops (58.0%).

Harvest and post harvest activities

With regard to harvest and post harvest activities, involvement of women was recorded to be high in activities such as reaping of crops (86.0%), making of bundles (82.0%), threshing (86.0%), winnowing (94.0%), storage of grains (100.0%), storage of grains for seed purpose (84.0%), drying of grains (100.0%), de-husking of grains (58.0%) and cleaning of grains (58.0%). In carrying crops from field majority of the women's participation level was medium (70.0%). This is evident from the findings of the study that women's participation level was high in almost all the activities related to harvest and post harvest. And in case of storage of grains for consumption and drying of grains cent per cent women were found to be involved highly.

Conclusion

From the above analysis it has been observed that most of the women were middle aged, illiterate and having insufficient family income. Hence, governmental and non-governmental organizations should introduce special educational and training programmes considering the needs of these categories of women, which will definitely help in increasing their knowledge about various developmental aspects so that they will go ahead for further development of the society.

From the findings of the study it is also leading to obvious conclusion that women are the backbone of hill agriculture. Contribution of women in agricultural activities stands indispensable. But they have little access to the knowledge of improved methods of agriculture. So, concerted efforts are essential to develop their potentialities by improving their knowledge, attitude and skill on improved agricultural technologies, so that they prove to be equal partner and get recognition as well. The responsibilities of the agricultural scientists cannot be kept aside in developing overall agricultural world which comprises majority of the population.

Basic truth towards the grim reality is that men must eat food. They cannot

eat money and materials although the world is growing fast towards materialism. All beings must eat to live. It is agriculture which is the core source of producing food. The growth of civilization along with the growth of human society is based on agriculture. Our indigenous women are rightly concerned with agriculture. State has got optimum responsibility to uphold the cause of agriculture, i.e. to uphold the cause of survival of human society and beings at large.

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Tribal problems of Assam and solution to their ends

Chandra Mohan Kalita

Introduction

Before we have a discussion on the tribal problems, it is worth mentioning, what is meant by the term tribe. According to Oxford dictionary a tribe is a group of people in a primitive or barbarous stage of development, acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor.

Article 342 (1) of the Indian Constitution empowers the President to specify a tribe to be a scheduled tribe by public notification. There are 25 scheduled tribes in Assam as per Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 2002.

The paper attempts to highlight the major problems and prospects of development in respect of the tribals of Assam. The state of Assam is situated between latitudes 24°05' and 28°32' N and longitudes 89°26' and 97°03' E.

The literacy percentage of tribal population in Assam as per 2001 census is not encouraging. The problem of dropouts among the tribal pupils is higher in remote villages. Majority of tribal population live in remote places. This has hindered their quality of life.

Few problems of tribal dominated areas

Industrialization

The industrialization in central India brought miseries to Munda and Oraon tribes of Jharkhand, due to displacement of their land. They had to profess rickshaw pulling from cultivation. Same kind of situation happened to the tribes of North Cachar Hills district of Assam, where NEEPCO Hydro electric projects displaced them. They have been fully compensated by the government. But they could not utilize their money for which they had to settle in nearby Kruming forest areas, where from they are forced to evict by forest department.

Red Tapism

The bureaucratic control of the administration of tribal areas have sometimes hampered socio-economic growth.

It may be mentioned here that cultural aggression on tribal cultural affairs by outsiders is also detrimental to economic growth and tranquility in tribal dominated areas.

Lack of operational NGOs

The NGOs are working in black and white. Field investigation reveals that almost 80 to 85 per cent of total registered NGOs are non functioning. Some of the NGOs dealing with tribal affairs have been waiting for funding in years together. But they could not achieve their goal. As a result, they could not deliver goods to the tribals.

Prevalence of insurgency

Problems of insurgency in tribal dominated areas of North-east India, especially, PLA in Manipur, NSCN in Nagaland, DHD in Karbi Anglong & North Cachar Hills of Assam and BLT in Boro areas are creating havoc in the region. Besides, the presence of ULFA in Assam is creating panic in the region. Of course, this is happening due to insufficient attention for development by Govt. of India to N.E.

Displacement of tribals

Displacement of tribals from their homeland due to the execution of developmental projects in the state during 1947-2000 drove out their community property resources (CPRs).

During this period of time almost 14 lakh acres of land were acquired by the projects. But the Government of Assam has provided monetary compensation against 3.8 lakh acres of land only. Besides out of 3,000 families only 10 have got rehabilitation in North-east India.

Problems of cultivation

The tribals are facing a lot of agriculture related problems. For example, if we specifically ponder the problems of the Mishings, we will get the following problems :

Many of the Mishing families do not possess periodic *patta* for cultivation of land at their disposal. Besides, a lot of Mishings are being effected by the recurrence of flood.

Lack of infrastructural facilities

The socio-economic overheads like proper roads, water supply, electricity, railway network, sanitation are some of the problem areas of tribal communities of North-east India in general and Assam in particular.

In majority of tribal villages, the link roads to national highways or state main roads are not even *pucca* in many places. This hinders economic growth of these areas.

Many houses are not electrified in tribal areas of Assam. Lack of electricity is also not conducive for smooth functioning of the people.

Regarding railway network it is seen that many villages of North-east India are not linked up by railway network.

Education

The literacy in tribal areas is not satisfactory. Due to non availability of teacher of specific tribal dialect in North-east, education of elementary level hampers educational growth. It is quite obvious that without educational development a community could not excel in their socio-economic life. As mentioned earlier, the problem of dropouts, the poor economic condition of the majority of the tribals, lack of proper road facilities have created a vacuum in the growth of tribal societies. There is also lack of vocational education in the tribal dominated areas of North-east India.

Land

Land has not been treated as most valuable resource in tribal areas. They take it as casually. Land tenure system was such that the rights over land are not hereditary and transferable.

Railway network

The railway network in many North-eastern states is not even started. Hence, adequate attention may be given to opening up railway lines in these areas.

Hydro electricity

Hydro electricity is a potential power generating arrangement. But there are a lot of avenues in N.E. India. So, these can be used by the government. This will help on the improvement of infrastructural facilities in N.E. states in general and the tribal areas in particular.

Development of small scale industries

The development of cottage and small sector is an important one. Because it will help in generating a lot of employment of manpower in the tribal dominated areas. Development of cottage industries in the tribal dominated areas like bee keeping, weaving, furniture making, gates & grills making and tailoring, etc., may be undertaken.

Development of agriculture

Proper land distribution to marginal farmers from land ceiling areas is the need of the hour. Besides, adequate attention may be given for the modernization of agriculture. The farmers may be guided by the block office for overall development of agriculture.

Sustainable development in tribal areas

The backward and poorer tribal population must be activated for the development in N.E. India for sustainable development. Sustainable development could be ascertained through the co-ordinated effort by forest department in these states too.

Development of cultural affairs

The state government should encourage the various tribal artists by awarding scholarship. Besides, exposure to different areas may be given due consideration.

Conclusion

The tribal development is a way of life for the poorer population in tribal areas. Their development is quite essential. The quality of life may be upgraded by the state governments and the NGOs and related agencies.

Status of men in matrilineal societies with special reference to the Khasis

Dhritiman Sarma

Introduction

India has a population of 8% tribes (Dube) and hence, according to their population the constitution has granted 8% reservation for them in all sectors including jobs, schools and in promotion of jobs through roster system. Gone are the days of 1950s or before independence when these people lived below poverty line but since independence the government introduced several measures to make them educated and to remove poverty.

Along with the Government they got the help from the Christian missionaries as well. As a result, they seem to live a normal wealthy life now, but so far no one has paid any attention to the men of the tribal communities notably those of matrilineal communities. This has created one of the major problems in tribal development.

Men have been neglected for years in the name of women development. It was Jawaharlal Nehru, who said, "When a man is educated, a person is educated, but when a woman is educated, a family is educated." So this was the beginning of neglecting men in society and as a result, on the basis of such sayings, the Khasis, willingly or unwillingly neglect their boys. However, this doesn't mean that we want to blame any particular scholar who has so far worked for women upliftment, but here, the problem of tribal men lies with their system of matrilineal customs. And also, Nehru didn't say to neglect the boys, rather he stressed much on equality as at that time, women were considered to be in their so-called lower status. But this so-called lower status of women is an issue for the female chauvinists like Brinda Karat and Renuka Chowdhury. Because, if women constitute a lower status, then all over the world, women would have never got a longer life span than men. From the developed USA (pci \$ 35,000) to the poorest country East Timor (pci only \$ 400) women get a longer life span of 5 more years than men. Had they been lived in a lower status, it would have not been possible. (Per capita income source : Manorama Year Book, 2007).

Although this paper centres round the Khasis and other matrilineal societies, yet we need to study the women oriented problems worldwide. Women are using the laws which are made to protect them from atrocities, not only here, but worldwide. Today, in every field, women have outnumbered men in all fields. One such ridiculous information is that in the late 1990s, male criminals are rising at the rate of 10% while the rising rate of women is 67% (Medhi, *Har Gouri Baxoti Houk*, p. 39).

Regarding the cases of sexual harassment, Dr. Jeuti Barua, Director, Law Research Institute, Gauhati High Court, stated that in such cases, it is better to check the dress codes, and other behaviour of the woman concerned. According to her, many women use their sexuality for promotion and when it doesn't happen, they generally file cases against their bosses. Inside the family court, the women are more aggressive than their husbands, and so it is quite natural for them to be more aggressive inside their home. This news was published in *Ajir Batori*, an Assamese daily, November 8, 1998, by Dr. Jeuti Barua. (Originally taken from Dr. B.K. Medhi's book *Padum Pator Pani*, p. 40.)

Leena Sharma, in her article "*Karyalaya, Mohila aru Zouno Utpiron*" (Office, Women and Sexual Harassment), published in an Assamese weekly newspaper, *Saadin* has stated, "From my personal experience, I have seen that if any woman uses her sexuality towards her boss and if she doesn't get her desired goal, i.e. promotion in such case, then she generally files cases of sexual harassment" (1995) (Medhi, *Padum Pator Pani*, p. 40).

If the condition of men is such in patrilineal society, then it is quite natural for the man to live in a more miserable condition in the matrilineal society.

Matrilineal societies

In North-east India, there are only three matrilineal societies, viz, the Khasis, the Garos and the Jaintias and along with them in Manipur also, women have a special role. In such societies men have relatively a low status as compared to women but in all patrilineal societies both man and woman have equal status.

In these matrilineal societies men are facing various problems, but due to male ego, fear of being ashamed; and of women organizations, no one

has dared to bring this issue as a problem of tribal development so far. Men constitute 50% of the total society and hence, if such a large group is suppressed then a society cannot progress.

Family laws

Family laws all over the world are women oriented. There is no exception to this rule in North-east India as well. In these matrilineal societies, as women are more educated and so they know about the loopholes of these laws and hence, in many cases, men are harassed through these women oriented laws. Laws are implemented to safeguard the weak, but in case of matrilineal societies of India as in Meghalaya, law is harassing the weaker section by making provisions of safeguards for the strong. In Khasi, Garo and Jaintia societies, men are beaten by their wives and treated as slaves. But now, after being beaten by their wives, they are beaten by police too with the help of several anti men laws like Article 498 A of IPC (Indian Penal Code) and recently implemented Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

Education

In the above mentioned matrilineal societies, girls have outshone boys in all levels of education, right from elementary education to higher studies, yet grants for education are meant for women only. As a result, all these people living in the area are working on women's problem, making man the neglected species of the society. Feminists, more particularly the female chauvinists stress that throughout the ages, women were not allowed to study. But this is not true, because during Vedic period, girls also had *Upanayan* ceremony (the ritual of wearing Holy Thread) and there were several women scholars at that time like Vishwabara, Opala and Lopamudra. (Devi, Nilima, 1991, Radio Talk, AIR)

Health

When any central government's scheme for tribal health is launched, these schemes also focus mostly on women. But in these matrilineal societies, women enjoy a better position in the society, and as a result, on the basis of health issues, girls are given much more attention by their parents. So from two sides, women are having advantageous position, and men are losing in this aspect as well. And also we have seen that all over the world including

India, women have longer life expectancy than men. But men are not given attention by government or any organization in this regard. But as the status of men is lower in matrilineal societies, generally the families expect female child and if a male child is born, then both the father and the newly born baby are neglected.

Methodology applied to collect case studies

The methodology applied was purely Social Anthropological. The investigator, in terms of collecting legal documents, met two advocates of Gauhati High Court, Mr. Arup Kumar Sarma and Mr. Lalan Prasad Thakuria, notably in collecting data on law abuse. Then, to prepare this paper on status of men in matrilineal societies, the investigator tried his best to get data from the Khasi men. But they are all ashamed to discuss this issue and the educated men told him that he should not ask anything, rather status of both men and women is equal in their matrilineal society. But this is not true, as a news item published around 7 years ago (c.2000) in *Dainik Asam*, an Assamese daily from Assam revealed that a new Khasi Men's Right Organisation has been formed because the Khasi men are dominated by their womenfolk and they are not allowed to do anything except rearing the children, cooking and in shifting cultivation. Although this sounds quite ridiculous, yet this is the reality of Khasi men. Then when the investigator found no response from the Khasis, then he had to depend on the non Khasis, notably the people belonging to Assamese, Bengali and other Hindi speaking communities either living in Guwahati or anyone who used to live in Shillong earlier. So, here below, two case studies have been shown which the field investigator collected from Dr. Nilima Devi, Head, Deptt. of Sanskrit, Arya Vidyapeeth College, Guwahati.

Case Study 1

It was Bel's mother who used to scold her husband with Bel's scale if he was sleeping in the morning, especially during the school hours of Bel. Bel was their daughter. Bel enjoyed it very much. But in patrilineal societies, boys are taught at an earlier age to respect women, but this was not so in the matrilineal society, rather little Bel was taught to enjoy this situation. Had it become in a patrilineal society, then the women's organisation would have created a hue and cry over it, especially in the case of wife beating or on the basis of a false charge by a woman on her husband.

Case Study 2

It was Meena who had physical affairs with several boys / men and so her husband told her restrain herself from such relationship. But Meena, with the help of her two sons, threw away her husband and then she started another affair with a boy of her son's age. Later, with the help of her two boys, she killed that boy with the help of poison, and a case was registered against her by her neighbours, but the parents of the boy didn't want to proceed and as a result, the case was dismissed.

Comment

Thus, on the basis of the two case studies, we have seen the low status of men in the Khasi society. Their tradition has empowered their women so much that they are not even afraid of committing any crimes like murder and the other illegal crimes like prostitution, which is a part of the game. By saying this, I'm not blaming all Khasi women, but their traditional family system is so weak due to the lower status of the men that due to this a major problem has occurred towards the road to tribal development.

Crime against men

If the honourable Supreme Court and the High Court are very much concerned about the crime against women, then the misuse of such laws, is definitely a heinous crime against men, as it doesn't allow men to live with dignity in the society, and similar is the case with the tradition of the matrilineal societies of the Khasis, the Garos and the Jaintias. As system, be it legal or traditional, when it outrages the modesty of men in society, it is better to avoid it as far as possible. Dignity, respect and such other terms are not only to be meant for women. But just like the men are taught to respect the womenfolk as mother or sister, similarly, it is the duty of the womenfolk to respect men as brother and father. (Gandhi, M.K.)

Some of the cases shown below are of various cases of crime against women, but in all these cases, except a few, majority of the cases were proved to be false, i.e. the men accused were acquitted. At the time, when law helps only women, it is really a matter of fact that a large number of men are accused and later acquitted. Women's organisations blame the judiciary, when a man convicted in such cases get acquitted and they say the criminal escapes through the loopholes of law, but they better blame the bad women, who try to misuse such laws for their own benefit and in course

of time, the innocent men accused are proved to be innocent. The most notable point in women oriented case is that both police and the judiciary consider the woman to be true and in such case, the man convicted will have to prove that he is innocent. That is to say, guilty until proven innocent. So the case of escaping through the loopholes of law doesn't arise here.

In Barpeta, there were four rape cases, but the three were acquitted and one was sentenced to a fine of Rs 50,000/-.

In Cachar, out of the three cases, three cases are pending.

In Kamrup, there is only one rape case which is pending.

In Nagaon, out of three cases, 3 were sentenced to imprisonment and two were acquitted.

In Sonitpur, out of six cases, only one was sentenced to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment. The other cases are pending.

Even in terms of 498A cases, i.e. the cases regarding the domestic violence and cruelty and dowry, the results were similar to those of the misuse of rape cases. Here, out of 22 cases found in the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Barpeta, Nagaon, Sonitpur, Golaghat, Sivsagar and Dibrugarh, only 3 were proved to be true. (Thakuria)

Even in an advanced country like the USA, where everyone is said to live under equality, 41% of the total rape charges were proved to be false. (hope4men, a website)

Now, if the condition of men is such in the patrilineal society, then it is quite easier to visualize the condition of men in matrilineal society.

Conclusion

Thus, in order to study the problems and prospects of tribal development of North-east India, we have seen that, although the problems of tribes have been diminishing day by day, yet there are various problems, which have been unnoticed so far. The root cause of such problems is nothing but the matrilineal custom. Although women are considered to be the weaker sex in the society, yet in reality it is not so. Rather, with the help of the women oriented laws, which are anti men in nature, men are becoming the second citizen and also becoming legally vulnerable and defenceless. The law is protecting the women's rights by depriving the men of their natural

rights. As a result, the modern men are enslaved to the women and this tradition from the matrilineal societies has become contagious to the patrilineal societies as well. That is why, a few examples were taken from patrilineal societies in terms of law, where women are misusing anti family and anti men laws to harass men.

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Impact of change in traditional food habits of the Sonowal Kacharis of Assam

Devika Rani Challeng Deka Boruah

Introduction and aim

For the development of nation, the overall development of its people is must in all spheres. They should be developed socially, culturally, educationally and should have sound physical and mental health along with economical uplift. In this regard the issue of tribal development has become an important subject in India as it constitutes about 8% of the total population. They are technologically and economically backward, poverty stricken, illiterate and have several complex problems of their own. In view of their low technological development and general economic backwardness and some complex problems of socio-cultural adjustment, they are of special concern of the nation.

The problem of development both social and economic involved complex issues in formulation, implementation and evaluation of plan for development of tribal regions. It is found that majority of the tribes are engaged for their livelihood in farming on their own small or medium size land holdings. Substantial numbers of the tribals are also engaged as agricultural labour. They are generally landless labour or have extremely small and uneconomic land holdings. One can also see that the tribal life is greatly conditioned and influenced by forest and other natural resources on which they depend upon for their supply of food, fodder, firewood and animals. Forest is also an important source for their diurnal livelihood.

Urbanisation is closely associated with the process of industrialization. Since the beginning of industrialization, efficiency and productivity in all

fields of human interference have gone up considerably, primarily due to the development of scientific and technological advancement. The application of improved scientific and technological device has now become an important force for the development of economy and socio-cultural transformation.

In view of this, an investigation was carried out to find out the linkage of change in food habits and their implication citing the Sonowal Kacharis of Ukhamati village of Dhemaji district and Hoonghongia of Moran of Dibrugarh district representing North Bank and South Bank respectively. Stress was given on how changes have taken place with respect to attitude, religion, food, education and economy, market network, taste, inculcation on the young generation, etc., for new food habits of the tribes.

Findings and discussion

There are different communities and societies in the world. They have their own food habits depending on the geographical location of particular area and dominant food produces in that area. They acquired their own traditional food habits at a certain period of time depending on the dominance of the availability of food, climate, health concern, etc. On the other hand, as a result of cultural contact they adopt certain types of food habits which are rather different from the traditional pattern.

The Sonowal Kacharis have their traditional food habits. But these traditional food habits are changing to a certain extent due to the outward influence of other factors like religion, attitude, education, food and economy. This is due to the growing extension of the Gogamukh township and Moran town in Dhemaji and Dibrugarh districts, respectively. Gogamukh township is well connected with the other towns of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, etc. Similarly, Moran town is suitably connected with Sibsagar and Dibrugarh. So, people from different communities, cultures and places get mingled and interact, due to which various cultural traits get transmitted to one another. As such, change and adoption of certain types of traits take place. These changes are also influencing the food habits of the Sonowal

Kacharis of the studied villages, although they are still pursuing the traditional food habits of their own.

It is seen that the most important change which has taken place in the society is the drinking of tea which is very remarkably visible. Along with tea tin milk, sugar, health drinks like horlicks, complan, bournvita, etc., and even coffee are also being introduced in their society. In their earlier days they offered *mad*, along with dry roasted powdered fish or roasted or fried fresh fish, etc., to the guest. *Komal chawal* (soft rice), *cira* (flat rice), *sandah gurah* (roasted rice flour), *pithas* (rice cake), different *ladus* made from rice flour, coconut, etc., were also offered to the guest. But nowadays they usually offer tea along with biscuits, cakes, *bundia*, *bhujia*, *dalmoot*, *chana*, *badam*, etc., which they purchase from the nearby market. Besides these bread-butter, ghee, refine oil, flour for *chapatti* from which *roti*, *losi* are prepared, are purchased and are served to the guest and they eat at their breakfast and in the evening times. They also offer those items in the tiffin of their children to eat during lunch time at school and college. Apart from these *chужи*, chow chow, maggi, chewoi, *papad*, etc., are also brought from the market.

Different food items like *goja*, *samosa*, *kachuri*, *paratha*, *rosgolla*, *lalmohan*, etc., are occasionally brought to their villages from the nearby market in Gogamukh, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sibsagar, etc., for consumption. These items are usually brought by the persons who work outside their villages. They sometimes bring cold drinks, like frooti, fanta, coca cola, etc. These food items are also brought to the villages by their children who go to study in schools and colleges outside their villages. Jam, jelly, sauce, pickles are also brought from the market for consumption. Nowadays, items like *paratha*, *lossi*, *rosgolla*, *lalmohan*, *bundia*, *bhujia*, etc., are served in marriage ceremony, *shraddha* ceremony, in the ceremony associated with child birth, puberty rites, etc., instead of rice with traditionally prepared curries, *komal chawal* (soft rice), *cira* (flat rice), *akhoi* (puffed rice), *sandah gurah*, *pitha gurah* with curd or milk along with jaggery or molasses. Dry fruits like *khismis*, *kaju badam*, *khejur*, nuts, etc., and different types of chocolate, toffee and chewing gum are purchased or brought from the market for consumption. Mouth freshners like *mitha sof*,

sof, *hiramaṭi*, *mithapati pans* instead of traditional betel nuts and leaves with lime are being served to the guest.

Different varieties of pulses, namely *mug*, *masur* and *chana* which are not produced by them locally are brought from the market for consumption. All the pulses are usually cooked by using mustard oil which is also purchased from the market. In earlier days, the Sonowal Kacharis usually used to boil their food items or roast the item in fire and the use of oil was very less. Now they prepare a number of curries and fried items by using mustard oil as well as refine oil. Grams like *motor*, *kabuli chana* are also brought from the market and cooked with oil after boiling. At the time of preparation of various curries, spices like cumin seeds, cinnamon, black pepper, cardamom, *garam masala* (a mixture of cloves) are frequently added. While preparing meat oil, *garam masala* and some of the above mentioned spices are always used now. But in earlier days they did not use those spices in preparation of meat or any curries. The spices and oil now become a common item in their daily diet. They feel shame in cooking and eating their curries, meat, fish, etc., by boiling. They also feel shame in entertaining their guest by cooking in traditional ways. Particularly the younger generation is more interested in processed food and purchased food items of fast food like chow chow, maggi, *chuji*, *papad*, etc. The younger generation is less interested in the home cooked and traditionally made light meal and snacks like the *komal chawal* (soft rice), *cira* (flat rice), different *pithas*, *sandah gurah*, *ladus*, etc. They are less interested in preparing those items. They usually say that it has storage, preservation problems and also it consumes more time and hard labour for preparing those food items. As now it is seen that people are more interested in other occupation than in agriculture as it was damaged by floods and other flood related factors.

Nowadays, varieties of foreign liquors such as whisky, brandy and rum, etc., are purchased from the market for consumption. Usually the younger generation prefers to drink those instead of their homemade country liquor as it has become a fashion. Among the Sonowal Kacharis the preparation of *madpitha* is not known by the younger generation. The fermentating agents are now purchased from the nearby market or from very few

households of the village who prepare them. The use of right proportion of different leafy vegetables, rice, water, etc., is very important in making the cake or *pitha*. Otherwise the country liquor may become sour which is not fit for consumption. All these activities are time consuming and laborious according to the younger generation.

The younger generation is not interested for engagement in agriculture and allied activities such as cultivation, labouring jobs in agriculture and livestock rearing, etc. As the villagers are not using modern technology in agriculture so a large number of labour is required and therefore, the present generation of peasants carries out only the *sali kheti*, as this is a preferred variety. They also even say that they do not get the market value in selling their agricultural product. Therefore, it is found that unemployment problem has raised and they are becoming more economically weak due to purchasing of those new food items and not using the land for productivity and production.

Conclusion

From the above analysis we may come to the conclusion that new scientific or the present technologies have to be introduced in their society. Such technologies have to be brought into application which they can easily avail and are within their reach. Their attitude also has to be changed gradually towards agriculture and its allied activities. They have to be trained to grow those food items which can be grown in the environmental condition of that area where they are inhabiting, which they are not growing or producing traditionally, but are interested in consumption of all those non-productive items and have the commercial value. The growth of small entrepreneurship for the product preparation, distribution, and marketing network is needed.

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Tribal health and medicine : a case study among the Karbis of the Karbi Anglong district of Assam

Girindra Nath Das

In India the scheduled tribes numbering 678 consist of 16.4 million households and a total population of 84.3 million as per 2001 Census. The percentage of scheduled tribe population accounts for 8.20 of the total population of the country. In North-east India the scheduled tribes with 18.52 lakh households and 1.03 crore population constitute 26.12% of the total households (70.92 lakh) and 27.02% of the total population (3.83 crore) in the region. Assam is having 25 scheduled tribes with 5.93 lakh households and a total population of 33.08 lakh indicating 12.41% of the total population of the State. The tribes with diverse origin and rich cultural heritage have been living in various levels of development under different environmental conditions.

The health of the tribal people has been invariably connected with socio-cultural and magico-religious practices since time immemorial. They have developed traditional ways of protecting health against various diseases. According to them, some diseases are caused by deities and evil spirits. As a result, they worship them sacrificing birds and animals for their appeasement. Moreover, the traditional methods of curing ailments and diseases by applying wild roots, herbs and plants, etc., are practised by the people. However, with the establishment of the medicare institutions such as hospitals, primary health centres and dispensaries, etc., throughout the length and breadth of the country, the tribal people have come forward to avail the benefits offered by these institutions. Of course, this does not mean that the tribal people have completely given up their traditional practices of curing diseases. As a matter of fact, they happen to practise both traditional and modern scientific methods of treatment.

The tribal people suffer from various types of diseases such as allergy, anaemia, asthma, blood pressure, bronchitis, cataract, cholera, conjunctivitis,

cough, diarrhoea, dysentery, eczema, fever, goitre, headache, itching, jaundice, leprosy, leucorrhoea, pneumonia, malaria, measles, paralysis, rabies, soreness of eyes, tuberculosis and worm infection, etc.

So far as the concept of health and perception of diseases in the country are concerned, Basu (1994 : 317) opines, "Attention is now being increasingly focused on the problem of rural health, particularly with regard to the tribals and other backward groups who represent a sizeable proportion of the population in India. The World Health Organisation defines health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity' (WHO 1971). However comprehensive, this has rarely been practicable....."

The concept of health, disease, treatment, life and death among the tribes is as varied as their culture. Tribal society is guided by traditionally laid down customs to which every member is expected to conform. The fate of the individual and the community depends on their relationship with unseen forces which intervene in human affairs. If men offend them, the mystical powers punish by causing sickness, death or other natural calamities. In tribal society, disease is seen to be caused by the breach of some taboo or by hostile spirits, the ghosts of the dead. They believe in the existence of benevolent and malevolent spirits, the former playing a protective role, while the latter are considered to be responsible for causing disease and epidemics. Magico-religious practices are resorted to for the treatment of diseases."

With regard to the necessity of preserving medicinal plants and herbs, Sharma Thakur (1997 : 71) comments, "At present data about ethno medicine are extremely meagre and the relevant institutes like the Tribal Research Institutes should be entrusted to collect data on tribal indigenous medicine. Due to opening up of the tribal areas and due largely to the expansion of infrastructural facilities and establishment of medium and heavy industries in the tribal areas, many of the herbs and creepers having medicinal value are disappearing and the educated sections of the tribal people are depending more and more on the modern health care system. The professional doctors discourage the illiterate tribals to take recourse to traditional medicines. But the importance of ethno medicine has been emphasized by eminent researchers like Boding (1940), Elwin (1955), Bhowmick (1955), Mann and Mann (1986), Roy Burman (1986), Vidyarthi

(1969), Mathur (1982) and Jain (1970), etc. The medical scientists have discovered many wonder drugs by using herbs. The Anthropological Survey of India has done a useful job by undertaking a survey on tribal system of health care among thirteen ethnic communities including Bodo Kacharis of Assam. More in-depth studies in this regard have to be undertaken before disappearance of the untouched wealth of unknown medicinal value."

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, New Delhi has prepared the Draft National Policy on Tribals (2003) wherein health status of the tribal people inhabiting the country has been highlighted. The National Policy on Tribals "seeks to :

- Strengthen the allopathy system of medicine in tribal areas with the extension of the three-tier system of village health workers, auxiliary nurse mid-wife and primary health centres.
- Expand the number of hospitals in tune with tribal population.
- Encourage, document and patent tribals' traditional medicines.
- Promote the formation of a strong force of tribal village health guides through regular training-cum-orientation courses.
- Formulate area specific strategies to improve access to and utilization of health services.
- Strengthen research into diseases affecting tribals and initiate action programme.
- Eradicate endemic diseases on a war footing."

Taking into consideration the above facts in mind, a study was carried out in 2004 to bring into focus the health status of the Karbis inhabiting the Karbi Anglong district of Assam. It may be mentioned here that Karbi Anglong is an autonomous hill district constituted under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. According to 2001 Census the total population in the district is 8.13 lakh, the males and females being 4.22 lakh and 3.91 lakh respectively. It is to be noted that the Karbis with a total population of about 3.30 lakh constitute the major tribal group in the district. In fact, the name of the district is given after their name.

Ethnically the Karbis belong to the Mongoloid group and linguistically they belong to Kuki-Chin group of the Tibeto-Burman sub-family of the Sino-Tibetan family.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study are to highlight the attitude of the Karbis towards scientific methods of treatment of diseases and to identify the medicinal plants and herbs generally used by them generations after generations. Moreover, an attempt is being made to take into account other traditional practices for curing diseases since health and culture are closely related to socio-religious and cultural factors. The study also includes drinking water facilities, sanitation and other infrastructure facilities available in and around the selected Karbi villages.

Methodology

Sample survey, Case study and Observation methods have been taken up for the study. The list of medical institutions located in various parts of the district are collected from the Office of the Joint Director of Health Services, Karbi Anglong, Diphu. Again, the list of Karbi villages surrounding the medicare institutions are collected. Altogether 62 villages have been selected on the basis of random sampling for the study. Household schedules have been administered to each household of the selected villages. Important particulars in relation to each village are recorded in the village schedule. Moreover, another schedule is used for collecting particulars from the medical institutions.

Major findings of the study

The findings of the study cannot be presented in a detailed manner in this paper. Therefore, an attempt is being made to furnish the major findings under the following headings :

Department of Health & Family Welfare

In the district of Karbi Anglong there are 2 Civil Hospitals, 5 Rural Hospitals, 25 PHCs, 8 State Dispensaries, 9 Medical Sub-centres, 7 Subsidiary Health Centres and 136 Family Welfare Sub-centres. It has been

found that 65 posts of allopathic doctors, 14 posts of pharmacists, 14 posts of staff nurses and 1 post of laboratory technician under the Health Department are lying vacant. Unless the posts are filled in, provision of proper health care to the needy people is merely a distant dream. It may be mentioned here that the number of patients treated and surgical operations performed in the medical institutions has been increasing day by day. Annual deaths in respect of respiratory diseases, child birth and malaria during the year 2004-05 are found to be 80, 33 and 33 respectively in the district. Measures have been taken by the department for health education, school health services, registration of birth and death, leprosy control, malaria, family welfare, immunization and IFA tablets distribution, etc. Moreover, the Programme Officer, Divisional ICDS, Diphu has undertaken various activities such as supplementary nutrition in respect of pregnant women, nursing mothers and children in the age group '6 m - 6 yrs', health check-up by ANM / DHU / MO and health immunization to pregnant women and children in the age group '0 - 6 yrs', etc.

Infrastructure facilities, demography, literacy and economy

Although most of the surveyed villages are located within a comfortable distance from the nearest motorable road, limited bus services and deplorable road conditions stand in the way of safe journey of the people. Railway facilities are not easily accessible to the villagers since only 14 villages are located at a distance of '10-15' km from the nearest railway station. The remaining villages are situated beyond 15 km. The location of the post offices is within easy reach of the people in comparison to that of the telegraph offices. Only seven villages are located at a distance of '12 km & Above' from the nearest medicare institution while 50 villages are located in the range of '0-11' km from the nearest medicare institution. As many as 45 and 40 villages are suitably situated at a distance of '0-5' km from the nearest market and bank respectively. The people of the selected villages depend mainly on *katcha* or *pusca* well for drinking water. Water from the wells is used by the people of 49 villages while water from the tubewells is used by the people of 34 villages. Generally, the people use traditional methods of filtration. As such, occurrence of water-borne diseases is frequent in the villages.

So far as demographic structure in the 62 selected villages is concerned, it has been found that there are 1,683 households with a total population of

9,692. The highest population (3,495) is found in the age group '0-15' yrs against the lowest population (369) in the age group '61 yrs & Above'. In the broad age group '16-60' yrs the total population is 5,828. Sex-ratio is higher (1000 : 970) in the surveyed villages in comparison to that of the district (1000 : 926) as per 2001 Census. Literacy rate is worked out to be 66.61% against 57.70% in the district. 42 and 12 villages have primary and M.E. schools respectively. High School, Higher Secondary School and College are located outside the selected villages.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the people. The number of households having cultivation as primary occupation is 1,132 (67.26%). On the other hand, 339 (20.14%), 154 (9.15%) and 58 (3.45%) households have adopted service, business and daily wage as primary occupation. As many as 1,152 (68.45%) households possess lands in the category '0-17' *bighas* while the remaining 531 (31.55%) have lands above 17 *bighas*. The average land-holding per household is 15.63 *bigha*. Per capita land-holding is 2.71 *bigha* only. The average annual income of a household is Rs. 39,524.00 and the per capita annual income is Rs. 6,863.00. The average annual expenditure of a household is Rs. 35,021.00 and the per capita annual expenditure is Rs. 6,081.00. On the whole, the average household possesses a marginal surplus budget of Rs. 4,503.00 only. This reveals that the people are living in a subsistence level of economy.

Health care and the people

So far as health care practices prevalent among the people of the selected villages are concerned, it has been found that about 73% of the households have made necessary arrangement for removing smoke of the hearth while 27% do not have any provision as a result of which the people suffer from air pollution. Although the people are in the habit of rearing birds and animals, most of them do not practise scientific rearing of livestock. Animals and birds are allowed to move freely and this creates an unhygienic situation. 19.43% of the households have sanitary latrines against 46.35% of households having service latrines. Others use open fields / forests for the purpose of defecation. Drainage system is not satisfactory. 15.21% of the households have permanent drainage while 84.79% make temporary canals to drain water during the rainy season. Presence of fluoride in water in some villages has also created problems. Regarding personal hygiene it may be said that 58.41% of the respondents use tooth brush, paste and

powder for cleaning teeth. Others use charcoal or twigs. Beard shaving is usually done twice/thrice a week, nail clipping once in one or two weeks and hair cutting at an interval of one or two months. 76.71% of the respondents take regular bath while 57.16% of the respondents use soap during bath regularly.

The people prefer black tea to tea with milk. 48.96% and 29.23% of the respondents drink black tea without sugar and black tea with sugar respectively. Only 21.81% drink tea with milk and sugar. Rice with leafy vegetables is their normal diet. They take meals twice a day. *Dal* and mustard oil are used by them occasionally. Vegetables are cultivated in their fields or collected from the nearby forests. Their delicacies are pork, chicken, fish and dry fish, etc. Ricebeer is their favourite beverage. Although the food habits include carbohydrate in sufficient proportion, deficiency of vegetable or animal protein deprives them from balanced diet. In other words, it may be said that the nutritional status of the people is poor. Chewing of betel nut is common irrespective of sex. 74.39% of the respondents use betel nut and 25.61% smoke *bidi*, cigarette and chew tobacco. The number of persons habituated with drinking, smoking and chewing of tobacco appears to be increasing in the surveyed villages.

With regard to the perception of aetiology, it may be said that the people subscribe to supernatural and physical factors for various types of diseases. Out of 442 non-Christian respondents, 115 (7.98%) consider black magic, witchcraft and evil eye of a person as the causes while 129 (8.95%) believe that diseases occur due to breach of social norms and taboos. There are also 348 (24.13%) respondents who consider wrath of deities and evil spirits as the cause of diseases. 407 (28.22%) believe that the people are afflicted by various types of diseases due to excessive heat, sunshine and rainfall. However, as many as 443 (30.72%) respondents consider the consumption of wrong food as the causes of ailments and diseases. The people offer worship to deities and spirits for prevention and cure of the diseases with the help of different categories of priests. Names of some deities and evil spirits associated with specific diseases are furnished in Table 1. Sometimes the help of *Lodeppi* is also sought for curing diseases. Moreover, charms and amulets are in use among them. Although the practice of black magic is believed by the people, the number of persons having first-hand experience in this regard is very limited. One respondent said that during the funeral ceremony of his father the head of a goat was observed inside the stomach of the dead. According to him death

occurred due to black magic. Another person informed that a packet containing nail, leather, hair, teeth, red coloured thread packed with banana leaf was found under the floor of the bedroom. The consequence was that a member of the family died after prolonged illness. A widow said that at the time of her husband's funeral ceremony a tortoise like thing was thrown out of his stomach. This signifies that his death was due to black magic.

The people take the help of medicine man who can cure diseases by applying medicinal plants and herbs. Table 2 shows the medicinal plants/herbs with botanical names and also in Assamese, Karbi and English equivalents along with portion used for treatment of different types of diseases while Table 3 shows the plants/herbs with botanical names and in Karbi language only and portion used for treatment of the diseases.

Table 1. Deities and spirits associated with disease

Sl. No.	Name of the disease	Deities & Spirits
1	Headache	RUITING
2	Fever	DUIKHLAI
3	Dysentery	PARAI ASE
4	Cough	HENRU AHONG
5	Jaundice	SE-MEK-ET
6	Boils	KARPONG ASE
7	Skin disease	DOR
8	Stomach pain	BOOT ASE
9	Eye disease	INGHUN-ASO
10	Snake bite	LOKROK ASE
11	Rheumatism	BEHALI
12	Malaria	HEM ANGTAR
13	Paralysis	ARNAM KETHE
14	Intermittent fever	MUKRANG AVUR
15	Recurring illness	THENG THOW
16	Frequent death of infant	SOMEME
17	Delivery	ANO AVUR KAMATHA PANJOK

Table 2. Medicinal plants / herbs

Name of the plant / herb (Botanical name)	Assamese name	Karbi name	English name	Name of the disease	Portion used for treatment
CLERODENDRUM COLEBROOKIANUM	নেফাফু	PHERKLUM	Nefafu	High pressure	Leaf
OCIMUM SANCTUM	তুলসী	TULUHI	Basil	Cough	Leaf
ZINGIBER OFFICINALE L.	আদা	HANSO	Ginger	Cough	Rhizome
AZADIRACHTA INDICA A. JUSS.	নিম	NIM	Margosa	Dysentery / Skin disease	Leaf
AVERRHOA CARAMBOLA	কদৈ	TORTE	Acid fruit	Jaundice	Fruit
PHYLLANTHUS EMBLICA	আমলখি	THELU	Emblic Myrobalan	Dysentery	Fruit
BUGENIA JAMBOLENA	জামু	JANGMI	Black berry	Diabetes	Fruit
PSIDIUM GUYAVA	ময়ূৰি	SOPRIM	Guava	Dysentery	Young shoots
CURCUMA LONGA	হালধি	THERMIT	Turmeric	Bleeding	Rhizome
SACCHARUM OFFICINARUM	কুঁহিয়াৰ	NOK	Sugarcane	Jaundice	Stem
MUSA PARADISIACA	কাঁচকল	LOTHE	Banana	Dysentery	Fruit
GENTIANA CHIRAYITA	চিবতা	CHUKOK	Chiretta	Stomach pain / Malaria	Leaf
RICINUS COMMUNIS L.	এৰা	INGKIAN	Castor	Body pain	Leaf
GARCINIA PEDUNCULATA	থেকেৰা	PRANPRI	Gamboze	Dysentery	Fruit
BRYOPHYLLUM PINNATUM	পাতেগজা	ME-ABAP	Acid plant	Burning	Leaf
CITRUS MEDICA	নেমু	NEMU	Lemon	Dysentery	Fruit
ALLIUM SATIVUM	নহক	HARSUN KELOK	Garlic	Skin disease	Stem
FICUS RELIGIOSA	আঁহত	CHERI	Peepul	Jaundice	Bark
ANANAS COMOSUS	আনাৰস	PAROK JANGPHONG	Pineapple	Jaundice	Leaf
COLOCASIA ANTIQUORUM	কহু	HENRU	Arum	Ear ache	Latex
CAJANUS CAJANS	বহৰ	THEKEK	Pigeon pea	Jaundice	Leaf
MUSA SAPIENTUM	ভীমকল	NUSADOR	Banana	Diarrhoea	Latex
MANGIFERA INDICA	আম	THARVE	Mango	Headache	Root
MIMOSA PUDICA	নিলাজী বন	BAP-THERAK	Touch me not	Jaundice	Root
CANARIUM BENGALENSE	ধনা	HIJUNG	Resin	Fracture	Powder
GOSSYPIUM HERBACEUM	কপাহ	PHELO	Cotton	Snake bite	Leaf
CARICA PAPAYA	অমিতা	MENSOPI	Papaya	Gastric	Fruit
LASIA SPINOSA	হেমৰা	CHUSOT	Arum like plant with pricks in the trunk	Jaundice	Root

Table 3. Medicinal plants / herbs

Sl. No.	Name of the plant / herb (Botanical name)	Karbi name	Name of the disease	Portion used for treatment
1	MURRAYA PANICULATA	DENGJIR	Dental problem	Twigs
2	KAEMPFERIA GAALANGA	BITHI PHAKNUR	Dog bite	Leaf
3	GARCINIA LANCEAEFOLIA	PRANSO	Diarrhoea	Fruit
4	EQUISETUM EQUISETIFOLIA	TISO LANGPONG	Fracture	Stem
5	RUAWOLFIA SERPENTINA	METHAN KROKDI	Dysentery	Root
6	COSTUS SPECIOSUS	AIUPPO	Jaundice	Stem
7	ACORUS CALAMUS	LANK ABAP	Gastric	Rhizome
8	HOULTTUYNIA CORDATA	HAN KUMPHI	Whooping cough	Leaf / Tuber
9	PAEDERIA FOETIDA	RIKANGNEMTHU	Dysentery	Leaf / Fruit
10	SWERTIA CHIRATA	BAP KEHO	Malaria / blood dysentery	Leaf
11	MIKANIA SCANDENS	RIKANG JAPAN	Blood dysentery	Leaf
12	CENTELLA ASIATICA	CHONG MOK	Gastric	Leaf
13	VITIS QUADRANGULARIS	HARJURA	Rheumatism	Plant
14	MICROPTERIS SP.	BAP KESO	Rheumatism	Leaf
15	BAPHICANTHUS CUSIA	SIBU	Dog bite	New leaf
16	AGRATUM CONYZOIDES	BONGNAI	Wound	Leaf
17	BAMBUSA TULDA	CHEK	Mumps	New leaf
18	BASELLA ALBA	CHITU	Boil	Leaf
19	SOLANUM TORVUM	HEPI-KUMBONG	Dental problem	Fruit
20	JATROPHA CURCAS	LONGLE PHARCHE	Eye disease	Latex
21	STERCULIA VILLOSA	PHARKONG	Dysentery	Root
22	MIRABILIS JALAPA	HUNMILI	Malaria	Leaf
23	CURANGA AMORA	PHARHO	Stomach ailment	Leaf

It may be pointed out here that the priests and medicine men play important roles in diagnosis and treatment of diseases in Karbi society. In order to get a clear picture three case studies have been furnished below :

Case No. 1

Mr. Chandra Sing Timung aged 75 yrs is a resident of Rong Ali Timung Arong and a retired teacher. His educational qualification is Class VI passed.

Besides his wife he has four sons and one daughter. He was interviewed on 19.8.2004 at his home to know something about the activities of the priest (*Kurusar*).

According to him the Karbis exist since the creation of the universe. Nobody can so far tell when and where the Karbis originate from. But they have one thing in common, that being sure, the Karbis since existence are *Honghari* (Hinduism) by religion. The so called *Hongharis* have so far no religious book in common like the Bible, the *Bhagavat Geeta*, etc. They get the knowledge of religion from the elders handed down from one generation to the next. They have no particular day of worship. Any day is a day to worship for the Karbis. The priest performs his duties or *pujas* by / through the tale of gods/goddesses. The priest is a genius. He can master the long verse with no single mistake, since there are some *pujas* in which, if the verse is mistaken, the priest may invite trouble for himself.

The Karbis are the worshippers of many gods and goddesses. As such, the priests are of various categories. Every individual priest has different knowledge. For example (1) There are priests who only practise black magic which the others may be ignorant about it. They are called *Thekkere*. They can kill people or curse to kill but do not know how to prevent it. There are some *Thekkere* who can kill or at the same time prevent the evil doings of others. (2) There are some priests who only can perform *pujas* of their home guarding gods or goddesses (*Hem Angtar*). As the Karbis are the worshippers of many gods and goddesses, so the same *Hongharis* may have different *Hem Angtar* or may not worship the same god or goddess which their forefathers had worshipped. They may have same religion but they may also have different *Hem Angtar* like *Rap Asor*, *Thoi Asor*, *Arnarn Kethe* or *Chojun*, *Peng Kapirdong*, *Thermit* or *Hidi Ase*, etc. Depending upon the locality they may have different gods/goddesses. (3) There are some priests who can predict or tell if someone has lost anything. They can also predict or tell about the cause of illness. Again, the same priests may perform differently. Some may use ginger, some rice, some betel nut, etc. The ginger or betel nut is cut into two equal halves. Then *mantras* are chanted and it is thrown into the net (net means sieve which is made of bamboo and used for cleaning rice – Assamese – *Saloni*, Karbi – *Ingkrung*). Some priests may use *banta* which usually consists of betel nut and leaves folded by banana leaf and is taken for observation. This priest is often called *Lodeppi* or *Lodep*.

The *Kurusar* and the *Thekkere* have their own meanings even though people may think they are the same. (1) The *Kurusar* literally means a person who only practises and performs *pujas* of *Hem Angtar* or *puja* for good or benefit. (2) *Thekkere* literally means a person who practises black magic and also a person who prevents or can prevent evil doings of others.

If any member of a family becomes ill or is suffering from illness for a long period, the other members of the family go to the priest (*Kurusar*) for *san kelang* or *kove kelep*. The priest performs the *puja*. In *san kelang* the *Kurusar* bisects the ginger into two equal halves and tells the cause of the ailments. Above all *pujas*, the Karbis have the most high and powerful God whom they trust and worship. The name of the *puja* is called *Arnam Kethe*, *Chojun* or *A Kangtui Asor*. It is also believed that the cause of lightning to any person is due to anger of *Arnam Kethe*. Again, this *puja* may not be performed by all the *Hongharis*. Whether this *puja* is to be performed or not is told by the *Kurusar*. If this *puja* is to be performed, it has to be done in three phases – First, Second and Third. However, this may not be done in consecutive years. The *Hongharis*, as already said, do not have the same gods or goddesses, so the name of the *puja* may be the same but the verse or words may not be the same. In *Chojun*, for the purpose of sacrifice, chicken, pigs but not goats or ducks are taken. In the first phase usually 2 pigs are taken, then 3 and then 4 pigs. Like different *pujas* different animals and fowls are required.

When enquired about the duties and functions of the priest (*Kurusar*) Mr. Timung informed that depending upon the nature of the *puja* a person takes bottle of wine either ricebeer or distilled liquor to the priest. Then the priest seeks blessing from god/goddess which is called *Horbong arnam kepu*. Again, depending upon the type of *puja*, there is pre worship called *Se Kasadi*. Here the *Kurusar* alongwith the elders, with some bottles of distilled liquor and ricebeer seeks blessing or performs *puja* for the next day *puja*. To perform any *puja*, the priest along with some helpers prepares all the necessities. Using bamboo sticks or bamboo branch he builds houses and stands for putting some materials. When everything is ready, before performing the main *puja*, he sometimes takes wine. By chanting the *puja* verse, he one by one kills the required fowls or animals. When the fowl is sliced, the blood is sprinkled on the altar. Then it is thrown in front of the altar to observe the position of the fowl/fowls. The intestine is taken out for observation. If pig or goat is taken, the liver and heart of the animal are studied. Experts can tell by studying the heart or liver, if any misfortune is

going to happen or good omen is shown. They can also tell if black magic is performed on him. The people usually take *kunchi* (the assembled parts of horn, tail, ear, finger, etc., of animal to offer to god) of goat and pig. After cleaning the fowls or animals they cook separately for the gods/goddesses for *kebo* which means offering to God before they can partake. They are prohibited to partake or even taste before offering first to God or the deities.

So far as the *Thekkere* is concerned, Mr. Timung comments that such type of priest is dangerous. With no second thoughts they spell black magic on others and kill them. They can also perform *puja* of *Kurusar*. If they are insulted or have a jealous mind, they do not hesitate to spell black magic. There are some *Thekkere* who are good doers or prevent the evil doings of others. Usually the *Thekkere* are issueless or even if they have, their siblings become insane, atleast one of them due to the curse from God, according to their belief.

Case No. 2

Mr. Bajong Bey born at Umrinti village in 1926, spent 30 years of his life in that village practising *jhum* cultivation. He read upto Class III. After his marriage he shifted residence to Thailangso where he owned one *bigha* of homestead land and four *bighas* of *jhum* land. He has five children. He was interviewed on 15.9.2004 at his home.

Mr. Bey went to Killing Ahavar (southern part bordering Meghalaya) where he started learning how to become *Kurusar*. He met his *Guru* Parting Hokola Timung. He stayed for one year. After completion of his training he came to Langmekang where he became *Kurusar* at the age of 54 years. From Langmekang he returned to Thailangso where he is presently living. His 20 years of practices as *Kurusar* have made him well known among the Karbis. As a result, many people from the neighbouring and far away places come to him to check their life line. He also went to different places like Nagaon, Diphu and Shillong for his demonstration and healing as per invitation. In course of discussion he mentioned the following *pujas* :

- 1) *Donri vo sangtar* : This is done during the night
- 2) *Hemphu avur* : This is done in the morning
- 3) *Mukrang avur* : This is done in the morning
- 4) To find out the cause of disease two parts i) *Voti sanglang* and

- ii) *Sang kelang* have to be done
- 5) *Sovai sovoi ase* : This is done during pregnancy for safe delivery
- 6) *Ahop aphi* : for children/infant
- 7) *Mehip abirne* : This is done to ascertain whether food items are contaminated
- 8) *Arlo avur ase* : This is done during pregnancy
- 9) *Hemphu Teran* : This is done to stop infant mortality rate
- 10) *Thipthang ase* : This is done to recover from malnutrition
- 11) *Lamki kepi maja* : This is done for swelling which is due to black magic

Betel nut, chicken, pig, goat and egg, etc., are necessary to perform the above *pujas*. During his 20 years of performance he has earned about Rs. 14,000/- as gift. He claims to have cured about twenty persons effectively.

Case No. 3

Mr. Stephan Phangcho was born at Rongkhelan (Block I) in the southern part bordering Meghalaya. Here he grew up as *pegan*. His parents are Mr. Saret Phangcho and Mrs. Kahi Tissopi. He read upto Class VI. He was interviewed on 24.9.2004 at his home.

In his youth he went to Molahin (Killing land) where he learnt herbal medicines. After spending there for about one and a half years he came back to his uncle's home at Badong. From there he went to Phongjangre where he met his beautiful wife Mrs. Mary Inghipi in the year 1989. After his marriage he settled at Inghinlangso. Luckily he got MR in PWD in 1991. He has five children (2 daughters and 3 sons).

Side by side he started to practise his medicine initially experimenting on himself. By 2000 AD he became very popular in the surrounding area and the people began to visit him. The names of diseases for which he provides herbal medicine are : stomach pain, TB, measles, boils, snake bite, inflammation, swelling, malaria, fresh wounds, epilepsy and fracture, etc.

Mr. Phangcho comments that he has so far cured four epilepsy patients and other persons suffering from fever, fracture, cut injuries and throat

swelling, etc. His future plan is to acquire more knowledge about the medicinal plants and herbs so that he can cure patients suffering from various types of diseases.

Modern medical treatment

With the establishment of health institutions in and around the surveyed villages, the attitude of the people towards scientific treatment of diseases appears to be satisfactory. Allopathic treatment is preferred by the people. Homeopathic medicine is used mainly for treatment of children since there is no side effect and the children do not hesitate to take it due to its sweetness. People have faith in ayurvedic medicine also. It is interesting to note that some households initially practise traditional methods of treatment such as propitiation of deities and application of wild herbs, roots and tubers. When the condition of the patient gets deteriorated, he/she is rushed to the nearest medicare institution. Again, there are some households who practise traditional methods after failure of modern treatment. Moreover, few households like to continue both traditional and modern methods of treatment simultaneously for quick recovery of the patient.

The study reveals that 62.80% of the respondents are satisfied with the functioning of the nearest medicare institution. On the contrary, 37.20% of the respondents are not satisfied due to dearth of doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, equipments and medicine, etc. Even some of the households complain that they have to purchase saline from the market although it is available in the medical store or pay charges for injection, etc. In this context it may be mentioned here that due to prevailing situation in the district many doctors have got transferred to other places. On the other hand, new doctors are not willing to join here. As a result, the patients have to go to Nagaon, Golaghat and Guwahati, etc., for necessary treatment of diseases spending lot of money, time and energy. Family planning measures cannot be said to be satisfactory because of the fact that only 36.72% of the respondents have adopted certain measures.

It is heartening to note that about 80% of the respondents send their children for immunization which is available in the villages or in the health institutions free of cost. Again, 46.68% of the expectant mothers pay regular visit to the nearest medical institution for check up. But most of the delivery cases take place at home with the help of relatives and elderly women. If any complicity arises, the people invite the doctors and nurses or rush

them to the nearest health institution for safe delivery. Of course, with the passage of time, there has been an increase of delivery cases in the health institutions. This reveals that the people do not like to take risk at home and therefore, they send the pregnant women to the health institution.

In order to know the functioning of the medicare institutions some records collected from a PHC and a State Dispensary are furnished below :

TARADUBI PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRE

1. Year of establishment : 17th March, 1991
2. Staff pattern : M. & H.O.-1 - 1 ANM - 1 NMA - 1
GDA - 2 W/G - 1 Sweeper - 1
3. No. of beds : 3
4. No. of indoor patients treated during 2003-04 : 178
5. No. of outdoor patients treated during 2003-04 : 22,277 (From 1.1.2003 to 9.8.2004)
6. No. of surgical operations during 2003-04 : 138
7. No. of annual deaths (2003-04) : Fever - 3, Malaria - 2, Respiratory diseases - 5 and Tuberculosis - 7 (The number of death in hospital is nil. The number is shown on area basis.)
8. Performance of FWB : L.U.D. - 27 C.C. Users or condom - 790
Oral pill - 1302 nos. and M.T.P. - 13
9. Measures adopted by the medical institution for :
 - a) Control of Blindness : Under one year all the children are given Vitamin A solution with other vaccine.
 - b) Health Education : With the help of ICDS workers a monthly meeting is held between ANM staff and guardians.
 - c) School Health Services : A yearly health check-up camp is held in primary school with the help of school teacher.
 - d) Registration of Birth and Death : Birth and Death Registration Certificates are issued regularly from Block PHC under the area.
 - e) TB Control : From July, 2004 Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) has been implemented for control of TB and a DOT Centre is established at Taradubi PHC.
 - f) Leprosy Control : NMA staff search and visit the suspected areas and the patient is medicated under this programme.
 - g) Goitre : There is no specific measure for goitre under the institution except sympathetic treatment despite some central scheme like supplementation of iodine in salt and other food materials.

- h) F.W. & M.C.H. : Under this programme regular monthly meeting between parents and paramedical staff with the help of ICDS workers is held.
 - i) Immunization : Immunization is given on Wednesday of every week regularly.
 - j) Malaria : S/Ws collect the blood slides and anti malarial drug is supplied by the institution.
10. Common diseases prevalent :
- Fever (Malaria, Typhoid, Viral fever, etc.)
 - Diarrhoea, Dysentery, Amoebiasis, Giardiasis
 - Cough, COPD, Respiratory Tract Infection, Asthma, Tuberculosis.
 - Skin infection like fungal, bacterial or mixed infection
 - Body ache, Joint pain, Arthritis, etc.
11. Genetic & Environmental diseases :
- The prevalence of genetic diseases is minimal in comparison to other environmental diseases. The genetic diseases among the Karbis is noticed sometimes but death due to such diseases is rare.
12. Sexually transmitted diseases, alcoholism and drug addiction :
- The sexually transmitted diseases among the Karbis like gonorrhoea, syphilis, AIDS are rare. Instead some other genital diseases like leucorrhoea, cervicitis, trachomoniasis, etc., are noticed. About alcoholism it may be said that it is more than the drug addiction in comparison to other communities.
13. Suggestions for improvement of health status of the Karbis :
- Awareness about the health status and to take hygienic food.
 - To give up old traditional process of treatment, to give up treatment from quack and non-medical individual.
 - To avoid alcohol, tobacco, *bidi*, cigarette and other toxic materials, instead to take nutritious food and safe drinking water.
 - To come forward to know the cause of disease, treatment and the measures to prevent the disease.

8. *Income generating schemes should be provided to the people to augment their economy since most of them are not in a position to spend lot of money for modern methods of treatment.*
9. *The need of the hour is to identify and preserve plants and herbs having preventive and curative qualities in respect of various diseases.*
10. *NGOs should come forward to improve the health status of the people.*

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Bhimbar Deori : tribal rights and Assamese nationality

Nandini Moral Sarma and Paramananda Majumdar

(1)

Towards the third decade of the 20th century, a sense of ethnic awareness could be traced in the minds of the tribals of Assam. The main cause of this can be attributed to the fact that the tribals though mostly backward in comparison to the caste Hindus, possessed a rich cultural heritage, although at the same time bogged down by economic backwardness and lack of education. Only a few counted heads of the educated tribal youths focused their glance to this situation. The Simon Commission had reached Assam in 1928 and representatives from different tribal communities placed their grievances in the form of memorandums (1). It was also at that moment that the backwardness of the tribal communities and the duties of the elite section towards them were published in various journals, newspapers, etc.

It was Bhimbar Deori, one of the educated youth from the Deori community, who emerged to focus this tribal situation of Assam, and he attempted to bring all tribals under one political umbrella for the upliftment of each community. Bhimbar Deori, who was born in 1903 in the remote place in Sibsagar, was a meritorious student who passed Matriculation with outstanding results. He graduated from Cotton College. It was here at the Cotton College that he first witnessed how the tribal students were subjected to discrimination in comparison to the caste Hindu students, because at that time the tribal students were allotted their stay in the Second Mess, whereas the caste Hindus were allowed to stay in the First Mess. Against this discrimination, the tribal students of Cotton College for the first time revolted against the authorities and Bhimbar Deori was also one of the participants. Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati, a renowned Assamese freedom fighter also supported this agitation (2).

After graduating, Bhimbar Deori obtained his law degree from Calcutta.

He passed the Assam Civil Service Examination and he was also selected for the post of the Extra Assistant Commissioner, but he was not appointed because he belonged to the Deori community, which was not included to be fit in the list of Government Service (3).

(2)

This situation had a bitter impact on his mind and he became conscious about the rights of tribal communities. He felt that if only Deoris, Sonowals, Mataks, Kacharis, Mishings, Bodos, Tiwas, Rabhas, etc., all unite, and then only would the tribals be immensely benefited. With his initiative, representatives of all tribal communities of Assam assembled in a conference at Raha in Nowgong in 1933 and formed the Assam Backward Plains Tribal League, where Bhimbar Deori was elected as a Secretary and Jadav Chandra Khaklari, who belonged to the Kachari community, and who had submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission, was elected as the President of the League (4). Bhimbar Deori, after assumption to the office of the Secretary of the Tribal League, organized the tribals of various places of Assam and he pinpointed the backwardness of the tribals to the Government of Assam. The Tribal League placed demands for reservation of assembly seats for the tribals to the Government of Assam and in response to it, in 1935, out of 104 seats in the Legislative Assembly four seats were reserved for the tribals. In 1937, in the general election, for the first time, Rupnath Brahma, Rabi Chandra Kachari, Kark Chandra Doley and Dhirsingh Deori were elected in the reserved seats from the Tribal League. After few days Khorsing Terang, MLA from Karbi Anglong (then Mikir Hills) joined the Tribal League in 1937 to increase the number of Tribal League MLA to five. In 1939, on the request of these Assembly members, and with the support of Assam Pradesh Congress, the Governor of Assam nominated Bhimbar Deori as the member of the Assam Legislative Council (5).

As member of the Assam Legislative Council, Bhimbar Deori pointed out the problems of Assam as a whole, specially the backwardness of the tribal communities of Assam. One of his important speeches was the immigration problem of Assam. He observed that the flow of innumerable migrants from East Bengal to Assam might create immense crisis to future Assam. For this he blamed the Sadullah Ministry as encouraging these immigrants. In the budget session of 1940, he mentioned that – ‘Sadullah

wants to satisfy indigenous people requiring protection and at the same time provide room for settling landless immigrant population. The difficulty is that there is no end to the number of landless immigrant population. Such landless immigrants are being given lands in vast areas of different districts of Assam valley. Their number, instead of dwindling, has been gradually increasing. There could have been such provision of land and the difficulty would have been already settled, had the Government taken steps to restrict or rather stop immigration from other provinces’.

He argued – ‘I do not see how the Hon’ble Finance Minister can satisfy immigrants of such an increasing flow ? I also ask how the Government of Assam is bound to provide land to the landless people of other provinces. Assam is not a charitable institution where all poor landless peoples of other provinces should be treated and given lands. Any Government in Assam must first see to the welfare of the peoples inhabiting it and should not invite people from other provinces, giving them advantages which are really harmful to the peoples inhabiting it’ (6).

He expressed his satisfaction over the representation of tribals in the Legislative Assembly according to the 1935 Act, by stating that – ‘It has given us great advantages and inspired our populace with hope and created an unmistakable feeling that they can also march in cooperation with other advanced communities’ (7). But at the same speech, he also nurtured his grievance that this reservation was not sufficient according to the ratio of the population. He mentioned – ‘The tribal peoples are the oldest inhabitants of the province. They have their own heritage. They are the people who can really claim Assam to be their own. Most unfortunately to us and to the eternal shame to the section of the people in whose hand, directly or indirectly, the Government of Assam had fallen for the last hundred years, the case of the tribal peoples, particularly of the plain, had been utterly neglected. They have now become the poorest and the most backward of the people. We now eagerly look forward that justice will be done to us and tribal people’s case will be fairly and justly treated in the next revision of the Government of India Act, including the federal part of it’ (8).

Bhimbar Deori now stressed to execute the Line System all over Assam because line system according to him would protect the tribal lands. On the other hand, Maulana Hamid Khana Bhasani who was in favour of immigrant

Muslims was trying to gather public opinion to eliminate Line System. In 1941 Budget Session, Bhimbar Deori noticed that future of Assamese nationality and tribal people could depend on existence of Line System. But within a short time, his idea came to an abrupt end. The Line System could not protect the tribals from the immigrants. In 1941, according to "Government Land Development Scheme", planning was made by the Government to give the waste lands to the landless tribals and the Assamese people, but in reality they couldn't acquire this facility because the tribals were unable to pay Rs. 5 as premium per *bigha* to acquire the land, since they weren't in a position to do so. When Line System was abolished, the miseries of the tribal population knew no bounds. After that, Bhimbar Deori suggested with his foresightedness to build Tribal Belts and Blocks for protection of the tribal people. In the assembly he proposed for 33 Belts and Blocks and it was accepted in the assembly with the support of Gopinath Bordoloi. Bhimbar Deori felt that only Belts and Blocks could provide protection to the backward people of Assam (9).

To justify the equal status of the tribals and backward classes of Assam, he openly criticized those groups of people who misinterpreted and looked down on them. In a meeting of the Muttoks he said that the Tribal League appealed to the tribal people to give their identity as tribals but some of the people from caste Hindu were trying to influence them to introduce themselves as Hindu by race and Hindu by religion. This attitude was resented by majority of caste Hindus who always opposed to give opportunities to the tribals. He again mentioned that the caste Hindu leaders were trying to deprive the tribes from getting special opportunities in the constitution by identifying these tribal communities as Hindus by religion and communities (10).

Even Bhimbar Deori criticized the Congress workers for their wrong interpretation of community because they said that there was no community, which could be identified as tribals. Again he also mentioned the aim of the Hindu Mahasabha, which also appealed to the tribals to identify themselves as Hindu by race and Hindu by religion (11). That would deprive the tribals from getting special opportunity. He also explained logically the contradictory role of caste Hindus because they were not in favour of reservation of service for the tribals but insisted that employment should be made on basis of merit. Bhimbar Deori strongly resented that as the caste

Hindus themselves were seeking reservation system instead of merit for securing jobs. The caste Hindus of Brahmaputra Valley always sought reservation for themselves to secure jobs and this was happening because they were not able to contest with the more advanced caste Hindus of the Surma Valley. He said – 'There is a tendency among the advanced communities also for a certain percentage of services should be reserved for them, they do not like to compete with the Surma Valley Hindus' (12).

For this he complained openly that there was a communal tendency amidst the caste Hindus who always insisted on the merit when the question of jobs to the tribals came up. He pointed out to those that backward tribes and tribals could be eligible only by proper training. During the Sadullah regime the Muslims got opportunity for education and Bhimbar Deori requested Sadullah that similar facility should be given to the tribals, which he clearly pointed out in the assembly. He stated – 'The advanced communities during the last one hundred years enjoyed in this particular field also privileges for in excess of what they are entitled to. They should now make certain sacrifice for our good and advancement' (13).

(3)

Bhimbar Deori identified the main cause for the backwardness of the tribals was illiteracy. So he thought that if education were not spread among them then their backwardness would remain forever. So he appealed that primary education should be made compulsory among the tribals. In his Presidential speech of First Kamrup District Tribal Conference (1st Session 1938) he explained this aspect and said if primary education could be made compulsory then the country, especially the backward communities would be immensely benefited. If we the tribal backward, Hindu labour communities, etc., those who were educationally backward demand for the expansion of education among us and struggle for this then any Government will be compelled to make primary education compulsory. It is to be noted that Tribal League in the Kokrajhar Session had resolved to increase revenue if necessary for the expansion of education. Bhimbar Deori in his speech demanded to give special privilege for the backward tribals in secondary and higher education, agriculture, engineering, vocational education, etc. He also stressed that scholarship should not be given on basis of population

ratio but Government should ensure that they should be lifted from backwardness in every aspect so that they could stand with the advanced communities equally. Even in the assembly he said that percentage of population should not be the criteria for spending money for the tribes. 'A sufficiently large sum should every year be earmarked for our education. In calculating this sum, not percentage of population, but necessity should be the basis' (14).

Discussing about the pitiable economic conditions of the tribals he mentioned that agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the backward communities, but Government and the educated communities have done nothing for their development. He noticed that markets for selling their finished commodities were in other's hands. This was happening because of the disunity of the peasants and due to the negligence of the Government towards agriculture and marketing its produce. The foreign factory owners and traders enjoyed the fruits of the peasants labour. Therefore, he appealed to the Government to give stress on the service and agriculture of tribals (15).

(4)

The mission of Bhimbar Deori was welfare of the backward tribals but at the same time he was the patron of Big Assamese nationalism. The interest of Assam and Assamese was deeply embedded in his heart. He never hesitated to give up the demands of the Tribal League as he stood for the interest of the people of Assam. He never felt that tribals are never a part of Assamese Nationalism. In the conference of the Tribal League held in Kamrup district, he clearly explained that 'whenever we discuss about our crisis and whenever we raise our demands we should not forget that we are a part of Assamese Nationalism'. He further mentioned that only if the condition of the Assamese community improves then only could the condition of the tribals improve, 'so our motive should be to strengthen Assamese Nationality' (16).

When the British were planning to merge Assam with East Pakistan, Bhimbar Deori in this regard was very much courageous and outspoken. On 11th February 1946, Gopinath Bordoloi Ministry was formed and at this time Cabinet Mission visited India and they proposed to divide India into

three groups A, B, C where Assam was to be enlisted with category C along with the Muslim dominated area Bengal. The Muslim League supported this grouping, but Bhimbar Deori and the leaders of the Tribal League stood against the incorporation of Assam with Pakistan by this categorization. Bhimbar published his statement, that he was ready to give up the demand of the Backward Communities for the sake of independence, integrity and identity of Assam. In the meantime, getting inspired by the people, Assam Pradesh Congress stood against this grouping. Bhimbar Deori expressed his hope that the leadership of Gopinath Bordoloi would restore the interest of Assam. Gopinath Bordoloi gave strong support and assurance of fulfilling the demands of Tribal League.

One of the main demands of the Tribal League was 'separate electorate'. But Bhimbar observed that if they were adamant about this demand, the anti-grouping agitation would be weakened. Therefore, he appealed to the members of Tribal League to accept joint electorate system where reservation for tribals should also be incorporated. At last, he succeeded in persuading the tribal league to accept joint elector with reservation and this system still prevails today (17).

Bhimbar and the Tribal League dreamt that they could demand to give Assam a special status at the Constituent Assembly so that indigenous people would not lose their land rights but Bhimbar was deprived of attending the Constituent Assembly because Congress Government decided to send Dharanidhar Basumatari as representative of tribals who was a Congress worker. Other members like Kuladhar Chaliha, Omiya Kumar Das, Syed Sadullah, etc., were other members who attended Constituent Assembly. Therefore, Bhimbar Deori and the Tribal League were not able to do anything for tribal interest.

(5)

Bhimbar Deori was critical about the struggle for independence and leaders of freedom movement for their indifference to the rights and demands of the tribals. He and the League suspected that independence might not be equal for all. He pointed out in the Legislative Council - 'If Swaraj is to come it must come to each and every section of the populace. It is for this reason that we may not miss to utilize the advantage so conferred by the

Constitution, we are definitely for working out the Constitution' (18).

Bhimbar Deori and workers of Tribal League observed that many of the leaders of freedom struggle did not have good intentions towards the tribals, and they often passed distorted remarks on the questions of grievances and their backwardness. Therefore, this situation raised suspicion amidst majority of the tribes about the freedom struggle. That did not mean that Bhimbar and the leaders of the Tribal League were completely away from their struggle for freedom. Bhimbar had communication with many leaders of the freedom struggle since he offered many a Congress workers secret underground shelter, e.g. Shankar Barua took refuge in total secrecy under his shelter (19).

Gopinath Bordoloi rightly stated that although Bhimbar Deori assumed leadership of tribals yet he was the leader of the whole of Assam. Being himself a tribal he tried to lead the tribals towards the path of their progress and development and this considered an offence by many. They commented that when a blind man guides another blind man both of them invariably fall into a ditch. 'As an answer to this I would state that there was no blindness at all in Bhimbar's leadership', as remarked Gopinath Bordoloi (20).

Bhimbar and the Tribal League was very much critic about Gandhiji and Ambedkar for their attitude towards the tribals. Gandhiji identified all as Harijan Hindus excluding caste Hindus and Sudras and he tried to merge tribals with Harijans and give them the most downtrodden status (21). On the other hand, Ambedkar's view was that since the tribals were illiterate, therefore, they were not fit to govern. When he published a statement in *The Times of India*, Tribal League under Bhimbar Deori published a booklet to protest against this attitude. They tried to establish with facts and figures that tribals of Assam are no longer illiterates as Ambedkar commented (22).

Conclusion

The rôle of Bhimbar Deori in historical perspective is remarkable especially in the socio-political scenario of third and fourth decade of the 20th century Assam. His role can be analysed with the present day also. He

deeply thought about the tribal situation of Assam, trying to solve it by keeping in mind, the progress of Assam as a whole. His vision was not communal as commented by some politicians of Assam. He was not only a leader of tribals but in true sense we can state that he was a patriot of Assam. He realized that without the development of peasants, development of Assamese nationalism was impossible. He presented a picture of true patriotism, a blue blooded Assamese, a true son of the soil who believed that Assam will only progress one day if the backward tribals are given their real status at par with the other citizens of the state. The light of education to these backward tribals will indeed make them march ahead, leaving their ignorance, superstitions and financial burdens behind and make our land of red river and blue hills prosperous.

References

- (1) Basumatari, Binai Khungur ; *Plains Tribal before the Simon Commission*, p. 28.
- (2) Deori, Lalit Chandra ; (Ed) 1995, *Sanhatir Buniyad Jananayak Bhimbar Deori*, Vol.II.
- (3) Ibid. p. 48.
- (4) Kalita, Ramesh : 1986, *Bharatar Swadhinata Andolanat Asamiya Satrar Bhumika*, p.162.
- (5) Deuri, Anup Kumar : (Ed), 2004, *Nayak*, p.11.
- (6) *Assam Legislative Council Debates, 1940*, on General Discussion of Budget : Speech of Bhimbar Deori, MLC.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) Deori, Lalit Chandra, op.cit. p.32.
- (10) Ibid. p. 8
- (11) Ibid, p. 14
- (12) *Assam Legislative Council Debate, 1939*, on Principle of Recruitment : Maiden Speech by Bhimbar Deori as MLC.
- (13) *ALC Debate, 1940*.
- (14) Ibid.
- (15) Deori, Lalit Chandra, Vol.I. p.24.
- (16) Ibid. p.14.
- (17) Deori, Lalit Chandra, Vol.II. p.56-57, *Essay of Indibar Deori*.

- (18) *ALC Debate, 1940.*
 (19) Interview with Kamalavati Deori, wife of Bhimbar Deori.
 (20) Deori, Anup Kumar (Ed), op. cit. p.3.
 (21) Interview with Kamalavati Deori, wife of Bhimbar Deori.
 (22) Assam Tribal Sangha, Part II, p.23.

Is peace achievable in North-east India ?

Tom Mangattuthazhe

Conflicts in North-east India

The North-east has a rich cultural heritage and long history of coexistence of a diverse anthropological mix of tribes and communities. An unfortunate corollary is that the region has a complex history of conflict and it is the single most important issue that impacts all aspects of life and development in the region. Hence, peace is not only an end by itself but also a means to development. The conflict situation is one of the key development issues that is affecting the poor in particular and the region's development processes in general. Violence and conflicts are perpetrated by powerful vested interests with local, regional, national and international roots and links. Hence, conflict is a product of several factors. It is to be noted that more often people tend to associate conflict primarily with insurgency, i.e. between the people and state. However, there exist conflicts of different descriptions in this region, which can broadly be classified into four :

- (a) Inter and intra tribal
- (b) Tribal and non tribal
- (c) Tribal autonomy and the state
- (d) Inter state

Structural factors of conflict

These are the underlying, pervasive conditions that affect large populations over a long time but do not themselves cause violence. It is also important to remember that vested interests often invoke religion, language or ideology to legitimise their interests. For instance, resource scarcity, rampant unemployment, corruption, unequal distribution of resources and land alienation are some of the structural factors for conflict. These situations do not inevitably produce conflict, they do inherently make mobilizing groups easier to begin and sustain agitation. They are instrumental causes, i.e. they are used as powerful instruments by groups who are with vested and genuine interests.

Enabling factors of conflict

Enabling factors of conflict are the political processes, civil society institutions and associations that pressure and take up the underlying structural sources. Examples include weak government, armed insurgents, discriminatory laws and practices such as privileges bestowed on one particular group, etc.

Triggering factors of conflict

These are the immediate actions that instigate violence or increase hostility. For example bombings, assassination of key figures, provocative speeches, kidnappings, spreading rumours, non-professional and unethical media reports, etc. These triggering sources spiral smaller disputes and tensions into increasingly violent conflict, which in turn intensifies the polarization of opposing groups. The fighting groups can then easily dehumanize each other through the stereotype of the enemy and the conflict escalates.

Impact of conflicts in North-east India

The conflict has led to massive displacement of people, poverty, social disruption, economic breakdown and further insurgency. Most of the underground groups run parallel governments by extracting resources from forest resources, private and public sectors and also from all sections of society. Two governments together provide most lucrative employment and business opportunities to the directionless youths putting any productive activities and free enterprise in shamble. "The loss of credibility of the political elite in the Northeast has contributed to the erosion of the integrative power of the political and economic institutions. A powerful section of the neo-elite, which believes in political chauvinism, resorts to corrupt means to earn a fortune at the cost of the common people and the wretched" (*The Northeast Today*, Vol.1, No.2, September 2007, p.23). The politicians, militants, law enforcement agencies, businessmen and bureaucrats are major players and make the best of the situation. It is indeed a war economy that operates in this region. Huge amount of fund which otherwise should be facilitating economic development in region is spent in maintaining law and order, purchase of arms and ammunitions and counter insurgency operations.

Decades of violence and militancy of insurgency and counter-insurgency activities have put the traditional authority structures and social control systems dysfunctional. Violent attitude and behaviour among the younger generations make the elders and senior citizens retract from social responsibilities, helplessly. Many a children, young men and women who suffered and witnessed the blatant violence and brutalities of armed insurgency and counter insurgency operation live with disturbed mind needing psychosocial and emotional healing.

The conflicts in NE cutting across ethnicity and tribes have multidimensional impacts leading to displacement of people, loss of lives, livelihoods, and posing a serious threat to the very fabric of democracy. "Conflict is one of the most common causes of food insecurity" (Roche, 2006 : 57). Incessant conflicts occurring in rural villages and towns have potentially contributed significantly to the growth of other problems like HIV and AIDS, Commercial Sex Work, trafficking, child labour, etc. While, the region's vulnerability against recurring natural disasters like flood and development projects induced displacements, and migration from neighbouring countries have added on the complexity of conflicts in NE.

Today, as an impact of perennial conflicts, the region's potentials in terms of socio-economic growth, human resources, industrial growth - tourism, harnessing abundant natural resources, etc., have taken a back seat. Lack of entrepreneurship and self employment opportunities have hit the youth making them vulnerable in spite of considerable education and skills. In this vicious cycle of conflict and resultant under development it is the women and the youth who become most vulnerable and susceptible, the women bear the brunt of running the household, while the youth become a stereotyped 'militant' both victimized and sandwiched between the forces of conflicts.

Specific areas of concern

Conflict as vested interest

Conflict and violence has become a lucrative money making industry for politicians, security forces, drug users, insurgents, business people and international agents, etc.

Identity assertion

The issue of land alienation has been a major factor for identity assertion and has resulted in violent ethnic conflicts in several parts of the region affecting the livelihood and survival of several ethnic communities.

Human rights violation

Events of human rights violations by security forces and the Non-state actors have resulted in the loss of huge number of innocent lives, perpetuation of violence, atrocities on women and children, promotion of local ammunition industries, etc.

Corruption and extortion

Corruption in the region stands at various levels of clerical, bureaucratic or political posing serious threat to development. It is the all pervasive corruption in public administration that is ruining the state in all aspects.

Is peace achievable in North-east ?

In this context **Is peace achievable in North-east ?** I asked this question several times because it could affect my motivation and others with whom I-work and live with. A second important question is this: **What is the formula for peace?** I wish to share the following :

It is not easy for an average citizen to find answers to the above questions, because the opinions on peace are diverse and complex. However, I am very happy to note that the answer is positive. **Peace is surely achievable in our region.** We do currently have the knowledge technology and infrastructure to achieve peace. The problem is motivation and time. How? Let me explain.

Good governments

Based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in simple terms, of the things they think, say or do, governments at the Central, State and District level must be able to be relied upon to be truthful, fair, build good will and better relationships and strive for the benefit of all concerned. "We now have to prove ourselves as a nation-State that respects citizens and not

just people. There are no majorities and minorities, no insiders and outsiders. The rich and poor have equal rights as citizens as they can access public goods at quality levels regardless of the accident of birth. When that happens India will be democratic in truly substantive terms" (Gupta, 2007 : 56). The same ethics should be expected of government departments, NGOs and other organizations as expected of individuals. Do as you would have done to you.

A transparent system of justice

Without justice there can be no peace. We have a criminal and civil court system to get the guilty off the street and into the courtroom, to be resolved in what should be perceived as a fair and reasonable manner. It is not hard to imagine that a system of justice is necessary for crimes against humanity. At the same time, there must be a reliable and I should add proactive, Conflict and Dispute Resolution System for parties who are willing to voluntarily work together to a solution, to avoid the necessity of going to court and most importantly to avoid conflict. The roles of our customary court system which are still practised in our villages is a fine answer to this. However, these are sensitive roles but reliant traditional wisdom of our ethnic communities.

A regional sustainable economy

There must be a proper economy to provide reasonable employment and eradicate poverty and hunger. Systematic public action can eradicate the terrible problems of poverty. For example, agriculture and agri related small scale industries can usher in this era of self-reliance. It will take only co-ordinated action to achieve this goal.

Access to competent education system

This principle is basic and simple to understand. The education is key to both economic and peace developments. In the past education was designed to make people strong, rich and intelligent, in order to dominate and progress at the expense of others. Today, the very basis of the educational system must change. The principle of strength must be replaced by the principle of mutual help. Everyone must be educated for peace. All must be taught that it is essential to go beyond selfish behaviour and commit ourselves to the development of others. As Albert Einstein said, "Peace

cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding."

A compassionate health and welfare system

This principle is also basic and simple to understand. The more privileged have a humanitarian responsibility to help the under-privileged, this applies heavily to all our leaders political and non-political. We must remember that every community's level of internal and external peacefulness is a result of the strength of these factors. Strengthen these factors and we will certainly become more peaceful.

To conclude, Peace, and the formula for peace, is measurable and manageable. What we have, therefore, is a management or leadership challenge to carry forward. We citizens must have a faith that peace is not only desirable but possible. Each of us must decide if we are part of the problem or part of the solution. **The world is dangerous not because of those who do harm, but because of those who look at it without doing anything.**

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2. Gupta, Dipankar. "The Grief that Binds" *India Today*, Vol.XXXII, No.33, 2007.
3. *The Northeast Today*, Vol.1, No.2, September 2007.

The problems of the Hmar people of Assam : a brief study

Vanlal Tuonga Bapui

Introduction of the tribe

The Hmar people belong to the Lushai-Kuki-Chin group of the Tibeto-Burman family of the Tibeto-Chinese race¹. They may be said to be a part of the Mizo group of tribes inhabiting the North-eastern region, especially domiciled in the states of Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya. The largest concentration of the people may be in Mizoram, but as only those speakers of the Hmar language figure in the Census, their actual population cannot be ascertained. According to the Census figures of 1991, the Hmar speakers are 65,204 of which 19,054 are in Assam, 36,092 in Manipur and 9,525 in Mizoram. Their Mongolian trait can be noticed at first sight. The name Hmar literally means 'north' and because of this some scholars believed that they have been given this name to refer to those who dwell in the north. However, an ancient tradition said that it is derived from the word 'hmer' which means a lock of hair tied at the nape of the neck². Traditionally the Hmar man used to keep his lock of hair at the nape of his neck as opposed to the Chin man who tied it on his forehead.

Historical background

The Hmars claim their origin from Sinlung which is supposed to be geographically situated on the banks of the Yulung river in between Chamdo and Szechuan territory of South-central China³. One of their ancient song stated thus

*Khaw Sinlungah kawtsiel ang ka zuong zuok a,
Mi le nel lo tam a e;*

Tlei dang chu thal tui ang lo kang rawh.

[I sprang up like a bull from Sinlung, where there were many people and sand. Let others dry like waters of winter.]

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1. Dutta Baruah, P.N., & Bapui, V.L.T. 1996. *Hmar Grammar*. Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore. p.1
 2. Thiek, Hrilrokhum. 1967. *A Brief Study of the Hmars*. Unpublished Monograph, Muolhoi. p.29
 3. Lalngawrlie. *A Descriptive Grammar of the Hmar Language*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis submitted to Manipur University.p.1

The Hmars were probably forced out of Sinlung by the superior Chinese immigrants⁴. They came down to Shan in Myanmar where they lived for some generations until a great famine drove them out from there in search of fresh fertile land. The great famine is still remembered in a folk song thus –

*Shān khuoah lenpur a tla
Lainran do zo love;
Ropui sele sawmfang zil ang ko
Kaia hrute sei zama
Ei khawsip khuo lam ang zawng.*

[A great famine broke out in Shan village, the poor were unable to survive. Every rule made and means explored were in vain, but through the stem (tuber) of wild yam (which I obtain), I was able to find the path to our village.]

From Shan they must have moved towards the Himalayan regions and then back to the Chin Hills of Myanmar, following the Chindwin river valley where Nature became more favourable, making them more prosperous. This new land was called Chinlung (Chin stone) after the name of their original home Sinlung. Major Fryer maintained that most of the tribes penetrated the watershed of the Chindwin river valley and then finally settled in Kawlphai⁵. It was from here that the large scale migration to Indian territories started. They crossed over the hill ranges bordering South-west Manipur and were one of the tribes who first settled in Champhai, and the surrounding places of Mizoram. Dr. B.Pakem contended that the Hmar group of people travelled closely with the Lushais and the non-Lushai group while migrating. The Hmar tribes travelled in the middle position, the Lushai group on the south and the Kuki group on the north⁶. They settled in the present state of Mizoram and the places of their settlements are still known by their clan names. Some of those are Biate, Thiek, Khawbung, Lawitlang, Zote, Leiri, Darngawn, Chawnchhim, Keivom, etc.

4. Ghosh, G.K. 1992. *Tribals and their Culture in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram*. Vol.1, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi. p.118.

5. Lal Dena. 1990. *Social and Political Institutions of the Hmars*. Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta.

6. Karotemprel, Sebastian (Ed). 1984. *The Tribes of North East India*. Vendrame Missiological Institute, Shillong. p. 276-277.

From Mizoram, many were driven further west and north by the strong Sailo migration⁷. Prior to that also, many waves of immigrants had fled Mizoram due to inter-tribe wars and raids. Some immigrants had settled in Tripura, Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya. Apart from this reason for immigration, a number of other immigrations were prompted by inhospitable living conditions due to infertility of the land.

Settlement outside Mizoram

The first evidence of the tribe's contact with British India, as mentioned by Rochunga Pudaite in his book *The Education of the Hmar People* is "a letter from the Chief of Chittagong to the Governor-General of India, the Honourable Warren Hastings, dated April 10, 1777, where the Chief reported that a man named 'Ramoo Kawn' was revolting against the British and assembled a large bodies of Kookie (Kuki) men, who live far in the interior parts of the hills."⁸ The Manmasi Year Book, 2006-2007 mentioned that the first group of Hmars entered Cachar plains in 1609. Subsequent groups entered in 1680, 1846 and 1851.

The Hmars in Cachar occupied Silchar area first, but later shifted to the foothills where they were given special permission to settle by the British Administrators. The first such permission was issued by Mr. C.R.Phok, the then Administrator, in 1864 for settlement of Saihmar village in Cachar. Saisel village was permitted in 1885 and Tuolpui (Cachar) in 1889⁹. Some migrated to North Cachar Hills and established the Tuolpui village of N.C.Hills in 1916. Prior to this, the Leiri clan under the leadership of Ngaichonsingpa migrated to Parsentlang in Barail Hills and settled at Doiheng village, and later on moved to Leiri village in 1820¹⁰.

In North Cachar Hills, the history of their entry could be traced to 1748. Alexander Mackenzie wrote, "The Kookies entered Cachar in the year 1748." He further said that some 600 of them were in Langting (Maibang) valley in the year 1859 and that the Old Kukies had already entered North

7. McCall, Major A.G. 1949 (Reprint 1977). *Lushai Chrysalis*. Firma KLM Pvt.Ltd. for Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram. p.35.

8. Pudaite, Rochunga. 1963. *The Education of the Hmar People*. Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission, Sielmaf, Manipur. p.26

9. Zote, Timothy Z. 2006-2007. *Manmasi Year Book*. Vol II. Manmasi Year Book Editorial Board, Churrachandpur. p.212-213.

10. *ibid.* p.209.

Cachar Hills in 1770¹¹. It may be noted here that the Hmars were referred to as 'Old Kukies' by the earlier writers like J.Shakespeare who stated that the Hmars were settlers in the North of Lushai Hills and were known as 'Old Kukies or Khawtlang'¹². Of that group, he stated that there were Khawsak and Khawtlang group and consisted of Hrangkhol, Bete (Biete) and clans like Lawitlang, Thiek, Hrangchal, Lungtau and other sub-tribes of the Hmars. To quote from *Tribes of Assam, Part-II, pp.23* "To the Kukis and the Lushais, the Hmars were known as Khawtlang which means Westerner. This means that movement of the Hmars to the west was earlier than that of the Kukis and the Lushais. The Hmars established their settlements in the Mizo Hills (present Mizoram), Cachar and North Cachar Hills districts of Assam, Tripura and Manipur states which are still in existence. In Assam, they are mainly confined into the North Cachar Hills and there are some Hmar villages in Cachar also bordering N.C.Hills."¹³

The presence of the Hmar people in Assam could be further confirmed by the Report of Mills (1854) and Allen (1859) on the population of North Cachar Hills as follows¹⁴:

Tribes	Mills (1854)	Allen (1859)
Hill Cacharis	3940	6735
Hojai Cacharis	1170	3260
Mikirs	1820	5076
Old Kukis	3335	3709
New Kukis	7575	4763
Aroong Nagas	3505	5885

According to the Census figures of 1875, the population of North Cachar Hills are as follows¹⁵:

Nagas	7536
Cacharis	10824
Mikirs	4335
Kukis (Old & New)	15080

11. Mackenzie, Alexander. *History of the Relation of the Government with the Hill Tribes of North East Frontiers of Bengal*, Home Department Press, 1884, Annexure - C, p.147.

12. Shakespeare, J. Lt.Col. Reprint 1975. *The Lushei-Kuki Clans Pt.II*. Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl.

13. Bordoloi, B.N. & Sharma Thakur, G.C. 1988. *Tribes of Assam, Pt.II*. Tribal Research Institute, Assam. p.23.

14. Mackenzie, *op.cit.*

15. *ibid.*

The coming of the Assam-Bengal Railway in the 1890s was a curse for the Hmar people as the Railway Contractors exposed them to the habit of taking opium, which was not only addictive but also destructive and proved to be a silent killer of the poor and ignorant people. It made many men and women barren and childless, and longevity was also reduced. In a matter of just 50 years the population was drastically reduced and only after 1920, they had parting of ways with the deadly drug.

North Cachar Hills was an **Excluded Area** and was administered as such till India attained independence. The British administered the area mainly through the Assam Rifles from Nowgong. According to Col. L.W.Shakespeare, the first venture into these hills took place in 1841¹⁶ only. By then a good number of Kuki villages were already in existence, and there is no mention of any other people group living there. By 1850, a Kuki Levy, 200 strong was formed, and later enlarged. By 1852, it had become too difficult to control the land adequately from Nowgong, and therefore, Asaloo in North Cachar was made an administrative station, where a civil officer was kept in-charge. To quote him :

The North Cachar was largely peopled by clans of Kukis, a self-reliant sturdy folk, who originally dwelt in the hill country South of Cachar, but who had moved and were still moving North under pressure of the Lushai tribe behind them. They lived under the autocratic rule of their own Rajas and therefore, invariably combined together for any purpose, defensive or offensive. For this reason, together with their fighting capacities and weapons (chiefly bows and arrows with which they are expert), they were somewhat feared by the Nagas, who, being essentially democratic and obeying no particular chief except when it pleases them to do so, can but rarely combined¹⁷.

The British Administrators themselves considered the Hmar group of tribes useful in so far as their presence being a buffer to the constant raids and

16. Shakespeare, L.W., Colonel. 1929 (Reprint 1977). *History of the Assam Rifles*. Firma KLM Pvt.Ltd. on behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram.

17. *ibid.* pp.29-30.

invasions for territorial expansions by the Nagas on the one side and the Dimasa-Cacharis on the other. In 1853, Lt. H.S. Bivar became the first Sub-Assistant on the creation of North Cachar Hills as Sub-division with its headquarters at Asaloo. He faced a problem with the Naga raiders from the East and Dimasa Cacharis from the North. And in order to tackle the situation, he proposed to the higher authorities for establishment of more 'Kuki' colonies and strengthening of the existing colonies. In the words of J.B. Bhattacharjee :

Accordingly, the Kuki immigration was encouraged and Bivar conducted the settlement of the Kukis. The Kukis had left their original home in Lushai Hills being hard hit by the frequent famines there, and settled themselves in Manipur, some in Cachar, while bulk of them moved on to the North Cachar Hills. The immigrant showed a good deal of enthusiasm to develop their new home, and shortly many Kuki colonies emerged in the district adjoining the Angami Hills being thoroughly colonized by them. These clan colonies had their chiefs, called Rajas, through whom jurisdiction of the government extended to the people. The lands were assigned revenue free for 25 years and soil proved fertile for agriculture. The facilities offered by the government attracted more chiefs from the adjacent district to settle in North Cachar, while others sent their emissaries to collect information about the country. Bivar expected, therefore, that the size of the colonists would gradually increase and thereby would contribute to the peace and prosperity of the district. The Kukis were provided with firearms for self-defence and to form themselves into a buffer between the North Cacharis and the Angamis¹⁸.

The Hmars are recognized as Scheduled Tribes by the Government of India, vide Notification Order No. SRO. 24774, Gazette of India, Part II, Section III, No. 316-A, New Delhi, October 29, 1956. On the formation of the Autonomous District Council for North Cachar Hills, the first Chief Executive Member was the Late C.H. Khawtlang, a Hmar man, born and brought up in North Cachar Hills. The Govt. of Assam has not only recognized the Hmars as Scheduled Tribe but has even recognized the Hmar

18. Bhattacharjee, J.B. 1977. *Cachar under the British Rules in North East India*. pp.108-109.

language as medium of instruction in schools. In Cachar, the language was approved as medium of instruction in Primary Schools in 1969, and in North Cachar Hills in 1982-83. Recently, the Govt. of Assam has given permission for introduction of Hmar as Modern Indian Language (MIL) in High School Leaving Certificate Examinations. In Manipur the language is studied up to the degree level.

Major problems of the Hmar people

As already highlighted above, the Hmars are a scattered tribe and are settled all over the southern part of the North-eastern States. They are thus a divided people, divided geographically, politically, and culturally. Such division has certainly acted adversely on the people. The geographical and topographical divide has alienated the people from one another. The political division further aggravates the alienation by making them interested only in the politics of the States and areas, keeping aside the interest of the tribe as a whole. The cultural divide has also created untold gap among them. Many have been assimilated into the major tribes living closest to their settlement. This can happen more so when a minority group lives in the midst of a majority group. And the Hmar people have experienced that unfortunate plight. All such situation and status have created a number of problems for the Hmar people. The prominent problems faced by the tribe are highlighted below :

Problems of the Hmars in Cachar plains

The Cachar plains are the initial settlement of the Hmar people when they entered the bounds of present day Assam. In spite of this, the Hmars are neither given the status of Scheduled Tribes (Hills) nor that of Scheduled Tribes (Plains), thereby depriving them of all the special provisions and benefits granted by the Government of India. They are debarred from availing ST reservation not only in Govt. services but even for higher education including technical and medical studies. As a result, they have been forced to lag behind their fellow STs. This serious matter has been repeatedly brought to the notice of the Central and State governments, but so far nothing that could meet the aspirations of the people and steps that will entitle them to enjoy that status to which they are entitled, has been done. In recent

years, a nominal local council was created for the people of tribal origin in Lakhipur sub-division, but that, as I understand, is far from the dues that the people are entitled. They have been treated as people belonging to the general categories long after their kinsmen elsewhere had enjoyed the status of ST. It is high time that the government give a serious consideration on this matter and remove the grave injustice.

Problem of representation in Autonomous Council

The Hmars are the third majority tribe in North Cachar Hills after the Dimasa Kacharis and Zeme Nagas. According to 1991 Census, there are 49,667 Dimasa, 11,469 Zeme, 10,882 Hmar, 6,517 Karbi and 5,896 Kuki, etc. On the creation of the N.C.Hills Autonomous District Council in 1952, constituencies were created for representation of the major tribes and minor tribes were represented with nominated members by turn. From the inception of the Council, the Hmars have always been represented in the Council by a lone member. As per the electoral roll of 2005, the Hmar electorate counts 11,533 whereas the major Dimasa electorate was 44,228 only. Till today, the Hmar people continue to be represented by a lone member in the Council, whereas the majority tribe who are hardly four times their number are represented by no less than 16 members including nominated ones (Zeme-3, Kuki-2, Karbi-1). What greater injustice to a people group could be meted out for no fault of theirs? Such certainly cannot be said to be good democratic practices.

The first Chief Executive Member was Mr. C.H.Khawtlang, a Hmar, born in Donlo village of North Cachar Hills. A gentleman's agreement was made to the effect that when the CEM belongs to a non-Dimasa tribe, the MLA should be a Dimasa. But that agreement was soon forgotten. The 12 elected and 4 nominated seats of the first Council has since been increased to 23 elected and 4 nominated seats in the ninth Council by creating more constituencies. But the Hmar people have been totally neglected and alienated during such exercises.

The entire constituencies of the Autonomous Council need to be delimited to remove the gross imbalance in the representation of the different tribes so as to have at least some semblance of justified representation for all, especially for the Hmar people in proportion to their number.

Problems of securing employment

Unemployment is, of course, a universal problem. But if qualified persons are deprived and unqualified ones are recruited due to political and other pressures, it is all the more difficult to understand and to tolerate. Especially in a small district like North Cachar Hills, there are very little or no avenue of employment in sectors other than the government services. Of late, the govt. of Assam has also curtailed creation of new posts. In the face of such a situation, the major tribe is demanding reservation of 90% of all jobs for their community only. In the Autonomous Council, plenty of jobs are still created, but all such jobs have been taken by the majority community or smaller communities favoured by them. At the early ages of the Council, there were substantial number of Hmar Officers in the Council. But now, such positions have become a far cry for the new Hmar generations. Many qualified graduates and post-graduates are now either self-employed or unemployed as there are no other avenues of employment in other sectors.

Besides, the Hmar people of North Cachar Hills have been made a deprived community for reasons best known to the authorities. The Hmar people happen to have a high spirit of entrepreneurship and no effort is left undone. Many had set up temporary shops in Haflong market, but even these had been stopped by forces not known to the communities at large. In the allotment of the newly constructed market stalls even, no person belonging to the Hmar community has been allotted. There appears to be a policy of alienation for the Hmar people of North Cachar Hills, and they have almost become strangers in their own land.

Govt. contractors have given up their business as they are not able to get allotment of works. Those who continue also do so by buying works from those who had been allotted. Discrimination of the people can be seen everywhere.

Inter-tribe conflict of 2003

As all are aware of, there was an unprecedented ethnic clash between the Dimasa tribe and the Hmar tribe in 2003. For no fault of theirs, the Hmar tribe had been made to suffer untold hardship in an attempt at 'ethnic cleansing' type of atrocities committed on them. The Dimasa people, being at the helms of affairs were attempting to butcher the Hmar people and were almost successful. In the process many villages were either burnt up

or abandoned by the villagers. Till now a number of villages have remained unoccupied. A good number had lost their precious lives and many were left bereaved. Properties of the Hmar people, movable and immovable, worth crores of rupees, were completely damaged and destroyed.

However, good sense prevailed and the conflict was ended as abruptly as it began. Perhaps the intervention of the Governor of Assam caused the stoppage of hostilities. In the aftermath, some semblance of steps for relief and rehabilitation was taken by the government. In that matter also, apart from a couple of relief camps in Muolhoi, where rice and *dal* were supplied for sometime, and some villages given some roofing material, the Hmar people have continued to be deprived.

Through their own efforts and with help from some NGOs and the Church, the Hmars steadily rebuilt their settlements and communities. And till now, no projects have been taken up in terms of long term rehabilitation and restoration of wholeness of life. The people had been left to their own fate.

Economic development

The tribal people mostly depend on *jhum* cultivation for their livelihood. This is a long-standing problem which has been addressed by the authorities in a number of ways. But it is sad to mention that no success has ever been achieved to eradicate the *jhumming* practice and to equip people to find alternative means of livelihood. It appears that the fund meant for projects are often inadequate.

Many Hmar families have realized the futility of continuing *jhum* cultivation and have started horticulture, animal husbandry and other pursuits on their own efforts. Some are so dedicated in their pursuits that they successfully planted pineapples, oranges, agar, teak, gamari and have derived their livelihood. But such efforts, though successful, are often noted to come to an end due to lack of help and encouragement from the authorities. They need help for maintenance, for marketing and for further development and enlargement of their efforts. Also technical help and advice are indispensable, but such are lacking.

And now the poverty of the people is likely to be aggravated by the onset of *mautam*, a phenomenon of bamboo flowering. Now also, a number of insect species and pests, including rodents, have been noticed to multiply. Such pests are often the scourge of the cultivated crops. Researches by

competent scholars need to be carried out and appropriate steps taken for the protection of the standing crops.

One of our national leaders had rightly said that the tribal people survive with the help of the forest and they are themselves protecting the forest. In fact, the tribal people depend on the forest for vegetables, fruits, firewood, building materials and protein supply from hunting and fishing. In recent years, wanton destruction of the forest had taken place. Valuable timbers have been collected from the lush-green sub-tropical forests which used to cover the hills and the plains of the southern part of Assam, the habitat of the Hmars. Perhaps many have made rich profits while the local inhabitants are facing problems. Such practices need to stop. Such wanton destruction have destroyed untold number of valuable species, flora and fauna on which the tribal people depend on for food, medicine and shelter.

For wholesome economic development, the improvement of road and other means of transport communication is a must. In this, the Hmar settled area has experienced much negligence. In North Cachar Hills, the Mahur-Ainacherra road has been under construction for the past more than 40 long years, and it is not known when it will ever be commissioned for use. Other existing roads also are much neglected with no maintenance worth the name. Such negligence only add to the backwardness of the area. Many Hmar villages are still depending on the worn-out footpaths for going to the market, to school and to other villages, paths passing through deep forests, up and down the hillsides. Most of the rivers are still forded on foot and when they are in spate, people remain cut off from the rest of the world.

Problems concerning education

It may be said that all children under 14 years of age have access to school education. But the sad fact is that schools are not what they ought to be. The main problem has been caused by the teachers themselves. The autonomous Council is both a blessing and a curse for the tribal people and the Hmar people are no exception. The Council often appoints unqualified teachers in the Primary Schools. I am told that some are not able to write even their names properly, and in some schools there are plenty of teachers whereas there are only a few students.

In the rural areas, there are High Schools in Hmar villages, but the Heads of Institutions and most of the teachers are non tribal personnels. The Heads and teachers of High Schools of Hmar villages like Leiri, Boro Arkap,

Vongzawl, Khuongluong and other interior villages are frequently seen in Haflong. One wonders what such teachers will teach to students. When there are enough of educated unemployed local tribals, why have these undedicated and unqualified persons been recruited for those posts? Most of the Heads of Institutions are interested only in Provincialization and even after the school is provincialized, the dedication to service is not there at all! It is indeed a very sad and grim situation. One cannot but wonder what future is in store for those poor students. They have been sentenced to a life of misery and ignorance for no fault of theirs. The concerned authorities need to be awakened without delay.

Concluding remarks

Being afflicted with untold hardship caused by political and economic injustice and discrimination, the Hmar Peoples' Union of North Cachar Hills District has even made a move for having a separate Administrative Unit and had submitted memoranda to the appropriate authorities on several occasions. But so far, all their pleas appear to have fallen on deaf ears. Perhaps the time is not ripe as yet.

Economic development cannot take place in a trouble-torn society. For any form of development to take place, there need to be an atmosphere of peace and harmony in the society and among the people at large. In such an atmosphere, the people need to be enlightened and motivated on the need for development. Only with proper motivation on the part of the people, economic development can take place in a desirable way. When development projects are planned from the table of some experts without any motivation on the part of the target people, however good and perfect that project plan may be, it may not be that successful on implementation. The ideal procedure may be to go to the villages and to discuss with the villagers the possibilities and feasibility of any development project intended. The intended project may not be what the villagers feel that they needed. It may be a totally different idea. Even then, to the extent possible, such ideas may be taken up because they are the most likely to be successful in their implementation. Any project planned should be need-based and having short-term and long-term benefits.

In a democracy, all must be equal before the law and all must receive unbiased treatment. The bias and bad blood formed by ethnic rivalry should be removed so that all receive equal and unbiased attention and treatment

from the government authorities. Those in authority must not be influenced by ethnic consideration. They must realize that they are in the position on behalf of all the citizens of the country irrespective of caste, tribe and creed. If certain section of the people felt that the Autonomous Council is only for a particular tribe, there will be unrest and nothing else.

In the absence of peace and harmony, the prospect of development certainly is slim. People will tend to pay more attention to ethnic problems and relationship rather than the realization of the need for development. Many of the insurgency problems that we face today may have something to do with the state of affairs prevailing. As such, authorities need to study the varied problems faced by different people groups and take appropriate steps to fulfil the aspirations of the people concerned.

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Jonbeel mela : a catalyst fair for peace and amity

Birinchi K. Medhi and Arifur Zaman

Introduction

To achieve the desired goal undisrupted peace and harmony should be maintained amidst different societies, particularly among those human groups who live in a compact geographical area. Fairs and festivals can perform amazing role to create such congenial environment. The pristine fairs and festivals observed in different parts of India have performed tremendous role in creating coveted environment among different racial and cultural groups of the country from the distant past. Various communities of North-east India also observe a good number of fairs and festivals, particularly as indispensable components of their mainstay, i.e. agriculture. It is pertinent to note here that the dictionary meaning of 'fair' and 'festival' are 'an exhibit and sale of things, often for charity', and 'a period of feasting or celebration', respectively. However, generally these two terms are used synonymously.

Each society observes some fairs and festivals, but the number of the studies on this topic, particularly on the fairs and festivals of North-east India are scanty. "Scholars like Jacob Grimm, Max Muller, Andrew Lang, Wilhelm Mannhardt, James Frazer, and so on made attempts to link beliefs, primitive and magical rituals with the modern festivals. We can assume that the tradition of the modern festivals emanated from the beliefs and magical rituals of the ancient community" (Sarma, 1988: 55). Impact of fairs and festivals and their indispensable relation with the societies from different perspectives are studied by the scholars from various disciplines. A few scholars like Hazarika (1960 : a, 1960 : b), Sarma (1988), Goswami (1995), Devagoswami (2001), et al., have studied some of the tribal and non tribal fairs and festivals of this remote part of India.

For survival, men have to struggle in clockwise precision throughout the year. Disease, distress, death, etc., always create hindrances in maintaining

the peaceful life. In the recent years, growing suspicion, malice, and intolerance amidst the different communities have created obstacle in the maintenance of peace and amity among different communities of North-east India. In such a vulnerable situation fairs and festivals can act as a strong catalyst to spread love and peace among the various groups of people of different racial and cultural identity. In this context one should remember that the stalwart patriot of India, Bal Gangadhar Tilak had initiated the Ganapati festival (festival of Lord Ganesa) in Maharashtra which had created tremendous impact in maintaining peace and harmony among the different caste and creed of that state.

In Assam all the communities observe a good number of fairs and festivals, some of which are conspicuously above the religion. Such a fair, viz, the *Jonbeel mela* (fair of Jonbeel) is observed by the Tiwa tribe of Marigaon area of Marigaon district, Assam, which have amazing impact on different communities in accelerating the process of spreading of peace and amity.

The Tiwas

The Tiwas, previously known as Lalung, is a prominent scheduled tribe of Assam, distributed over both hills and plains. It can safely be ascertained that the Tiwas belong to the great Bodo race and their ancestral source was Mongoloid. The existence of this tribe has been referred to in the old Sanskrit and Assamese literature like the *Atharva Veda*, the *Yayurveda*, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Kalika Purana*, the *Yoginitantra*, the *Kachari Buranji* (literally the history of the Kacharis), the *Darrang Rajvanshavali*, etc. "Lalung concentration is mainly found in the district of Nagaon of central Assam. They are spread in Kapili, Mayang, Bhurbandha, Kathiatali, and Kampur Development Block areas of Nagaon district and Nartiang *Elaka* of Jowai subdivision of Jaintia district of Meghalaya. Besides, there are a few Lalung villages in Dhemaji areas of Dhemaji subdivision of Lakhimpur district, Titabar areas of Jorhat subdivision of Sibsagar district. While the Lalung villages of Nagaon, Lakhimpur, and Sibsagar districts are established in the plains areas, the Lalung villages of Nartiang *Elaka* (now within Mikir Hills) are situated either in the hilly areas or in the foothills" (Sharma Thakur, 1985 : 12).

Agriculture is the mainstay of the Tiwas inhabiting both in the hills and the plains. In the hills they practise *jhum* cultivation while in the plains

they practise permanent cultivation. The Tiwa society is divided into a number of exogamous clans (*wali* or *kul*), which are again divided into a number of sub-clans called *dhan-bangha*. Each clan has a *barghar*, the place of community worship. The plains Tiwas follow the patrilineal system but the hill Tiwas are matrilineal. Till the recent past *samadi*, the youth dormitory, occupies vital place in the Tiwa society. Monogamy is the prescribed form of marriage among the Tiwas though the cases of polygyny are also not rare. Instances of divorce are very few and far between. It is customary to pay bride price to the bride's family by the groom's family because the daughters are treated as the asset of a household. The womenfolk of the Tiwas have been expertise in weaving and they produce clothes for the use of the members of respective household. Besides weaving, the Tiwa girls perform various works in the household and also in agricultural fields. Traditionally the Tiwas are animists, although almost all the Tiwas inhabiting the plains areas have adopted Vaishnavism abandoning their pristine religion. However, in the religion of the Vaishnavite Tiwas remnants of the archaic religion could be traced.

In the Marigaon area there are a good number of Tiwa villages, some of which are homogeneous, while in the others the Tiwas live with the Assamese caste Hindus. Many elements of the Assamese caste people have been percolated to the Tiwa society including Vaishnavism. Traditionally the Tiwas are habituated to eat pork and are used to drink country liquor (*zu*) irrespective of age, sex, and time. However, the Vaishnavite Tiwas of the Marigaon area have abandoned such practices atleast in the formal situations.

Background of the Jonbeel mela

A few folk tales are found among the Tiwas about the origin of the *Jonbeel mela*. One of the folk-tales described the initiation of the fair as follows :

Once upon a time there were three Tiwa brothers who ruled over three small areas. The eldest brother was the chieftain (*Raja*) of Joyota, the middle one ruled over Khairam, and the chieftaindom of the youngest one was Marjong. Their high god was Lord Mahadeo, and they intended to select a place which could be used as shrine to propitiate Mahadeo. The youngest

brother went for the venture, and he selected a place in between the Kiling and the Kapili rivers in the Marigaon area of Assam. Enchanted by the beauty of the place, the youngest brother shifted his chieftaindom from Marjong to the newly selected place of Marigaon area. The physical structures of the place closely resemble a *guha* (cave), and therefore, the new inhabitants of the area named the place as Guha. The Gova is the corrupt form of the word *guha*. At present Gobha is a revenue division of Assam.

In one evening the chief of Gova with his wife while walking by the side of the *beel* (a big swamp) of Gobha area, saw the beautiful reflected image of the full moon in the deep water of the *beel*. They feel as if the water source is the abode of the moon. The Chief had a mind to offer a feast to his kith and kin along with the people of the Gobha area to mark the event of establishment of his new chieftaindom. The spellbound beauty of the place inspired him to offer the feast by the side of the *beel*. From that onward a fair is held in the same place every year, which becomes popular as Jonbeel *mela*.

According to another folk tale the Tiwas are the offspring of Lehi, daughter of the god Lungla and goddess Jayanti. At the initial stage the Tiwas lived in the Joyota area. At that period the princess of the Joyata chieftaindom was in love with Langbar, a youth from a hand to mouth family. When the chief came to know about the love affair of his daughter, he was very angry, because he thought that the relation of his daughter with a poor youth is against the prestige of the royal family. The chief intended to kill Langbar. However, when he came to know that his daughter will not survive without Langbar, he had changed his mind and gave his daughter's hand to Langbar. To celebrate the occasion he had arranged a grand community feast by the side of the Jonbeel – the big swamp of Marigaon area. From that time onwards a fair was arranged in that place every year which is known as Jonbeel *mela*.

Goswami (1995:60) writes, ".....there is a larger *mela* of the Tiwas (Lalungs) known as Jonbeel *mela* which follows Magh *Bihu* and is held on the first Friday after the *uruka* or eve of Magh *Bihu*. It is held near a marshy lake known as Jonbeel and not far from Jagiroad. It lasts for two or three days. The Gobha *Raja*, the most respected citizen of the area, and

the scion of an old ruling family, arrives with his official and under his supervision there is community fishing in the lake. At the same time contributions are raised for the management of the ensuing *mela*. The *Raja* is offered a share of the fish caught". It should be mentioned here that Magh *Bihu* is the festival observed by the Assamese people during the month of Magh (January-February) through household and community feast, merry making, and appeasing the fire god.

The *mela*

Although the *mela* starts on Friday of the third week of January every year, the time of beginning of the *mela* is not known. However, the Tiwas believe that the fair is first observed during the establishment of the chieftaindom of the Gobha chief. At that time the *mela* was held before the Magh *Bihu*. The *mela* is held in an area of 18 *bighas* (1 acre = 3.025 *bighas*), composed of land and water bodies. They started the *mela* by praying and sacrificing in the *deosal*, a greatly revered shrine of the Tiwas of the area. In the past human sacrifices were conducted to appease the deity of the *deosal* along with different animals. In 1834 *Raja* Chatra Singha, the chief of Gobha was arrested by the British for sacrificing human beings in the *deosal* (Deuri, 1994 : 32). From that time the Tiwas have abandoned the custom of human sacrifice.

Different scholars opined that till eighteenth century the western part of the undivided Nagaon district (now Marigaon district) was under the sway of a number of Tiwa chieftains who ruled as vassals under both the Ahom and the Jaintia kings. There were about seventeen Tiwa chieftaindoms ; seven of these are known as *Sato Rajar Rajya* (kingdom of seven kings), five are known as *Pacho Rajar Rajya* (kingdom of five kings), and four are known as *Datiyalia Rajar Rajya* (frontier kingdoms). Till date these are in existence. In old days the chieftains of these areas had political power, and acted as the authority of law and order with the help of a *durbar* (a levee held by the king) composed of a number of officials. 'The *Raja* of Gobha (a *mouza* or revenue division now), their relatives or old political associates in the nearby Meghalaya hills, including the Syiem of Khyrim, the Ahom *Senapati* from Kajalimukh, some Muslim officials from Jaluguti – all have a ceremonial place at this *mela*. These persons have no political or administrative relevance now ; they are just descendants of historical figures and just symbols, socially recognized' (Goswami, 1995 : 60). Gobha

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is the important chieftaindom which is composed of the villages of the Marigaon area. In the Jonbeel *mela* the Gobha Raja occupies the central place, and he receives the most honour from the Tiwas.

"Tiwas, Karbis, Jaintias, the common Assamese people, traders of various types – it is a huge concourse, many taking temporary shelter in makeshift huts covered with paddy stubble. The hill people come down to procure *pithas* or cakes, dried fish, vegetables, medicinal herbs, and so on by bartering with ginger, turmeric, arum, and such things that they themselves produce. This is a traditional gathering with a traditional mode of trading. The things that the hill people procure here are used to celebrate their feasts up in the hills. The people come down walking about twenty miles or so" (Goswami, 1995 : 60-61).

Salient features of the *mela*

Jonbeel *mela* has some important features which make this fair a conspicuous and important one. Before the fair a community fishing is held in the water sources of a vast area. The fishing is conducted in the Jonbeel, Kharbeel, Thakur Durgabeel, and Amolbeel, where thousands of villagers irrespective of age and sex, spontaneously take part. The community fishing is done under the vigilance of an official (*Nga pathla bishia*) of the Gobha chief. The fishing is started just after the Magh *Bihu* and generally continues for four days, i.e. to the day before the inception of the Jonbeel *mela*. A small quantity of the catch is taken by each of the participants, one portion is given to the Gobha chief, and another portion is kept for bartering. The lion's share of the catch is utilized for the community feast held in the site of the fair place for the honour of the chieftains, their officials, and the other guests.

Although in the present economic scenario barter becomes almost obsolete, this traditional system is one of the primary attractions of the Jonbeel *mela*. The bartering takes place early in the morning in the *mela* days. The principal objects of barter are arum, ginger, turmeric, medicinal plants, leafy vegetables, bamboo shoots – both fresh and dry, yam, dried fish, local cakes, etc. The hill Tiwas come to the *mela* with their *jhum* produces (arum, ginger, turmeric, leafy vegetables, yam, lac, etc.), jungle products (bamboo shoots – both fresh and pounded dried, medicinal plants, etc.), dried fish, etc., and exchange those with local cakes made of rice flour powder with or without coconut granules, sesame, molasses, sugar,

fish, salt, kerosene, match boxes, etc., offered by the plains Tiwas. In all the four days of the fair, a big market is held at the fair site. Previously, only the local produces were exchanged and sold in the fair. 'The market now-a-days exhibits furniture like bedstead, table, box, articles like quilt, mattress, sweets, and cloths and so on. There is a formal meeting as part of the celebration and some dance and music as well as a list of speech-making are there. Old war implements like swords, rhine-hide shields, one or two small cannon and spears are also exhibited. The dancers put on attractive traditional dresses. One of the dances shown was the rice powder making dance, a mimetic affair' (Goswami, 1995 : 61).

Conclusion

The age-old Jonbeel *mela* is acting like a powerful catalyst in establishing a warm and sincere relationship among the hill Tiwas and the plains Tiwas. It also established a cordial relationship among the people of different caste and creed. Festivals are the external expression of social behaviour. In community fishing integral to the Jonbeel fair a good number of villagers from far and near irrespective of age and sex take part whole-heartedly. They do not grab the entire catch, and obeying the primordial custom they offer the lion's share of the fishes to arrange the community feast. The Tiwas coming from distant areas visit the houses of local people. Some of such people have established the fictitious kinship relations with some households of the local Tiwas and the Assamese Hindus. The exchange in the fair is not conducted with a motive of gaining, but done for merry-making, and to create a congenial environment among the people of different racial and cultural identity. In present years the *mela* is overcrowded by a good number of unindigenous traders ; these scrupulous traders stealthily seek the opportunities to deceive the honest hill Tiwas by giving a few sugar candy (*batacha*), a cup of puffed rice (*muri*), or such cheap products taking big amount of ginger, turmeric, etc. The government, NGOs, and the local socio-cultural organizations of Marigaon should keep a cautious vigil to stop such malpractices for keeping the praiseworthy flavour of the *mela*. Now-a-days the foreign tourists also take part in the Jonbeel *mela*. This fair could be easily used as an attractive component of cultural tourism to promote the tourism industry of Assam. Without slightest hesitation it can be said that Jonbeel *mela* has created a congenial environment to spread the feeling of universal brotherhood amidst the environment of suspicion, malice, and insurgency.

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The space for indigenous communities in North-east India

Amrit Kumar Goldsmith

Introduction

The indigenous people are regarded as the original inhabitants of a particular geographical location residing for a considerable period in the history of mankind. It is difficult to have universally accepted definition on indigenous people. The definition of International Labour Organization (ILO) 1989 may be accepted as working definition. "Tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national communities and whose status is regarded wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations."

"People in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from population which inhabited the countries or geographical region to which the countries belong at time of conquest or colonization and the establishment of present state boundaries and who irrespective of legal status retain some or all of their social, economic, cultural and political institutions. Self identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as Fundamental Right."

Any group working with the indigenous communities for development of their state of poverty, marginalization and injustice may use this definition as the overall analytical framework.

For further clarification they may be defined as

- a) Indigenous
 - (i) Originating in a (specified) place or country
 - (ii) Nature, Original, Aboriginal
- b) Tribal
 - (i) Ethnic groups, family, dynasty, clan
 - (ii) Having to do with tribe or tribes

There is concern for security and development of the indigenous communities. The Constitution of India through the fifth schedule

protects the property of these groups. The sixth schedule of the Constitution provides mechanism for local self governance of these groups. They are called as Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste. All these measures are towards giving protection to the identity, customs and traditions of the indigenous groups. The indigenous communities have their respective organizations like *Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples*, towards protection of their interest and rights.

Verrier Elwin had stated, "the tribal people are bound to their land by many and intimate ties. Their feeling for it is something more than mere possessiveness. It is connected with their sense of history, for the legends that tell of the great journeys they have made over the wild and lonely hills and of the heroic pioneers who made the first clearings in the forest. It is part of their reverence for the dead, whose spirits still haunt the countryside. The land is the mother who provides for them in response to the labours of their hands and who, when supplies in short, feed them with hundred natural gifts. It is the setting of adventure, in love, in hunting, and in war, which can never be forgotten. The land is the foundation of the sense of security and freedom from fear, its assured position is a lasting road to peace".

S.L. Dubey writes, "thus the land to a tribal has social, moral and historical in addition to its economic significance. Loss of land, therefore, strikes at the very roots of its existence as a self respecting member of society. He suffers, besides poverty, a great psychological set back".

Christianity came to this region over 150 years ago in the search of bringing enlightenment and a prosperous life. Many of the indigenous community members have accepted the Christian faith, till such time they were animist (worship any object in the environment and solar system that they couldn't understand). Christianity became a connecting mechanism of the socially divided groups. Gradually it gave the sense of oneness in diversity. Many of the tribal groups especially in the hills were practising head hunting, polygamy, witch hunting. However, with the spread of education, the socially unacceptable practices were given up. As per record, the Kanyak Nagas gave up head hunting by 1950.

It is to be noted that many of the traditional systems of governance, property administration, community life management remained as it is. The women remained as marginalized group within the community till today.

As the government of India started functioning as sovereign independent country from 1947 onward, many of the freedom loving indigenous communities become politically restless. There was fear of being enclosed in a system where their rights and freedom could be curtailed. Few have started political agitations which unfortunately developed into violent armed struggle in the region.

The North-east region covering an area of 2,55,083 square kilometre has 4825 km of international border with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Myanmar which poses a distinct strategic importance in its geo-political location. The region is connected with the rest of India through a narrow breadth of 20 km called Siliguri corridor. From the defence and security point of view the North-east region is distinctly separate from the rest of India.

North-east region represents

- 7.9% of India's total geographical area
- 3.8% of India's total population
- Languages and Dialogue - 235
- Districts - 79
- Towns - 254
- Villages - 42,250

Moreover, the region is rich in resources like forest and its wealth, the rivers like Brahmaputra and Barak and the rich river valleys, oil, gas, coal, uranium, limestone, etc., are few to name. It is a hot spot of bio-diversity. This natural resource richness attracts attention from other parts of India and the global capitalists. Much of the land with natural rich resources is occupied by indigenous communities.

The indigenous communities are very traditional in their socio-economic activities close to nature, forest and water and practise simple value based day-to-day living. They practise slash and burn method of cultivation mostly in the hills. Due to bad experience with people from other communities they are hesitant and suspicious to mix readily with other communities. They inhabit in rich forested areas, fertile land and close to water. Also they occupy rich mineral areas. This position of their location poses threat from exploitation from other communities. Thus, many social concerned groups and organizations are trying to help and address the issues that are hampering the development of the indigenous communities.

These indigenous communities are prone to exploitation by other communities on the look out for improving their ;

1. Economic status and 2. Social status

Newspaper report of 26th November, 2006 (*The Sentinel*) says, "the Chief Ministers of Nagaland, Assam, Tripura, Mizoram have appealed to the central government to define and crystallize its Look East policy into specific programmes and if needed restructure the country's foreign policy. The Look East policy statement is an attractive slogan keeping in view its strategic importance in promotion of trade and commerce through sea route via Chittagong Port of Bangladesh, the extension of railway line upto Sobroom linking Agartala (Sobroom is 75 km from Agartala)".

Chief Minister N. Rio says, "Look East policy to facilitate trade and culture exchange the learning of mandarin, Japanese, Korean and with oriental languages to be exchanged and facilities created for the purpose. The trade links with South-east Asia holds the key to development of trade and commerce and consequent growth of industries and North-east. Developing international access corridor with Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar is urgent. Aizawl airport be developed as the hub after Guwahati for air links".

The Look East policy was initiated by Congress government under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in 1992. Under NDA government it gained momentum and UPA government with Dr. Manmohan Singh had re-energized with a clear focus of North-east and the emerging roles as a strategic actor in the integration of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Association of South East Asian Network (ASEAN) because of its common cultural roots and ancestry. How the indigenous communities in the states of Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim participate and integrate in the Look East policy programmes in the emerging socio-economic, political, religio scenario in the near future is in question.

The recent Thailand Business delegation led by Commerce Minister Kirik Krai Jirapaet and his 35 member strong team, visited Tripura, Assam and Meghalaya accompanied by DoNER minister Mani Shankar Aiyar and Minister of State Jairam Ramesh is a history of official integration process of NEI with the ASEAN neighbours. Several interests are connected to this

historic visit besides trade and commerce. Trade and commerce down the history played vital roles in socio-political-religious-cultural integration between countries and communities. Mr. Jirapaet is indicating initially building relationships with the communities of NEI. He was surprised to interact with Singpho girls at Shillong and amazed at the striking similarities of looks, culture and the language between the Thai and the Singpho communities of Arunachal Pradesh.

The British came to this part of the world through the East India Company, on purely business interest initially but eventually led to integration of several interests, which is for the history to confirm. Without the colonization the fragmented countries (called INDIA now) would not have materialized within the time that it happened. During the past 60 years India emerged as a strong democracy in the world and came to 3rd economic power position. Such is the power and influence of integration process. Many Indian politicians dream that within their life time they will see India as a global economic super power.

The Annual Trade Fairs are a huge success of bonding relationship between the local and Thai traders ; there are instances of invitation for dinner, etc., by the local people. This is just beginning or continuing with this process which will only grow vigorously in future. The indication is that tourist flow will increase in NEI from all corners of Asia and beyond. It was indicated that some of the tourists can be encouraged to come to NEI who usually do not put NEI location in their itinerary. There is indication of commerce highways constructed to facilitate the flow of vehicular traffic with goods and materials from across the borders of Myanmar, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Thailand, etc. With this development huge flow of trade related people and tourists are expected at our doorsteps in near future..

The inauguration of East-West corridor bridge at Saraighat by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the Asian car rally, construction of four lane highways, the National Games, the grand Prix sports events are to name a few of the integration process.

The visit of Shri Pranab Mukherjee, External Affairs Minister to Shillong after more than 15 years after the Look East policy of GOI was announced, creates hopes of fastening the pace of integration process. It is to be noted that without the presence of Asian governments in the respective states of

this region, the trade and commerce promotion that is being indicated is not fully understood. The ethnic groups are politically divided between India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Unless there are mechanisms to facilitate easy flow of travels, how effectively the regional cooperation and integration is planned is not clear. Unless protective measures are adopted the mainland Indian manufactured goods will dominate the initiatives at the expense of NEI entrepreneurship and developments.

In the wake of such developments, will the Look East initiatives solve the unemployment scenario of the region or will it aggravate the situation due to unequal competitions? At present, there are in Assam 30 lacs, Manipur 6 lacs, Mizoram 80,000 unemployed educated youth. It is the indication of unresolved current issues. In Assam there are more than 19 lacs development displaced persons. There are ambitious plans of 156 mega and medium range dams' constructions for power generation which will overthrow many settled indigenous communities from their habitat. There is relentless continuation of ethnic conflicts over land and identity issues. How these issues will be resolved is not clear.

In the renewed integration process it is a matter of concern how to protect their identity, autonomy, right to livelihood, land, water, forest and culture.

The vision of SAARC and ASEAN for greater Asia is very much a reality. Asia is now truly emerging as the leading growth centre of the global economy and influencing all global affairs. M. Rajaretnam, Executive Director, Asian Dialogue Society (ADS), Singapore and Director, International Centre, Goa said, in his introductory remark in dialogue and *Shared Integration promoting a greater Asia* on 23rd November, 2006 at Pragati Manor, Guwahati "the future of the North East region cannot rest on its continued isolation from mainstream of India or greater Asia. The future of your region I believe will be directed by its integration into India and greater Asia".

The key issues here are of four dimensions of integration :

1. NER amongst its constituent parts
2. NER and the rest of India
3. NER and South-east Asia
4. NER and greater Asia

"There are geographical and physical contiguities that NER shares in varying degrees with its neighbours. There is also the matter of cultural contiguities but this raises the all important issue of identities simply put, is there a crisis of identity in the NER? Is there, however, an opportunity to find a common space over this issue, yet another question whether or of the issue of political and state violences has an opposition and distinct effect? As we looked toward better future you need to confirm this question".

Hurdles of shared integration

Mizoram NGOs oppose repatriation of Brus

A news report of November 23rd, 2006 (*The Sentinel*) says that the Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), Mizo Upa Pawl (MUP), Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkawm Pawl (MHIP) and several other NGOs in a joint statement oppose the move by the government to repatriate the 1700 Brus refugees in Mizoram. They are saying the Brus were not the state's actual citizens. The statement said most of the Brus were from Asom, Tripura and Bangladesh and were trying to settle down in Mizoram. The statement added the move can cause demographic imbalances and jeopardize the security of Mizos and disturb the peace of the state. It is evident that the political process and issues of integration is not supported by the indigenous (so called) communities in Mizoram. The Brus are not indigenous in Mizoram, but they are indigenous somewhere else.

Similar is the situation existing in the state of Arunachal Pradesh regarding the repatriation of the Chakmas.

Adivasis in Assam

The Adivasis inhabiting the Chotanagpur belt of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar were brought to Brahmaputra and Barak valleys to help farming tea. They were indigenous in the area of their origin, became un-indigenous and given all sorts of name like cooliebongali, tea tribe and so on. They are still struggling for their indigenous identity even after 150 years of their habitation in NER.

The tribe identity crisis and land issues have internally displaced many indigenous groups in the states of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, Meghalaya,

Tripura and Mizoram. We have witnessed violent armed conflict among the tribes.

It is observed that there is a growing agitation on the question of construction of Megadam in Subansiri river in Arunachal Pradesh.

- The issue is of internal displacement of indigenous communities.
- The issue is creating hazard of flash flood down stream, if triggered by earthquake, dam burst or incessant rain. What happens to the indigenous communities down stream ?
- So also the Tipaimukh dam issue in Manipur.
- So also the Uranium mining in Meghalaya.

In this process, many of the indigenous communities are being pushed towards marginalization.

Against this backdrop how do we see the question of integration for greater Asia and the Look East policy agendas of the Government, SAARC and ASEAN.

The Special Economic Zones (SEZ) policy as said by Praful Bidwai "the SEZ will also be socially retrograde, no labour laws will apply to them. Workers will enjoy no freedom and no rights including the Fundamental Rights of Association and peaceful protest. SEZ will be exempted from environment impact assessment. They will be under no obligation to employ local people or share profit with them. They will deplete ground water and other resources. They will be islands of prosperity in a sea of deprivation and agrarian distress, to top it all the SEZ are being established through land acquisition under special Acts passed by the state". It is a further marginalization of the indigenous inhabitants of the land.

Through the development of Information Technology (IT) the traditional political border and social barriers had vanished. There is open sky policy in operation ; there is free trade system and market liberalization in process. There is talk of liberalizing the Restricted Area Regulations to facilitate in flow of external and internal tourists. It is observed that, in near future the indigenous communities will no longer live in isolation.

What remains to be seen is how the indigenous communities will be able to bargain for their space of survival with dignity. The space for living, space for livelihood, space to the identity, etc. The forces operating to integrate will disintegrate the present socio-economic, political, cultural, religio scenario in NER.

The indigenous groups will be pushed to find their space to live as shared integrated community in 21st century and beyond.

Conclusion

The first jolt the Indigenous Groups received is the immigration of the Ahoms (Shan-Tais) to Saumara (Eastern Asom) through the Patkai range of mountains in 1228 AD. Due to the judicious and able leadership of Sukapha the integration process was peaceful. The protesting and agitating groups were dealt with severe actions.

The second jolt received during the imposition of Hindu faith by Rani Phuleswari. The indigenous faith (*Adi Dharma*) got converted to Hindu way of religious practices.

The third jolt is when the British occupied the region in 1826 and subsequent missionary movement of the Christian faith.

The reorganizations of the region on linguistic and tribe basis was to safeguard the identity and the interest of the indigenous communities.

The vision of shared integration and Look East policy of greater Asia is posing threat of different jolts.

The vision 2020 of North Eastern Council has a focused theme "*Let Us Dream, Let Us Think, Let Us Plan for Our Future*". It talks about superficial poverty and backwardness. We have inherited the best body and mind from many races, the best in the field of Art and many cultures, boundless mineral wealth, plentiful rains, all types of climates. These are all scattered and divided, collectively NER is immensely rich. Unless scope and space is created for free and prior discussions with the communities in NER, the top down approach of planning and implementation of activities will go against the interests of the indigenous groups.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) envisages :

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV / AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop global partnership for development

What are the indicators of the MDG ? How far we have achieved the goals ? What is the role of the indigenous people in MDGs, are the questions remained to be answered.

The aggressive capitalist globalization process, the Look East policy, the vision of greater Asia is pushing the indigenous communities towards mainstreaming on behest of the advanced group. The achievement of the goals will not be on terms of the indigenous communities. The space which they think is their rightful space will be integrated in the name of shared integration and prosperous and strong greater Asia.

Changing tribal situation in Assam : some positive and negative impacts

G.C. Sharma Thakur

The tribals of Assam constituting twenty three scheduled tribes, 14 hill tribes and 9 plains tribes, have undergone metamorphic changes socially and politically over the decades particularly since the launching of the Five Year Plans in the post Independence period. From the 'excluded' and 'partially excluded' status of the British period to the District Council status under the Sixth Schedule coupled with the Constitutional provisions the ethnic communities today are no more a depressed section rather an awakened section socially, economically and politically. Retrospectively speaking *Pundit* Jawaharlal Nehru's Five Principles of tribal development had gone a long way towards fulfilling the aspirations of the ethnic groups. These principles are :

- a) *People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their traditional arts and culture.*
- b) *Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected.*
- c) *We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. We should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.*
- d) *We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes.*
- e) *We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.*

After Independence the hill tribal people demanded regional autonomy. The Interim Government of India in 1947 had to consider their demand as the outgoing British administrators gave assurances to the hill people in

this regard. Thus in order to address the grievances of the hill people the Constituent Assembly appointed a committee known as Bordoloi Committee or North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee under the chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi with members Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy, Rupnath Brahma and Mayang Nokcha (later replaced by Aliba Imti Ao). The committee toured extensively the then NE provinces. In some places they had to face serious opposition. Gopinath Bordoloi lamented, "The point presented before us whether we should raise in them (tribals) the spirit of enmity and hatred by application of force or whether we should bring them up under the broad principle of Government by good will and love." Members like Kuladhar Chaliha and Rohini Kumar Choudhury criticised the special treatment as they feared that would perpetuate the colonial policy of isolation and 'tribalstan'. Kuladhar Chaliha said in the second reading of the resolution of Sixth Schedule on 5th September 1949, "If you see the background of the schedule you will find that the British mind is still there. There is the old separatist tendency and you want to keep them away from us. You will thus be creating a 'Tribalstan' just as you have created a Pakistan."² Dr. Ambedkar, however, convinced the members that Tribal Councils will not be free from the executive power of the Government of Assam. The laws passed by the Parliament and State Legislature would also apply to the District Councils. Thus Article 244(2) was incorporated in the Constitution forming District Councils under the Sixth Schedule to provide the tribal people with a simple administration of their own.

Initially the following areas of the composite Assam were included in the Sixth Schedule :

- PART A -
1. United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District
 2. Garo Hills District
 3. Lushai Hills District
 4. Naga Hills District
 5. North Cachar Hills District
 6. Mikir Hills District
- PART B -
1. North East Frontier Tract including Balipara Frontier Tract, Tirap Frontier Tract, Abor Hills District and Mishmi Hills District.

The Sixth Schedule areas underwent several changes over the years and today we have the following areas :

- PART I (Assam) -
1. North Cachar Hills District
 2. Karbi Anglong District

- PART II (Meghalaya) -
1. Khasi Hills District
 2. Garo Hills District
 3. Jaintia Hills District

- PART II(A) -
1. Tripura Tribal Areas District

- PART III (Mizoram) -
1. Chakma District
 2. Hmar District
 3. Pawi District

In this way the two hill districts of Assam were brought under District Council administration with sufficient self rule mechanism under Article 244(1).

Autonomy and plains tribes

The nine plains tribes, a unique nomenclature found only in Assam, were left out of the Article 244(1) as they were thought to be much advanced. Development of these communities was entrusted to the State Government. They were enjoying only privileges of reservation of seats in the Parliament and State Assembly plus some other benefits granted to them by Executive Authority. The Five Year Plans, however, provided special treatment to the Plains tribes for accelerated development. Mention may be made of Tribal Sub Plan with exhaustive development schemes under the Development Departments and there is no denying the fact that the tribal backwardness has been vastly ameliorated over the decades of planning.

The Bodo Kacharis who constitute the largest group in the plains, however, became restive due to factors like encroachment of tribal land by non Bodos in the Bodo inhabited areas and the Official Language Bill of 1960 brought by the State Government. In fact, the Official Language Bill became the easy handiwork of starting a movement as Assamese is declared as official language allowing English as an alternative. The All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC) demanded a hill state. Meanwhile the Bodo political leaders formed the Plains Tribal Council (PTC) on 27 February, 1967 and demanded autonomous region entitled Udayachal, a Union

Territory consisting Northern Belt of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang and Lakhimpur districts extending upto foothills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh (Mukherjee, 1992).

In June, 1972 Government of Assam brought a bill introducing Assamese as medium of instruction in Gauhati and Dibrugarh Universities which was opposed by the Linguistic Minorities Rights Committee. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha's demand for Roman script in 1974, later accepting Devanagiri script bolstered the statehood demand. In 1983 the Bodo leaders formed the United Tribal Liberation Front (UTLF) with All Bodo Students Union's (ABSU) support. So far the demand was for a Union Territory of Bodoland but with the appearance of the Bodo Security Force demanding independent state of the Bodos took a new turn of the events. New equations of political aspirations of the Bodos took place when the agitating Bodo leaders participated in the 1985 General Election under the banner of Bodo Peoples Action Committee (BPAC) winning 9 Assembly seats. In spite of joining the mainstream politics the BPAC and ABSU combined continued their demand for Union Territory of Bodoland with full vigour. The Central Government (Chandrasekhar Government) took up the demand of Bodoland and appointed Bhupinder Singh Committee in 1990 to study the whole situation and the result was the Bodo Accord of February, 1993 constituting Bodoland Autonomous Council Act, 1993 with sharing of as many as 38 subjects.

It is relevant to mention that the Bodoland movement contributed in a large measure towards the demand for Autonomous District Council by other plains tribes like the Mishings, Tiwas, Rabhas, Deoris, etc. Thus development of tribal areas by the tribal people themselves (geneous theory) became a reality. A new horizon opened for all round development of the plains tribes.

It must not be construed that autonomous status will solve the age-old socio-educational and political problems of the tribals. The available data in respect of functioning of the District Councils in the hill districts indicate a not so happy picture as Agnihotri (1997 : 46), one time administrator of the hill areas tells us about functioning of the District Councils in the following words :

"During all these years the District Councils have, however, not been able to live upto the people's expectation. In general following deficiencies

have been noticed in the functioning of the District Councils. Firstly, the Councils have failed to establish healthy conventions in performance of their functions..... Secondly, in the discharge of executive functions after several years of working there has been no perceptible improvement in implementation of projects. Thirdly, there is inadequate coordination between the official department and political component of the District Councils."³

Roy (1997 : 321), a scholar from Tripura has narrated his experience of District Council in Tripura in this manner : "The Tripura tribal history has so far witnessed the long experience of the working of the District Council since 1982. But the seething discontentment and wrath of the tribals could not be mitigated through this political arrangement..... The Autonomous District Council could not show even the least improvement of the tribal masses from their ordeals."⁴

The Assam experience of functioning of District Council in the North Cachar Hills as described by Dr. Tanmay Bhattacharjee (He was a teacher of Diphu Government College, presently a teacher in the Assam University in Silchar) is not satisfactory. "The District Council is now in a desparate condition financially..... A kind of 'political elite' has developed which has delinked itself from the grass roots. Presently a revolution has occurred which can be styled as a 'Maruti Revolution'. It is alleged that a good chunk of developmental money has gone into financing such purchases of motor cars. On the other hand, primary school teachers are going without their salary. Some of them are forced to sit in the markets for earning some money"⁵ (Bhattacharjee, 1997 : 168). The functioning of the Karbi Anglong District Council is not without blemishes. Barua (1997 : 147) informs, "It is thus seen that cold feeling between the State Government and the District Council resulting in wrong policy making, misplaced priorities and wrongful allocations of funds, is creating administrative problem. State Government's interference leading to the curtailment of power of the District Council is breeding dissatisfaction in the minds of the Karbis. This feeling of resentment has been promoting the growth of their ethnic identity culminating in their demand for an autonomous state."⁶

The above data amply demonstrate that the autonomous style of administration in the hills has yet to make any dent in the dissatisfaction of the ethnic groups.

Among the plains too the autonomous pattern is yet to make much headway. For example, only recently the CEM of the BTAD announced that by next twenty years Bodoland state will be a reality. Preliminaries have already been started. On 21st May, 2007 a resolution was passed in the Executive meeting wherein the Chairman directed the Deputy Commissioners, Civil SDOs, SPs of BTAD to write Bodoland instead of BTAD in all communications (*The Assam Tribune*, 22nd May, 2007).

The Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council is also not happy with the present status. They want inclusion of the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council in the Sixth Schedule. Representatives of as many as 9 political parties like AGP, AGP(P), BJP, NCP, CPI, CPI(M), CPI(ML), PLP, AUDP supported the demand of the Rabhas in the all party meeting held on 21st May, 2007 at Guwahati (*Dainik Asam*, 22nd May, 2007).

The Autonomous District Councils of the Mishings, Deoris, Tiwas also are not functioning satisfactorily due to political factions. Even the performance of the Autonomous District Councils in some NE states is far from satisfactory. Ray (1997 : 257) observes, "The State-Autonomous District Council relations remained strained. While government side charged the Autonomous District Councils with mismanagement and inefficiency, the ADCs complained of paltry fund, limited resources and limited power."⁷ In this context the Chief Executive Member of BPPF Hagrama Mahilary's comment on 27th May, 2007 in a meeting at Judge's field, Guwahati draws our attention when he said that Central Government had released Rs 210.00 crores to the BTAD whereas the State Government released only Rs. 141.00 crores.

Conclusion

The post Independence planning process brought metamorphic changes into the socio-political life of the tribals of Assam. From 'excluded' and 'partially excluded' status the hill tribes have started self rule in the form of Autonomous District Council. Although there are many drawbacks in the implementation of the District Council programmes, it cannot be denied tangible improvement has taken place in the socio-economic life of the tribal people. Over the decades the aim of Government's effort to establish a social order based on equity, justice, elimination of exploitation was, by and large, fulfilled to a considerable extent. Tangible attitudinal and social

changes have been noticed. Besides there is an appreciable degree of awareness among the tribals. Ironically the upcoming tribal leaders are more aware of the development programmes where a large measure of power and pelf is involved, than to engage themselves seriously in addressing the age-old problems of the general masses. The District Council solution of the tribal problems is beset with various unsavoury elements and functioning of the District Councils is yet to be fullproof.

In the plains districts of Assam new political awareness (mostly among the educated elites) has been noticed. Along with Bodos who spearheaded the movement for autonomy, some other groups are also having autonomous status. But so far the experiment is not bearing desirable fruit as factional feuds and tug of war for office is going on. But District Council arrangement is the most sensible arrangement to satisfy the tribal ego as the tribal people in this region had their small principalities earlier with kings or chiefs of their own and generally they have a tendency to remain under their own leader.

The tribal people are the autochthones of Assam and Assam identity is closely linked with their socio-historical and linguistic episodes. Thus while enjoying the Autonomous District Council facilities they should keep in mind the greater interest of Assam. Indibar Deori (1996), a renowned tribal writer opined, "*Upanadi Bore' Jadi Luitat Bilin Hoi Astitwa Heruai Pelai, Tetiyahole' Pustikar Upaadaanar Abhaabat Luitoro Astitwa Naaikiya Hoba. Aanpine' Upanadiye' Luitat Pustikar Upaadaanar Jogaan Nidile' Upanadir Gati Stabdha Hoba Luitar Sristi Hoise Gatisil Upanadi Samuhar Paanirehe, Aaru Upanadi Samuhar Gati Abyaahat Aase' Luitar Abasthitir Baabe', Duyu Pakhyoi Ei Paraspar Nirvarsilatar Katha Jimaan Sonkaale' Upalabdhi Kariba, Simaanei Sakalore' Baabe' Mangal.*"⁸

Free English translation

"If the tributaries lose their identity by merging with the river *Luit* (Brahmaputra), then the great river *Luit* will lose its identity due to non availability of sustainable ingredients. On the other hand, if the tributaries do not supply the ingredients to the *Luit*, the tributaries will not be flowing smoothly.... The *Luit* is flowing with the water of the tributaries and the flow of the tributaries has been maintained due to the existence of the *Luit*. Both should realize the symbiotic relationship as soon as possible ensuring well-being of all."

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Peace, harmony and development vis-a-vis the tribal communities in Assam

Dilip Kumar Kalita

Peace, harmony and development are the goals that are tried to be achieved by each and every country or nation or community throughout the ages. In history there are certain points of time when peace and progress are regarded to be achieved. Such a time when peace and progress was believed to be achieved was the reign of Rama described in the *Ramayana*, from which evolved the concept of *Ramarajya*.

People believe in different ways for achieving peace and progress. Some believe that peace and progress can be achieved through economic development. To some extent it is true also. Economic well-being is regarded as a scale for measuring progress.

Some believe that peace and progress can be achieved through political means. More political power is regarded to be higher chance of achieving progress. In a bid to acquire more political power some even resort to path of violence. North-eastern states of India have witnessed this kind of extremism for quite some time. The professors of extremism also have a kind of goal, which is peace and progress. They believe in elimination of certain forces for the establishment of a utopian state of their own which they believe will be able to deliver peace and progress to the people. But in the euphoria of materializing their goal they create more mess than peace.

There are others who believe that peace and progress can be achieved through education. By educating the common people the society can be made aware of the social evils and consequently these evils can be eradicated through education. This is also true to some extent. Education is a vital factor for the uplift of the society.

Assam is a multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-racial

state. The singular thing about India is that it is plural. Plurality is its greatest value. In *Atharva Veda*, a book written about 4 to 5 thousand years ago it is said that here is a country where people speaking different languages following different religions stay together and happily. The situation is same today after a lapse of almost 5 thousand years. The unity of India is based on its diversity, which makes this country a land of colourful variety. It means there is no compulsion to follow just one path of social order resulting in hegemonic regimentation. There is freedom for the people to create their own social order. The same is true of Assam also.

Maintaining peace, harmony and progress of such a huge country like India, both geographically and demographically is not a matter of joke. Maintenance of such a huge family as that of India needs a lot of effort. Keeping a multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country intact for centuries together is a magic that can be performed by centuries of practice. The secret of the success behind this is definitely communal harmony and a sense of belonging to the country and this is national integration in the real sense of the term.

Multi-culturalism is a phenomenon, which is in existence in India since time immemorial. Co-existence, that too peaceful, with the people next door, who may belong to a different community or religion, speaking a different tongue is common place in India. This is something, which is not that common in many of the western as well as eastern countries. India is a veritable melting pot where different tribes, castes, races, languages and religions have mingled into one nation. The builders of modern India had rightly coined the phrase *unity in diversity* to describe this situation.

Nature has made the North-east a great panorama of diverse races, languages and cultures and which adds one more thread to the texture of Indian civilization, characterized by its unity in diversity. This model of unity in diversity is a unique model, which is very difficult for the westerner to understand and perceive. Their understanding is that by appropriating all diversities unity can be achieved. Whereas we think that by acknowledging diversity India has always achieved its unity.

These facts are more so in the North-eastern part of India. Each community has cared not only for one's own community but also for its

neighbouring communities. The world view of each community accommodates its neighbouring communities even at the level of the folk. Members of the community learn to respect and love people from other communities from their very childhood. The creation myths of many communities have narrated myths of polygenesis. They have not delineated the creation of their own community alone but have referred to the creation of their neighbours also. For example, in one of the creation myths of the Karbis the bird *Wo Plakpi* laid seven eggs. Six communities living adjacent to the Karbis and the Karbis themselves were born from the seven eggs.

Wanchoos and sometimes the other groups of the Arunachal hills have stories, which say that the Assamese in the plains are their brothers. Sometimes it is even claimed that the Assamese living in the plains are their children, which is very important. The Mishmis claim themselves to be descendants of Bhismaka, the legendary king of Kundil and address Rukmini as their *Nanyi*, i.e. aunty. She was exquisitely beautiful and was married by Srikrishna, Lord of Dwaraka. In the sacred Vaisnava work, *Srimad Bhagavata*, there is a story that the king of Vidarbha, Bhismaka had a beautiful daughter Rukmini by name, whose marriage was arranged with Sishupala, the ruler of a neighbouring kingdom. Her beauty fascinated Lord Krishna, who carried her away by a stratagem and married her.

The North-east has witnessed a long history of armed rebellion against the Indian government since independence. The Mizo insurgents laid down their arms and are engaged in building a better Mizoram. Naga insurgency also could not create a sovereign Nagaland and at present, peace prevails in Nagaland. The insurgents in Meghalaya did not pull their struggle too far. The ULFA in Assam is also on the verge sitting across the table and negotiating with the central government any day.

Though at times regional and local interests are felt to be of greater importance finally it is felt by the masses that sharing of a great common heritage with the rest of the country gives a more serene and soothing feeling to the heart. That is why, the myths and epics tend to be shared by various people belonging to diverse languages and races.

Babrubahana, the prince from the North-east defeated Arjuna, the great hero of the Mahabharata, who could not be defeated by the Kouravas.

Bhagaddata, the non Aryan king from the North-east took part in the battle of Mahabharata as described in the epic and fought with great valour from the back of his elephant. Bhima married Hidimba, a girl from the North-east. Krishna married Rukmini from the heart of present day Arunachal Pradesh, which was known as Kundil. Being knitted into this intricate fabric of Indianness from the days of the epics, which are the oldest in the world and regarded to be five thousand years old by Indian scholars, is not a superficial or shallow bond with that of the rest of the country.

This is a country where people professing different religions worship in the same temple. (At the Hayagriba Madhava temple at Hajo Buddhists and Hindus offer their prayers together.) This is the country where Muslims lead a religious procession of the Hindus. On the day of Ashokastami, the religious procession carrying all the deities of the different temples of Hajo, the temple town near Guwahati to the river Brahmaputra at Sualkuchi, the village known for its world famous *muga* and *pat* fabric is led by the Muslims of the locality. This is a place where Christians pray in the style of the Vaisnavas. In the first church, which was established in Assam, shoes are kept outside and the prayers are offered by sitting on the ground like the Vaisnava *Namghar*, that is, the prayer hall of the Vaisnavas.

Apart from the level of religion at the levels of caste, tribe, language and race, the people of India have shown a unique harmony for which the country has not fallen apart inspite of its being so diverse in its structure. It is only a matter of viewing things from this perspective not a matter of creating it from thin air.

Peaceful coexistence is something that India has taught the whole world. Each and every community living in the country has been leading a harmonious relation with each other for centuries. So it will not fail though there have been some tendencies to disrupt it at times.

A case of the Garos

The Garo hills in Meghalaya has shown unique examples of communal harmony and national integration throughout its history. The Garos are of Mongoloid stock and the language they speak is of the Bodo branch of the Tibeto-Burman family. They share a lot of commonness with the other people

of the Mongoloid stock and hence their peaceful coexistence with other people of the Mongoloid stock is almost ensured. The Garos have lived peacefully along with their neighbours from time immemorial. They have shared the territory with the Khasis and Jaintias of Meghalaya at present without any major dispute.

Most of the Garo people are Christians by religion. But in this land a Masjid has been maintained for the Muslim people and is looked after by the Garo people who are mostly Christians.

A peculiar situation of the Garo hills is that the route to the state capital, i.e. Shillong is through its neighbouring state Assam. Though originally Garo hills were also a part of Assam the state of Meghalaya was carved out in the later part of the last century and Garo hills became a part of Meghalaya. Since then its communication to its state capital is through the state of Assam via Guwahati. This particular point has been raised because it is an example of a queer communal harmony, which is based on ground realities. The Garos and the other communities of the neighbouring state of Assam has never had any conflict. The Meghalaya State Transport Service Bus and other vehicles plying between Garo hills and Shillong is a daily sight which has never been hindered.

On the contrary, they have been maintaining such a cordial relation that the first Garo-English-Assamese dictionary KU-BIDIK compiled by H.W. Marak was published by the Assam Academy for Cultural Relations, a socio-cultural organization of Assam with financial assistance from the Govt. of Assam.

In the preface of the dictionary Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, the Gyanpith award winner and the then Secretary of Assam Academy for Cultural Relations wrote thus – “The publication of the Garo-English-Assamese dictionary by the Assam Academy is an act of love” This act of love has been there from time immemorial and will continue to be there for all times to come. A recent act of this love is the publication of tales of India translated into Garo and published jointly by Sahitya Academy and Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language, Art and Culture, Assam.

Thus, the Garos are maintaining communal harmony not only within their state but has shown an example to the rest of the country in maintaining harmony with its neighbouring states which is the essence of national integration.

Tribal development in Assam : few possibilities

Abhijit Bora

Introduction

Human as well as inter-community relationship is a highly complex and sensitive issue today. More so in our state where new and new communities are demanding recognition of themselves as ST groups. This move, about six decades of the country's Independence bears a special significance because in this long period all communities were expected to have developed to the optimum level.

Even those communities recognized as 'tribal' communities by the Constitution and subsequently by the Government later on should have been developed to this point. But despite a theoretical and technical vision of the framers of the Constitution this has not at all gone along the expected lines. Rather it has only managed to create deep chasms, distrust, alienation and unrest among the communities which were never known earlier.

So, in the rat race for governmental benefits including jobs, inter-community clashes have gone up over the years. And the politicians' class has been taking utmost advantage of this development. At the same time a few educated and already-empowered creamy layer of people of the recognized backward and tribal communities have benefited leaving the vast majority of the other members of these communities to rot in the name of development.

Issues and possible solutions

Ours is a land of almost numerous communities co-existing peacefully since time immemorial. However, over the years this fine relationship has been breached many a times and a sense of distrust, deprivation, etc., have been taking roots deeply, disturbing everything in the process – development and prosperity. But have we ever pondered why this is happening. Let us try to take a look at a few possible factors and solutions.

The sense of alienation among the tribes / ethnic communities and the other people in general need to be eliminated before a harmonious and peaceful growth can be ensured. It has two dimensions - the feeling of segregation among the tribal communities themselves and again between these communities on one hand and general people on the other.

One of the most potential ways to do this is to remove the system of reservation in a time-bound manner in about 15 to 20 years. An all-round effort must be taken up by everyone concerned for making the masses to properly visualize the scenario beyond the immediate one. Without reservation also, people with a vision can prosper. A simple example is Mr. R. S. Mooshahary at present, the Chief Information Commissioner of Assam who served as DG of BSF before retiring and belonged to a very remote village near Kokrajhar.

Though one may say that this is an exception, we can assure you that there will be lot many exceptions like this if properly explored.

We all know how much of the reservation benefits are actually trickling down to the people who really need it. Definitely there will be a big hue and cry from the group of politicians and people who are reaping the benefits meant for the masses.

Then again, in actuality, the concept of self-rule is a very ideal provision if judged from its merits. But the political parties and ruling classes have always been hijacking it for implementing the same old 'divide and rule' policy left very much alive by the British rulers.

This way the successive governments of independent India have been continuing the arrangement for keeping the people falsely satisfied under the guise of an autonomous self-rule.

But in practice, this has gone very far to create a divisive sense among the people. Only a few days back, a statement came from a top BTAD functionary that Bodo community people not living inside BTAD were not indigenous, but foreigners. Thus, see the extent of alienation in the same community itself.

This alienation and mutual distrust is also taking place among the different tribal / ethnic communities. We all know that in the very recent days, there have been reports of serious clashes between the two parties - the few communities desparately demanding ST status (which has been deferred for the time being) and some of those who are already enjoying this privilege. The already existing ST communities feel threatened by these new demands for possible shrinkage of opportunities. In all probability this is what the government wants. So whom do we blame.

The same episode will be repeated in the near future whenever new communities will demand this status. This is a ploy of the government and political parties combined to divert the attention of the people to unimportant things in life so that they do not rebel against the establishment.

Then again, if at all SC/ST reservation has to be continued in principle for creating better opportunities for the deprived people, could we think of the 'creamy layer' system that was incorporated for the OBC / MOBC reservation system. This might go a long way in eliminating those from these communities who have already benefited from the provision and thereby pave the way for other deprived people from these communities.

One very important aspect is that in this age of globalization, jobs and other opportunities in the sectors directly and indirectly linked with the government are shrinking fast with hardly any new opportunities coming in.

Also, everywhere in the country, there has been clamouring for full reservation of class III and IV jobs in the government and government-supported organizations for the local people. Under these circumstances how much meaning this reservation policy is actually having other than creating a mismatch and sense of alienation and deep dissatisfaction among the other communities.

Right here, it may be pointed out by somebody that of late, there has been a strong advocacy for reservation of jobs in the private sector also based on castes and class. But this will not happen in the near future as the industry and business sector will oppose it tooth and nail.

The question is – is reservation the only way to boost the development of tribal communities? Is it not the high time that we thought of some other alternatives also?

Taking a cue from this above point, are we not actually rendering our future upcoming generations weaker to face the world on their own by keeping in place the reservation system. Have we not already suffered a lot by limiting the competitive edge of so many of our generations by this system?

The situation can be compared to the majority of the public sector undertakings (PSUs) of the country under both the state and central governments. Due to the 'protectionist' policies of the governments both at the Centre and the State most of them used to be running just in the name and eventually became sick.

They were also among the most vehement opposers of the government's open door economic policies as this would have ushered in a stiff wave of competitiveness and ensure the survival of the fittest. Do we also want the same thing to happen for our upcoming generations and make them weak to face the challenges of the global opportunities.

Actually, there is no alternative except ensuring an 'intellectual enrichment' of the people of the tribal / ethnic communities. A sort of 'cultural revolution' must take place for achieving this feat. In the absence of this, we don't see any escape from the problems plaguing the development of tribal / ethnic communities. This is also true for other non tribal communities as well.

The question here is how to achieve this. In an earlier seminar (Problems and Prospects of Tribal Development in North East India) here at this Institute a few days back, we have said that there is an express need to explore informal sources / means of spreading education and awareness among the tribal people also so that they can be transformed into 'thinking human beings' who can logically think of and decide for himself or herself what is good and what not.

Besides, a serious look at the achievements of formal education, adult literacy programme and the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan Mission indicates that

they have failed to achieve their goals properly. Thus, as a major supplement to these formal efforts, there is a very strong advocacy for experimenting with the informal means of education like Community FM Radio, e-learning, etc.

There is good news in the offing. The Union Ministry of Information & Broadcasting of the Central Government is going ahead with a plan to set up about 340 FM Radio centres all across the nation. A good percentage of these radio centres will be dedicated for educational purposes to be implemented and run by reputed institutions including Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).

Also, the government now allows reputed NGOs and voluntary organizations to set up such FM radio centres for the benefit of the community. This is going to help the members of the tribal / ethnic groups and even the people of general communities in keeping themselves 'informed' of any development or information / messages necessary and beneficial for an overall improvement of their lives. The expenditure for establishing one such centre has come down over the last few years and is in an affordable way. These centres will also be useful in countering the spread of the 'dominant culture' paradigm. That is – as we can see that the major electronic media channels are owned and controlled by agencies based in North America and Western Europe, they are bent upon spreading their culture over the world. We must also fight this powerful and all out effort by those agencies to impose their culture upon us.

There might be a question at this point that how do we actually bring back these people from so many entertaining TV or radio channels serving them on a round-the-clock basis, 365 days a year. That is the challenge that will have to be taken up by those involved in the whole process – sociologists, anthropologists, academicians, educationists, planners, etc. Obviously this will be a tall order but at least a beginning has to be made somewhere by somebody. So why not do it sooner than later.

Again, we have been giving leap service to the issue of the need of patenting and proper research of the huge depository of indigenous knowledge in terms of medicinal practices and other important aspects of life. But this has not been happening effectively so far.

Let's have a small example in this connection. We all generally know that 'dried fish' is supposed to be medicine for malaria. Once, when I was serving in All India Radio at Dibrugarh I happened to meet the Director of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) there who informed me that this was being researched into by them. But so far I have not heard anything about the results.

My point is that there are many such things which are supposed to have huge potential of medicinal qualities. But are we actually researching into them? And, if we are, what are the results? Same is the case for *jhum* cultivation as well as many other such indigenous practices and customs, etc.

This lack of interest in actual research and consequent non documentation of the results and practices, customs, etc., may lead to the potential danger of these practices being hijacked by foreign multinational companies / research groups, etc., without our knowing about them.

Role of media

The role of mass media in the state and also of the country has been not worthwhile so far in this regard. The paradigm of Social Responsibility and Development Communication have been grossly undermined while performing its duties by the mass media.

In an ideal situation media should function as an open forum – a platform for anyone in need of a channel for airing and expressing his or her opinions. Here in this platform all sorts of positive/ negative/ contradictory aspects of everything should be discussed so that something better can come out. Thereby people also become informed and come to know what policy should be followed and adopted and what not at times of crisis.

But in practice do we see anything like this from media. Almost everything is sensationalized to a big extent for attracting the readers' / viewers' attention dumping important issues to the backburner.

Can we confidently declare that our media has been taking the right steps for bringing to the fore the actual behind the scene aspects of crisis

situations rather than focusing on the extremities of the situation to stoke emotions of the people.

We are used to seeing and watching evidences of barbaric extremities of the groups / parties involved in agitations in support of their various demands including communal riots (examples – Gujarat riots, Karbi-Dimasa riots). But do we see the same kind of seriousness and passionate resolve to bring together the parties in conflict and also the aggrieved parties for seeking a true solution to the situation.

On the other hand, have we noticed any barbaric and gory scene in the aftermath of the New York Twin Tower blasts in the 9/11 incident. So, where goes the social responsibility of the mass media organizations in this regard.

Let me point out to an important aspect here. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in June, 2005 issued recommendation to mass media in general not to offer terrorists as a platform for publicity which is oxygen for terrorist activities and outfits. It also recommended avoiding aggravating news items, comments, societal tensions underlying terrorism and in particular to refrain from disseminating any kind of hate speech. In our country, do we see the mass media doing anything even remotely like this in its day-to-day functioning.

My point is that mass media would do a much better service to the tribal/ ethnic communities and the society in general by focusing on why these problems are occurring and what can be possible solutions to them rather than beating around the bush and concentrating their energies on the wrong side.

Media is a magic multiplayer and a very potential weapon in the hands of those whoever would like to exploit it. Thus, there is an extreme need for exercising self-restraint under such situations. Besides, under the Development Communication paradigm the mass media have also not been able to provide information / messages which would be helpful for the tribal communities in improving their lifestyle. This is because on an average how much of the news items / features in mass media, whether TV / radio or newspapers are of any good use to the people in general, let alone the tribal people.

Conclusion

There is no way that we can skirt the issue. The best way to get rid of a problem is to solve it. Though a lot of time has elapsed since Independence, yet we have to make a small step somewhere sometime. Why not now ?

We strongly believe that the issue has to be tackled at the grassroots level with different custom-built solutions based on local requirements and necessities so that they become effective when implemented.

Here we must definitely avoid a top down model of development or solution to the abovementioned ills plaguing the society and hugely hampering our society's progress. This is because unless we have peace, harmony and development is out of the question. All these three aspects of society always go hand in hand and only then we can expect some definite results in the positive direction. When there is a will, there is a way. If we put all our heads together, nothing can impede the progress of our society at all. Let us begin on a positive note.

The causes of the tribal movements of Assam

Jagadish Patgiri

The foundation of Assamese culture is constituted by the different races, tribals and non tribals. Since time immemorial various communities of different people have been living in the soil of Assam. The ancient men of Assam were not real Assamese speaking. The racial assimilation of the different ethnic groups, races, tribals and non tribals, Aryan and non Aryans have made up the Assamese nation and its distinct culture.

From the cultural stand-point, the tribals of Assam, we mean, who are living in the present time within the political and geographical boundary other than the tribals of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, etc.¹ The various people in the tribal society are gradually changing into the ordinary Assamese peasantry class while the permanent agricultural system and feudalism have evolved. Today, almost all the scholars of Assamese language, literature and culture agree that the tribal influences on Assamese language, literature, her religious beliefs, customs, festivals, foods, social behaviour, dress, ornaments, every sphere of social life are playing a vital role. Though Assamese culture is constituted by the valuable contribution of tribals and non tribals, at present time due to the various causes the tribals of Assam are dissatisfied. Tensions and conflicts are inevitable in every society. This is much more true in a polyglot society. North-east India is a polyglot area. Nowhere in the world is there so much diversity as in this region. The ethnic differences are immense. As a consequence, tensions existed and are existing in this region. The sources of tensions are several, i.e. in the political life the demand for autonomous state (Karbi Anglong), separate Bodo land is the rising problem ; like this in the economic life— the unemployment problem and the problem of poverty is tremendous. The characters of the tribal movements in Assam are the same with those of the characters of the ethnic movements in the different parts of India. Nowadays all backward communities in India are becoming more

conscious regarding their socio-economic problems. We can point out the causes of dissatisfaction or tension of the tribals in India in the following way²:

1. The tribals are economically backward ; 2. They depend upon natural (wealth) resources but they are facing so many obstacles of their way of living ; 3. Landlessness and backwardness of agricultural system and they are inhabitated with economics of commodity ; 4. The problem for the preservation of tribal tradition and cultural heritage ; 5. The problem of education and mother language for its proper development ; 6. Unemployment problem ; 7. The problem for political power ; 8. The problem for social justice, political right and equal status, etc.

At present time a new wind of awareness is creeping in the minds of the tribals of Assam. In Indian context though the character of the tribal movements in Assam is the same, there are certain specific characteristics of the tribal movements in Assam. Following are the chief causes of tribal movements and struggles in Assam for securing social justice – (1) social, (2) political, (3) economic and (4) cultural and linguistic factors. It is necessary to explain the above four causes for better understanding of the tribal movements in Assam.

Social cause

The tribal movement of Assam is not a phenomenon just like a comet which occurs accidentally in the sky. The question of social status or prestige of the tribals has compelled them to rethink of their ethnic identity. Tribalism is a backward stage of social evolution. This backward stage can be developed through the currents of time. At present time a strong change of wind is blowing in the tribal's life both hills and plains among Dimasa, Bodo, Karbi, etc.

During the British rule or before independence the tribals of Assam with the middle class dominated bourgeois Assamese leadership fought against the Britishers. The tribal people thought that they could be able to free from the severe deep rooted problems after independence and that is why, they never stood against the middle class dominated bourgeois Assamese leadership. But ultimately the bourgeois Assamese leadership neglected the

economic and political problems of the tribals. This class is always talking about peace and integrity through the different medias of communication like Radio, Drama, Poetry, Newspaper and all items of cultural exhibition ; but in the political life they are uttering hollow nationalism. Rather the high caste dominated middle class neglected the word tribal and through this word they behaved the tribal as inferior, lower and backward. From 1947 to 1971 no proper action has been taken for spreading of education in the tribal life.

The caste system is a creation of a particular social system. The preponderance of Neo-vaisnavite movement in Assam Mahapurush Sri Sri Sankardeva recognised the value of each ethnic group like Muslims, Ahom, Kaivarta, Tanti, Naga, Mising, Moran, Chutia, Koch, etc. To quote him *Kukur Srigal gadarvaro atmaram* (meaning everything should be respected). In this way Sankardeva has built up the base of integrity of the Assamese society. The social ideas are not static. The process of evolution is continuing from the pre-historic period till now. The modern world is totally changed. The structure of society and its character has also changed. The tribal social system has transformed from feudalism to the capitalism and from the capitalism to the socialism.

Due to the spreading of rational education in the tribal society a new middle class is emerging. The impact of western education has also inspired the tribal people for their ethnic identity. As a result to safeguard their own ethnic spirit and existence, or independent identity, they have built up some separate platforms, viz, All Assam Tribal League, The Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA)³ etc., and from this time they thought that chauvinism high caste middle classes were the causes for their backwardness. The truth of this can be realised from a memorandum which was submitted in 1928 before the Simon Commission by the tribals "The signs and stirring of a new life in the depressed class the outcome of English Education slowly and steadily creeping into the masses under the active sympathy of the Christian Missionary Organisations have not failed to have their redeeming effect on the dump mass population naturally and justly have evoked in them a growing clamour for legitimate rights and privileges in equal partnership with other high class Hindu communities who by an accident of birth barring other qualifications have obtained supremacy in a hide bound social structure."⁴

Political cause

From the analysis of the socio-economic history of Assam it is obvious that there is no conflict and contradiction among the ordinary working class people of tribal society and the working class people of non tribal society. The character of the working class people of Assam in the different ethnic groups is that they are simple and having folk life, neglected and exploited. But from the first part of seventies of the last century conflict and contradiction occurred in the minds of both the middle classes of tribal and non tribal communities. This class conflict is becoming stronger among these people for political and social establishment. In other words due to the imbalance of the distribution of power this conflict is coming strongly in their minds and as a result, for the demand of separate state for their own land the tribals have directly launched movements. The objective analysis of the history of the middle class of Assam has proved that this fact is truth. This point will be clear from the slight analysis of the background of the Bodo movement. Since the formation (1967) of the 'Plains Tribal Council of Assam', the organisation continued its demand for creation of autonomous region in the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra and extension of the provisions of the sixth schedule of the constitution in the tribal areas of the southern bank of the river Brahmaputra. In the year 1968 the PTCA boycotted the by-election of the Kokrajhar parliamentary constituency and they could have been able to gain popularity. The PTCA gave a nomenclature to the proposed autonomous region as Udayachal and demanded Union territory status for it in the year 1973.⁵ Since independence while the tribal leaders have good relation with the non tribal middle class leaders, it is clear that the spirit of the demand for autonomous state movements remained passive. The demand for autonomy/statehood in N.C. Hills and Karbi Anglong (State within a State) and the demand for Udayachal/Bodoland, etc., are its evidences. The nature and currents of the tribal movements have been changed by the ceaseless well-planned conspiracy of party politics. The Congress Govt. totally failed to redress the various grievances of the tribals. The Janata Govt. tried to establish a good relation with the tribals and so the demand for Udayachal was passive. Though the Janata Govt. have an agreement with the PTCA and have been able to establish a good relation, true to speak, the Janata Govt. could not remove the tribal problems. Of course, the Janata Govt. introduced a new act, i.e. Assam scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (reservation of service and posts) Act

1978, and it was implemented during their rule. But unfortunately, after Janata Govt., no Govt. can be taken by the tribal leaders with trust. In case of services the unfilled but reserved posts for tribals and scheduled castes are approximately 11,500 (today it will be more).⁶ The movement for separate land headed by the then leader Upen Brahma during AGP's rule stood as a great challenge for peace and integrity in Assam. The wrong idea of AGP Govt. and the political activities of Congress Govt. and the role of Assam Sahitya Sabha are the root cause for the present alienation movements of the tribals.

Some observers comment that the tribal movements actually occur by the conspiracy of the external forces. The capitalist country like America tried to disturb the peace of Asia and for this they encouraged to the ethnic movements of India. This is not real truth. Simple encouragement cannot burn a fire without grievances and conflict in the minds of the people. While the elements of modern life penetrated in the tribal society a new thinking of revival is coming in their minds. The elements of modern life, viz, spreading of modern rational education, impact of material philosophy, science and technology, services, contract, trade and commerce, administrative and parliamentary system, language, literature and culture, etc., help to sow the seeds of capitalism in their life. Political forces used chauvinism as weapons for earning votes and ultimately every community is going to the path of revolt and movement.

3. Economic causes

The economic condition of Assam is deteriorated. Assam has been facing a number of serious problems. The problems like unemployment, exploitation by the central government, industrial backwardness, over population, rising of prices, severe flood problems, etc., paralyse the backbone of the economic condition of Assam. The economic condition of the tribal people (both hills and plains) is very pathetic in comparison with that of the Assamese speaking people from the time of the downfall of Ahom monarchy. The upper caste Assamese have developed society economically, politically and culturally, but like the high caste Assamese no tribals have been developed. In the pre-British period the economics of coin was not popular and the trade and commerce was basically barter (exchange) system ; but while the Britishers came, the use of the economics of

coin became rapid. The tribals could not be able to accustom with that new system of economics. The hilly tribals are generally associated with the *jhum* cultivation (shifting cultivation). As a result, they frequently change different places. Under these circumstances, they lost their land. Of course, after independence the then Indian Govt. in the year 1950 formulated tribal Belts and Blocks to adequately protect their land. According to this act tribal land cannot be transferred to the hands of non tribals. But in the real sense this is not happening. At present time, infiltration problem has taken a major role in the tribal Belts and Blocks. Several objections were raised by the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) (U) regarding the land problem of the Bodos. The state Govt. of Assam illegally evicted the Bodos from their own land and property. Sixty percent Bodos are landless according to the ABSU (U) leaders. Same objections were also raised by the Karbis. The tribals have been compelled to live in the protected forest for increasing the number of infiltration and that is why, they are identified as infiltrators and ultimately they are evicted by the state Govt. Moreover, the state Govt. evicted about six lakh acres land for the development of various projects in the tribal Blocks and Belts. In Karbi Anglong, the District Council is the authority for land settlement of this region. Karbi Anglong and N.C.Hills are enjoying sixth schedule status of the constitution of India and so, the state government has no authority for land settlement. The Karbis are taking certain amount of money and giving their lands to the emigrants or contractors for cultivation through an agreement. Gradually their economic condition is becoming bad and the poor has become poorer and the rich to be richer. Besides these those who have little education they are very much interested to the Govt. jobs but not to the trade and commerce. A lot of amount is sanctioned by the Govt. for developmental works but unfortunately a huge amount of money is not used in the proper direction. There is always rampant corruption. All these negative conditions destroy the economic foundation of tribal societies under acquired status of local self government.

4. Cultural and linguistic factors

Assam has been land of controversy over language. Though Assamese is the chief language of this state, this language has not been originated from a particular source and it is not rich from a particular angle, rather it is constituted by the different elements of tribals and non tribals. Assamese language and

culture has been developed through assimilation by the contribution of the different ethnic groups— Aryan and non Aryans. But due to some historical causes some ethnic groups have not been merged with Assamese. There are, in Assam so many indigenous languages (dialects) in every ethnic group, other than Assamese. The Nagas, Khasis, Jayantias, Garos, Mizos, Kukis, Bodos, Tiwas, Misings, Rabhas, Deoris, Mikirs (Karbis), etc., have their languages (dialects). Above all, these tribals used Assamese language for communication but in their day-to-day life they used their own dialects. As a result, those who use (i.e. by Brahman, Kalita, Sonowal, etc.) Assamese in all spheres of life they become more advanced in comparison with those who do not use Assamese in their day-to-day lives. The problem of this backward group stood as a challenge in the first part of seventies of the last century. The source of this dissatisfaction has been experienced right from the period of British rule. The colonial Britishers used 'divide and rule' policy among the different tribals for spreading of their imperialism. The middle class leaders during the so-called independent India have been ruling according to the British traditions and were breeding to the separate sentiments of tribals. The larger socio-cultural and language literature organisation of Assam, Assam Sahitya Sabha emphasised on only Assamese language and culture.

The tribal Culture and Language did not find weighted place in the various schemes of Assam Sahitya Sabha. As a matter of fact, the tribals thought that the Assamese appealing leaders are chauvinist. Of course, now Assam Sahitya Sabha is thinking about the development of the languages of Mising, Karbi, Bodo, Dimasa, etc. At present the grievances are not curable even though the development packages are offered recently by this organisation, while AGP Govt. came to power in 1985 the demand for autonomy in the two districts (Karbi Anglong and N. C. Hills) has become more pronounced and all non Assamese ethnic groups were agitated. Two factors are basically responsible for this condition (1) The Secondary Education Board of Assam's circular No. SEBA/AB/Syll. II/85-88/128 February/85 Assamese was to be introduced as compulsory in all schools; (2) Making mandatory, the knowledge of Assamese for all recruitment to government services.

Beyond the above mentioned causes there are certain other causes. Before independence the ambition for self determination was present in the minds of

the tribals. It was Naga National organisation who had for first time demanded for complete independence from India. Like this, Mizo Union also demanded for autonomous State (State within a State). Similarly, the leaders of the Karbis (then Mikirs)⁷ in the year 1946 had also demanded for autonomous state. Same demand has also been raised by the people of Khasi, Jayantia and Garo hills. From the knowledge of history we can say that the present tribal problem in Assam is the creation of the Britishers. The Britishers introduced certain principles to govern the hilly people. They divided hilly region into three Zones from historical and geographical perspectives (1) North-East Frontier Agency (Today it is Arunachal Pradesh) ; (2) Excluded Area (Naga hills, Mizoram or Lusai hills. These were not included in Assam). In these regions the Britishers introduced Inner line Act and (3) Shillong, Khasi-Jayantia hills, Garo hills, Mikir hills and North Cachar hills, these regions were called by the Britishers as Partially Excluded Area. By introducing the Inner line Act the Britishers created a vast communication gap between the hills and plains and ultimately after independence the demand for separation became pronounced.

Rise of Ethnic consciousness, land to Political consciousness, Movements and struggles, etc., have been the day-to-day phenomena in the post Independence India. The problems of pre-Independence India like unemployment, rising of price, inflation, landlessness, etc., are not solved rather these are enhanced in post independence period. Social justice and security is totally absent. Rampant corruption makes social life completely poisonous. People's confidence on state machinery is decreased. Class conflict is becoming stronger due to the rapid expansion of capitalism. The state has been facing various problems like value of lives, terrorism at the rising scale, etc. All these also touch the tribal life.

In Assam the demand for the formation of a new state raised after 1960. In 1967 a sentiment for reorganisation of Assam was acted and patronised by the then Indian Govt. and the Congress party. In the year 1967, January 13 such a proposal of federation have been offered for the formation of Hill State. The conception of federal Assam was not materialised due to the objection of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, All Assam Students Union and the middle class people. North-east India was reorganised under the North-East Areas Reorganisation Act 1971. Under the new arrangement we have five states (Assam, Manipur,

Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura) and the Union Territories (Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram). Mizoram soon becomes another full-fledged state under the Mizoram statehood Act 1986 and Arunachal Pradesh has also been declared statehood in 1987.

The movement for the demand of self determinations started first in Nagaland. The slogans of separation in hill states gradually echoed in plains and hills of Assam.

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Sensationalism vs. social responsibility Role of mass media in community conflicts

Ankuran Dutta and Anamika Ray

Introducing the debate

Mass media include all forms of information communicated to huge groups of people scattered in a large geographical terrain, from a handmade sign to an international news network. Mass media is not a simple term, which is encompassing a countless group of institutions and individuals who differ in purpose, scope, method, and cultural context. There is no standard for how large the audience needs to be before communication becomes mass communication. There are also no constraints on the type of information being presented. The mass media have a powerful influence on how people view the world. Newspapers, radio, and television are frequently the only link to events happening outside of one's neighbourhood. The television in the living room, the newspaper on the doorstep, the radio in the car, the computer at work, and the letters in the mailbox are just a few of the media channels daily delivering advertisements, news, opinion, music, and other forms of mass communication.

Media are prevalent in industrialized world and they have a commanding impact on how those populations view the world. It is only the most local and personal events that are experienced first-hand. Events in the larger community, the state, the country, and the rest of the world are experienced through the eyes of a journalist.

Not only do the media report the news, they create the news by deciding what to report. The "lead story" of the day has to be selected from the thousands of incidents that happened that particular day. After something is deemed newsworthy, there are decisions on how much time or space to give it, whom to interview, what pictures to use, and how to frame it. Often considered by editors, but seldom discussed, is how the biases and interests

of management will impact these determinations. All of these decisions add up to the audience's view of the world, and those who influence the decisions influence the audience.

The media have an enormous importance to conflict resolution because they are the primary — and frequently only — source of information regarding conflicts. If a situation doesn't make the news, it simply does not exist for most people. When peaceful options such as negotiation and other collaborative problem-solving techniques are not covered, or their successes are not reported, they become invisible and are not likely to be considered or even understood as possible options in the management of a conflict. A journalist's story on a conflict can be the sole information available to his audience. How the reporter frames the conflict can bias the audience in favour of one party, or one solution, over another. Because the media are so vital not only to presenting and explaining conflicts, but also keeping them from escalating, it is necessary for parties to a conflict and conflict resolution practitioners to know how to work with the media effectively.

The lead story for most news programs is typically the most recent incident primarily based on political issues and crime and disaster. Conflict attracts viewers, listeners, and readers to the media and large audiences are imperative to the financial success of media outlets. Therefore, it is often in the media's interest to not only report conflict, but to play it up, making it seem more intense than it really is. Long-term, on-going conflict resolution processes such as mediation are not dramatic and are often difficult to understand and report. Thus conflict resolution stories are easily pushed aside in favour of the most recent, the most colourful, and the most shocking aspects of a conflict. All too often conflict is regarded as more newsworthy than resolution. That does not have to be the case. Bringing journalism and conflict resolution techniques together can result in solid news stories that are beneficial to the conflicts and people covered.

As discussed above, the media including press — all are interested in sensationalizing an event, whether it is a story of parliament, legislative assembly or a conflict. The media have been embarking on a deliberate exercise of sensationalizing news. There are a section of media which are truthful, but their number is very much limited and especially the number of readers or audiences is also limited. But the sections of media, which are not aware for their social responsibility and bound by the old discipline,

are much larger in number. News is so sensationalized by media as if the world was come to an end. Oxford dictionary defines the term Sensationalize as 'to exaggerate a story so that it seems more exciting or shocking than it really is'.

In November 2005, the former Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India Mr. Jaipal Reddy criticized the increasing "trivialization and sensationalization" of news in our daily papers, when speaking at the Inauguration of an International seminar on the *Media Concerns of the Day*. As Mr. M V Kamath, Chairman, Prasar Bharati cited in an article, Mr. Reddy noted that Page-3 people were increasingly trying to get into page-1 by joining politics. He said "I am not opposed to entertainment, but where is the information?" Instead of discussing their dressing sense or appeal, said Mr. Reddy, the media should focus on their work.

Because of the great responsibility associated with reporting the news, there is some controversy as to how reporters, editors, and others associated with the process should treat stories on conflict. There is often a call for unbiased views in the news media, associated with an apparent responsibility to look at a situation without taking sides. However, a lack of bias is impossible to achieve, as every person has his or her own opinions and perspectives that do not disappear while he or she is reporting a story. In addition, "as all journalists know, their mere presence on the scene often alters the behaviour of parties to conflict." In many cases, the parties involved in the conflict use the media to their own advantage, portraying themselves or their causes in a positive light. This is, quite obviously, a difficult situation to deal with.

We can take the example of the freedom of the press. According to the Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India we have the right to freedom of speech and expression. It depicts indirectly the freedom of the press, though the Indian Constitution does not mention the freedom of the press separately. There is no doubt that this right is the litmus test of democracy. At the same time, there is no end of misuse of the freedom of the press in a democracy. Both are facets of the same truth. As Gandhiji used to say, if you did not have the freedom to go wrong, then you have no freedom. But in these cases we should not go for the mis-utilization of the freedom.

Assam : the land and its problems

Derived from the European experience based on a monolithic credo and the unitary state, the concept of Indian state had come under scrutiny during post independence period in view of the challenges received from the North-eastern region that could perhaps be attributed to its nature and formation of the nation-state itself. India's North-east covering a combined area of over 2,55,088 sq. km (7.7% of the country's territory except Sikkim) with a combined population of 38,49,50,89 persons (as per the 2001 census) is not only socially very heterogeneous for its about 250 social groups and more than 75 languages divided into seven predominantly tribal states, i.e. Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and surrounded by Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar.

India's North-east is the location of the earliest and longest lasting insurgency in the country after independence and the separatist violence firstly commenced in Nagaland in 1952 as well as a multiplicity of more recent conflicts from other states of the North-east proliferated since 1970s. In Assam near about 40 insurgent groups are challenging their demands. Out of them National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) are prescribed under previous POTA ; Adivasi Cobra Force (ACF), Dima Halam Daogah (DHD), Hmar People's Convention Democracy (HPCD), Kamatapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA) and United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) are the active insurgent groups and rests are inactive terrorist groups such as Adam Sena, United Muslim Liberation Front of Assam (UMLFA), Asom Lion Force, Karbi People's Front, etc.

Karbi-Dimasa at the cross road

Karbi Anglong with a geographical area of 10,434 sq. km territory and total estimated population as on September 2005 – 8,77,534 is a miniature of Assam in terms of composition of various tribes and races.

Political background

In November 1951, a new district, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills, was carved out of portions of Sibsagar, Nagaon, Cachar and United Khasi & Jaintia Hills.

- In 1970, it was again split up into two different districts : the Mikir Hills district and the North Cachar Hills district.
- In 1976, the Mikir Hills district was renamed as Karbi Anglong.
- In 1970, when the then Prime Minister of the country Indira Gandhi thought about granting full statehood to Meghalaya, a memorandum was presented demanding for a separate state consisting of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills.
- Almost 16 years later, on 17 May 1986 that demand for separate state led to the formation of the Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC).
- Under Article 244(A) of the Constitution of India the ASDC organized a strong mass movement demanding the creation of an autonomous State that concluded in signing of the MoU on 1 April 1995 between the Assam government and the leaders of the ASDC.
- The signing of the MoU led to upgradation of both councils of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills with improved powers under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- But the district councils have failed to fulfil the aspirations of the people because of various problems such as the lack of proper administration, legislative powers and lack of the proper utilization of the allocated funds.

What happened in September and October of 2005 ?

- The abduction and killing of three Dimasa auto rickshaw drivers in a Karbi village apparently sparked off the violence in the year 2005.
- On September 26, 2005, three auto-rickshaw drivers belonging to the Dimasa tribe were murdered by unidentified assailants, suspected to be members of the armed opposition groups, at Tissom village under Manja police outpost under Diphu police station of the district.
- No attempt was made by the authorities to identify them, a spate of retaliatory killings of the Dimasas and the Karbis started with the killing of five members of a Karbi family at Hemari Terang village on 2 October, 2005.

- The most horrible of the killings occurred on October 17, 2005 when 34 Karbis were killed at Charchim, about 25 kilometres away from the Kheroni police station.
- It is accounted that these events have claimed at least 200 lives through brutal killings, and more than 1000 homes have been burnt. About 2,000 houses have been destroyed or looted.
- About 44,016 ethnic Karbis and Dimasas have been displaced as on 30 October, 2005 in Karbi Anglong, North Cachar Hills and Hojai sub-division under Nagaon district.
- In the Karbi Anglong district, out of 32,871 displaced persons 25,602 were Karbis, 5,600 were Dimasas and 1,669 were other communities.

What was the role played by the media of Assam ?

We know that media has a vital role in communicating these experiences in the right track so that communities can learn from their neighbours and are better prepared to discuss the issue of ultimate development that would be beneficial to them. It is essential that journalists have an understanding of background on various issues of conflict so that they can begin to ask the right questions, critically examine policies as they emanate from the capitals of the states and the centre, and be able to follow through on what happens in their implementation thereafter.

The role of mass media has been significant particularly in covering the news of violence and various peace initiatives and disseminating the information to the people or parties concerned on such matters. The media's focus of attention is now on searching the roots and extent of violence. The role of mass media in India has been quite significant in bringing the issues of such 'anti-national' movements (both violent and non-violent) for discussion providing a platform at the national level. Nevertheless, in spite of all these, no much progress has been seen so far in this peace-conflict settlement process in the North-east. Interestingly, in this ethnic clash a section of vernacular press published such kind of photographs, which we cannot give the permission to see our children. These are really horrible. And what about the headlines or the body? Many vernacular press including print as well as broadcast media use to give

their stress on the community based reporting which might be destructive rather than constructive. Some dailies published as much sensational and provocative news as sensitive publications of the activists who are out of the so-called mainstream. They simply ignored their social responsibility. One of the veteran journalists of the state opined that media has no social responsibility. It is an industry like any other production companies. They can publish anything for their profit.

But what says the Press Council of India regarding these types of coverage?

The Press Council of India provides us some norms of journalistic conduct. According to the council 'the fundamental objective of journalism is to serve the people with news, views, comments and information on matters of public interest in a fair, accurate, unbiased, sober and decent manner.'

- In the 34 and 35 no. principles, the council mentioned specific guidelines for covering communal disputes or clashes.
- Principle 34 stated that news, views or comments relating to communal or religious disputes / clashes shall be published after proper verification of facts and presented with due caution and restraint in a manner which is conducive to the creation of an atmosphere congenial to communal harmony, amity and peace.
- Sensational, provocative and alarming headlines are to be avoided. Acts of communal violence or vandalism shall be reported in a manner as may not undermine the people's confidence in the law and order machinery of the state. Giving community-wise figures of the victims of communal riot, or writing about the incident in a style which is likely to inflame passions, aggravate the tension, or accentuate the strained relations between the communities/religious groups concerned, or which has a potential to exacerbate the trouble, shall be avoided.
- In the next principle the council strictly says that Headings should not be sensational / provocative and must justify the matter printed under them.
- In general and particularly in the context of communal disputes or clashes –

- A) Provocative and sensational headlines are to be avoided ;
- B) Headings must reflect and justify the matter printed under them ;
- C) Headings containing allegations made in statements should either identify the body or the source making it or at least carry quotation marks.

What should be the role of media ?

The news and entertainment media tend to focus on conflict. The news media rely on advertising for income, and advertisers look for programs with a large number of viewers : "Audiences are the commodity the commercial media sell to their advertisers." Media representatives assert that they focus on conflict because that is what people want to see. Conflict is more "interesting" to viewers than peace, just as an accident on the road draws the attention of passersby. The result is a tendency to "focus on the episodic and fragmentary accounts of the most dramatic moments largely leaving out the preceding causes and antecedent consequences."

This habit of focusing on the negative aspects of a conflict situation is extremely problematic. By only addressing these aspects of an issue, the information is skewed and can adversely affect the ideas and images that the audience has of the conflict participants. This is particularly worrisome when it affects the attitudes of the participants themselves.

Any discussion of media and conflict eventually leads to the purpose and responsibilities of journalists. A general audience expects objectivity of its news reporters. While most citizens take this for granted, objective reporting has not been the historical norm. The concept of objectivity itself has often been the focus of debate. As L. Susan Carruthers states, "... news can never be 'value-free,' from 'nobody's point of view.' Deciding what the news is requires a value judgment.

In response to the drawbacks of 'objective' journalism, some journalists have begun advocating for alternative models such as "peace journalism" and "public journalism". Peace journalism advocates the belief that journalists should use the power of the media to help resolve conflict rather than report it from a distance. Public journalism seeks to explore issues affecting a community and

stay with those issues long enough to give the community enough information to understand the conflict and get involved. This, however, often requires a long-term commitment by the journalist and news media to follow a story over the course of the conflict. If the story is of continuing high importance to the readers — such as a war that involves local troops, insurgency blasts in the region such coverage are common. If the story is not deemed continuously "newsworthy," however, it takes a committed journalist to continue to write about it.

If media or modern communication forms may play their role at the right time, at the right situation and at the right place without any bias every problem can be solved at ease. The role of the media should be very much constructive. In this ethnic clash, some media indirectly helped to increase the clash through community based reporting which were very much out of the ethics of the Press Council. We often say that media is the fourth pillar of the democracy. For implementing the government rules and to make a beautiful terrain media should play an important role. The vernacular dailies of the state should give their stress on the improvement for the peace process by avoiding some biased story. Other media should also do the same.

Communication media have a key role to play in creating such an awareness in each and everyone of us. As the MacBride Commission stated : "If communication is considered in its broadest sense, not only as the exchange of news and messages but as an individual and collective activity embracing all transmissions and sharing of ideas, facts and data, its main functions in any social system may be identified as the following : Information, Socialisation, Motivation, Debate and Discussion, Education, Cultural Promotion, Entertainment and Integration. Integration, as a function of communication, means "the provision to all persons, groups and nations of access to the variety of messages which they need in order to know and understand each other and to appreciate each other's living conditions, viewpoints and aspirations".

National integration is a question of the mind and heart, because one has to realize that he belongs to the great country of ours having cultural and ethnic diversity. Such a realisation can only give rise to a faith that whatever be one's religion or language, he is an Indian first and Indian last. Ours is a democratic society and our Constitution is secular. We cannot afford to have passive, indifferent, ignorant and idle citizens as members of our society. Each one of us

must know our neighbourhood, our village, our district, our State and our country in order to be able to identify and appreciate the thread of unity, amidst diversity, which binds all of us. Without this complete awareness national integration is not possible.

Conclusion

From the above, we can come to the end with a view that the newspapers and the TV channels should follow the following points :

- Dissemination of information and news is a service to the society rather than a trade or business. So they should have a social responsibility to their society.
- The media organization should train up their journalists, particularly who cover conflict stories.
- Especially in case of community conflict or in communal dispute, the reporters and the editors of the media organizations should handle the issue with a special care. They should stop community based reporting and should not try to sensationalize the issue.
- Media should follow the journalistic conduct prescribed by the Press Council of India.
- Interestingly, the active insurgent groups of the region always use newspapers as platforms for their popularization of their view points, against each other, among ethnic groups and the central as well as the state governments. The press should stop these activities to make the leaders of the insurgent groups as well as the community conflicts as hero in front of the general mass.
- Finally, general audience or the reader should be aware of the sensationalization of a news particularly on community conflict and they should protest it.

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Problems and perspectives of peace, harmony and development with reference to the Singphos of Assam

Slg. Manjela Singpho

The Singphos live in the hilly outskirts of the Patkai ravine bordering the Kachin state of Myanmar. They were the most powerful tribe of the frontier for several generations.

At present, they are mainly concentrated in Margherita subdivision of Tinsukia district and partly scattered in Sonari subdivision of Sivasagar district in Assam. Moreover, there is also a Singpho speaking community within the Jorhat, Golaghat and Karbi Anglong districts in Assam. In the adjoining state of Arunachal Pradesh we have the highest concentration of Singpho population in Changlang and Lohit districts respectively. The population of the Singphos and Singpho speaking communities are almost 25,000 in India.

The mainland of the Singphos are India, Myanmar and China. After the end of World War II some Singphos migrated to USA, UK, Japan and Australia, etc., for seeking livelihood and settled there.

Definitions of Singpho

The word Singpho or Jingpho literally means 'man'. (All Chyinghpaws are men but all men are not Chyinghpaws - E.M. Enriquez 1923 (p.17). The Singphos are known as Singpho, Jingpho, Jingpo, Kachin, Chyinghpaw Yejen, Shantau, B'uok, etc., in different parts of the world. Singpho scholar, Marip H. Naw Awn mentions in his book *Wunpawng Ginshi Labou* that the word Singpho is derived from the Tibetan term *sin-po* which means man of 'shrewd and untamed'.

H.N.C. Stevenson, in this regard comments that the original name of the race now known as Kachin is Jingpho or Singpho and the name itself is

said to be the Tibetan origin being derived from the Tibetan term *sin-po* which means 'cannibal'. But some of the scholars try to define that the people who migrated from Mongolia and settled down in the valley of Sangpo river in Tibet more than 400 years, in course of time they were called Sangpo or tribe of Sangpo valley, etc., and most probably they were later known as Sangpo, Sinpo and eventually as Singpho in the mouth of the people. Hence, we can give reference of Dr. Ola Hanson's remark upon the Assamese people and their pronunciations in the case of Kachin Jingphaw, they often pronounce as Singpho. Dr. Negi Gang, Head of Department, Tibetan literature and language, Delhi University, remarked on 29-9-1993 that during the period of migration from Tibet, more than 150 Tibeto families scattered in different directions of the hilly outskirts of Tibet, China, India and Myanmar. Of these, he has mentioned about the family *Singpho Daw Manchya Da* which is a pure Tibetan term and is found in the history of Tibet. Besides, he said that this *Singpho Daw Manchya Da* family was very brave, powerful, shrewd and ferocious in nature. Hence we can assume that the term *Singpho* of the present day, was possibly the *Singpho Daw Manchya Da* and the etymology of Singpho and its usages in their dialects have vast similarities with Tibetan language.

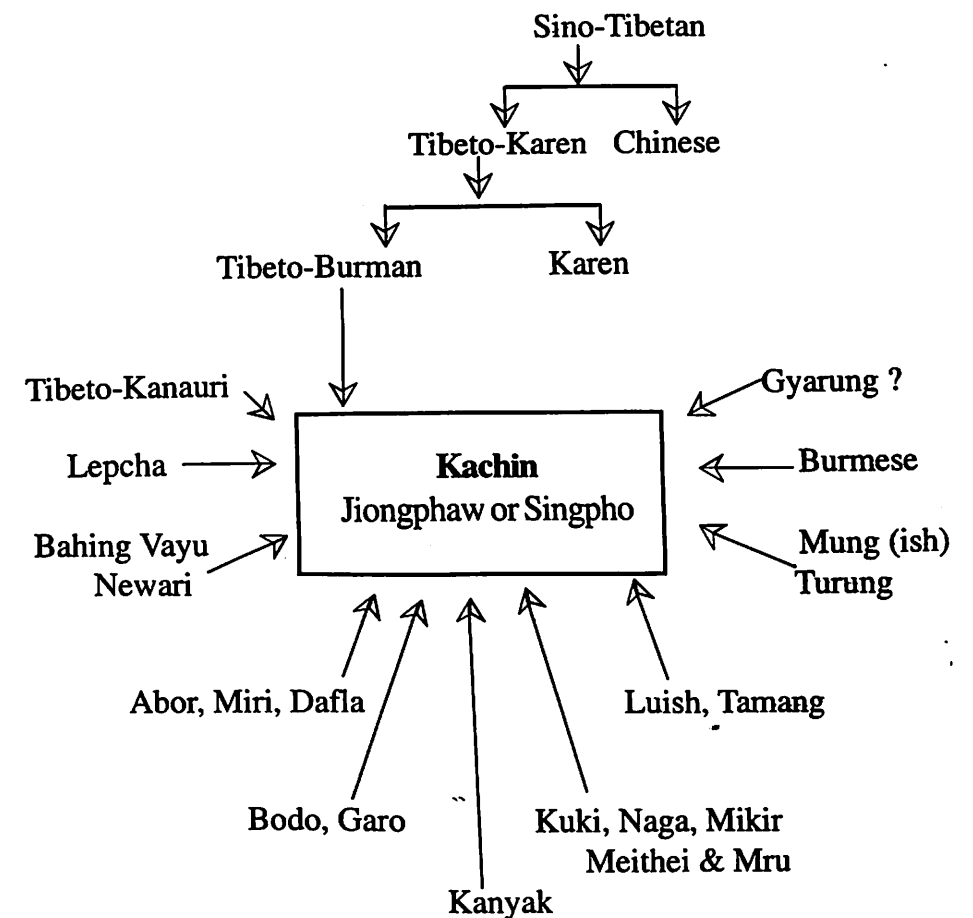
<u>Singpho</u>	<u>Tibetan</u>	<u>English</u>
Ngai	nga	I
Sha	sa	eat
Lam	lam	road
Mying	mying	name
Gwi	kayi	dog
Phum	bum	fat
Shan	sha	flesh
Myi	mik	eye
Si	shi	die
Na	na	ear
Kara	skra	hair

Language

The Singpho language serves as a *lingua franca* among the Zi, Liso, Maru, Lashi and Nung. Moreover, the Singpho language was a dominant link

language in the North East Frontier of the Patkai Range. According to a Tibeto-Burman linguist James Matisoff, the Singpho or Jingphaw which consists of a single language with only relatively slight differentiation among its dialects, is of paramount historical significance. It seems to live at the linguistic (as well as geographical) cross roads of the entire Tibeto-Burman family showing special lexical and morphological affinities with all the other nuclei simultaneously. A figure is shown where everything radiates out of Kachin (Jingphaw or Singpho), the 'nucleus' of the Tibeto-Burman family.

SCHEMATIC CHART OF SINO-TIBETAN GROUP



The Tibetan and Singpho Kachin or Jingphaw languages, though of the same stock belong to different branches. The parent of all these languages which we call Turanian, is believed to have been of some ancient Mongolian tongue from which are derived these groups namely, the Tibetan group, the Chinese

group, and the Burmese group. According to Dr. Ola Hanson, the author of Kachin Dictionary both the Singpho or Kachin and Tibetan languages are sister groups, having a common source in some Mongolian mother speech now extinct.

The Singphos have no written language of its own, at present they use Roman script which was developed by Dr. Ola Hanson, a Kachin Baptist Missionary in 1895. In the leading Kachin dialect Jingphaw or Singpho is understood by nearly all from the Borders of Tibet to the extreme South – according to Dr. Ola Hanson (The Kachin, P-26).

Name of the country	Singpho population
1 Myanmar	1.5 million
2 China	1.2 lakh
3 India	30 to 40 thousand

Source – “The Kachin : Lords of Burma’s Northern Frontier” by Bertil Lintner published in 1997, P-7.

Background history

According to the oral history of Singphos their ancestors migrated from ‘Majoi Singra Bum’ or ‘Kaang Singra Bum’ which means naturally flat mountain. It may be somewhere in the highland of Mongolia as it was the birth place of Mongolian race.

It is also believed that the Singpho originally migrated from Mongolia almost in BC 700-800 and entered to the south west of Tibet almost in BC 600-300 and settled down in the Sangpo valley over 400 years. And almost in BC 300 – AD 100, the Singphos entered the Brahmaputra valley. (‘Singda Laban’, a book of Singpho History, P-4).

Origin of Singpho family

The prevailing legend among the Singphos reveals that once in the very past before the existence of human being in the world a certain semi-mythological

figure came down from the heaven, split into two and six brothers came out of it, one of them died in the explosion, the remaining five brothers were named Gam, Nong, La, Du, Tang and Yawng respectively and thus till now the nomenclature of the Singphos goes on accordingly.

The Singphos believe that the Caucasians who migrated to Europe were generated from the eldest brother Gam, the Chinese from the second brother Nong, the Siamese from the third brother La, the fourth brother Du died and became the God of protection for the living brothers, the Kyein (including Burmese and Naga tribes) from the fifth brother Tang. The sixth brother Yawng, also known as Daru Tsinli Yawng or Shapawang Yawng became the forefather of the Singphos.

Shapawang Yawng’s grandson Wakhyet Wa became the father of nine sons and later, the family of the Singphos originated from them :- Gam, Nong, La, Du, Tang, Yawng, Kha, Nkying, Sharoi.

But Sharoi the last son died. Out of eight families only five are the families of chieftain. They are Marip, Lahtaw, Lahpai, Nhkum and Maran.

History

According to Colonel Hannay the Singphos are identical in race with Kachus or Kakhyens of Burma whose chief habitat was on the great custom branch of the Irrawati. They extended nearly as far South as latitude 24° N, touching on the North and East of the borders of China in 27° 30’ N with the break-up of the Northern Shan kingdom in Burma. The Kakhyens (Singphos) entered on a career of aggression and conquest, which practically placed in their hands the whole country lying between upper Assam and Bhamo. This vast treat was their homeland centering round the Hukawng. The name itself is a Singpho word which means ‘a fence of human heads’. The Singpho or Jingphaw during the migration period, according to Professor J. Russell Andrus, ‘A highly successful fighting race, they forced the Chins, Palawng and Shans further South. The Hukawng valley gets its name from the innumerable mounds in it where the corpses of the Shans slain by the Singphos, were cremated. ‘Ju-Kawng’ in the Jinghpaw dialect means cremation ground’. In this regard, H.N.C. Stevenson added more clearly that “the fighting group descended upon Burma and occupied the Northern hills to the exclusion of Chins, Palawng to the

South and the last remaining descendents of the once powerful Ahoms almost exterminated”.

The Ahoms migrated to Assam before the Tai Khamtis and the Ahom kingdom was newly established in between 1828-1868 in Assam. According to H.N.C. Stevenson, the remaining Ahoms in Hukawng valley were massacred by the Singphos at the last moment which had been nearly to be extinct. They did not foresee to remain in the valley. The Tai Khamtis afterwards, left Hukawng valley and entered perhaps in Assam. The last and dreadful massacre was caused by the Singphos upon the remaining Ahoms in 15th century and split them from the valley. At the same period, the Singpho Chiefs (Dus) were also fighting and slaughtering each other as the might was right in the whole valley to exterminate the domination and suppression of the powerful chiefs. As a result, the weak Singpho Chiefs escaped to get rid of dreadful consequences from the superiors, and some of them (Chiefs) entered Assam. The revengeful attitudes of the Singphos against their enemies often seen by their crucial act of burning houses, destroying paddy fields, and other properties were very common.

Ahom – Singpho relation

The Singphos were the most troublesome neighbour of the Sadia front of Assam. They first came into prominence during the weak rule of Gaurinath Singha (1780-95). They drove out the Khamtis from low land under the Patkai hills and settled themselves on the Tengapani, east of Sadiya and on the upper Buridihing in the tract called Namrup. They thus brought under them the whole country.

During this period the British did not enter Burma. The Burmese king Bodopaya ruled Burma from 1782–1812 AD. Purnananda Buragohain, the Prime Minister of the Ahom king had given gift the sister of Baram Duara Barua, ‘Rangili’ (Phukan) to placate Singpho Chief Bisanong who again presented ‘Rangili’ to Burmese king ‘Bodo paya’ with a view to strengthening friendship with Burmese king. The Singphos violated the pact with Purnananda Buragohain and continued their ravages in course of which a large number of Ahom subjects were taken away as captives. So, after the British force was replaced, some of 3,000 of them were subsequently recovered by Captain Nufville, the first political agent of upper Assam.

The Singpho raid of 1799 was extensive and devastating. Being incapable to prevent the Singphos the Ahom king appealed in June 1802 to Lord Wellesley asking for 800 stand of new arms with ammunition and five companies of Sepoys under a British Officer. Lord Wellesley ordered to supply the Ahom king with 800 stand of serviceable repaired arms with an equal number of bayonets, 40,000 ball cartridges and 1,600 spare flints. After getting these arms, the Ahoms resisted the Singphos.

Before the arrival of the British, the Singpho Dus (Chiefs) governed the country according to own way and deployed the Shan and Assamese slaves in their paddy fields, household works and vegetable gardens (E.R. Leach, 1954 p. 232). Though they were considered as slaves they enjoyed a very happy life more than the Roman and Greek slaves. They had permission to intermarry. Even they could earn whenever possible. They could mix up with the non slaves. Eventually they adopted the title of their lords.

During the quarter of the 19th century the Burmese invaded Assam consequently for three times, plundered the province and committed harrowing outrages. The Singphos joined them for pillage. The second invading force of the Burmese consisted of a large number of Singphos from the immediate frontier of Assam. In those days, the Singphos left all kinds of labours in the house and the field to the slaves and depended mainly upon services of slaves for their very subsistence.

The prominent Dus (Chiefs) of Assam were known as the Pisa, the Dafa, the Lottora, the Lattao and the Ningroo. The Singphos in the Hukawng valley knew how to compound gunpowder. But their weapons were the daos, swords, spears, bows and arrows, and match locks which could be fired upon by putting fire. The Singphos before they waged a war, used to amass the army from 9,000 – 10,000.

When the Singphos came down to the Brahmaputra valley, the fertile land for cultivation more and more, the British also came to the North-east India. In the mean time the Singphos resisted the British invaders. The Abors, Assamese, Khasis, Mishmis and Nagas were also fighting against the British. In this joint rebel, Rupchand, Haranath, Jeoram, Peoli and Boom Singpho were captured. After trial at Jorhat, Peoli and Jeoram were hanged. The other rebels, Boom Singpho and his companions were sentenced for imprisonment for fourteen

years at Dhaka Jail. The British captured Rongpur, the ancient capital of Assam, before 1825.

In April, 1819 about 20,000 strong Burmese army captured Rongpur and when they left, the Singphos kept the kingdom under their domination. The Bisa chieftain named it as 'Pisa Country' (S.K. Bhuyan, 1949, P-481).

Early in 1825, the Singphos had amassed about 7,500 soldiers to fight against the British. The Singpho army who came to the Khamti area had dethroned Sadiya Gohain and replaced another Gohain of their select.

The Singpho armies followed the Burmese armies immediately from the behind, and they became helpful for the Burmese for fighting and hence, they did not have to face a big loss. And, the Singphos could take more Assamese as captives in 1824-25 AD.

The British after defeating Burmese, started fighting again with the Singphos, who eventually compromised with the British and signed a treaty of peace on 5th May, 1826 and after the break they went to Lakhimpur, Lottora and Tengapani and again started to fight against the British. At that time they had only 3,000 soldiers in their possession. Captain Nufville came to know about the war arrangement of the Singphos and when he went to face the attacks of the Singphos, the former had retreated to the mountain. The Burmese after the death of their army Chief 'Ban Du La' after signing Yam abo Treaty in 1826, did not come up to fight against the British in the Hukawng valley and Assam.

The historic British-Singpho treaty dated the 3rd May, 1826

Two copies of the agreement entered into with Mr. David Scott, the political agent of the Governor General in Assam during his visit to Sadiya are reproduced below which may be useful to the readers.

Translation of an agreement in Assamese executed to the British Government by the Singpho Chiefs – 1826

Whereas we the Singpho Chiefs named Bum Koomjoy, Meejong Jow, Chow Khen, Jowrah, Jowdo, Chow Chumun, Neemgun, Tangrung, Chowbah, Chamuta,

Chowrah, Chawdoo, Choukam, Kumring, etc., are under the subjection of the British Government, we execute this agreement to Mr. David Scott, the agent to the Governor General and thereby engage to adhere to the following terms, viz,

1st Assam being now under the way of the British government we and our dependent Singphos who were subjects of the Assam state, acknowledge subjection to the agreement. We agree not to side with the Burmese or any other king to commit any aggression whatever, but we will obey the orders of the British government.

2nd Whenever a British force may march to Assam to protect it from foreign aggression we will supply that force with grain, etc., make and repair roads for them, and execute every order that may be issued to us, we should on our doing so be protected by that force.

3rd If we abide by the terms of the agreement, no tribute shall be paid by us, but if any Assam pykes of their own accord residing in our villages, the tax on such pykes will be paid to the British government.

4th We will set at large or cause to be liberated any Assam people whom we may seize, and they shall have the option to reside wherever they please.

5th If any of the Singphos rob of the Assam people residing in own country, we shall apprehend the former and surrender him to the British government, but if we fail to do so, we will make good the loss thus sustained by the latter.

6th We will govern and protect the Singphos under us as heretofore and adjust their differences and if any boundary dispute occurs among us we will not take up arms without the knowledge of the British government.

7th We will adhere to the terms of this agreement and never depart from them. This agreement shall be binding upon our brothers, sons, nephews and relatives, in such way as the agent to the Governor General may deem proper. We have executed this agreement in the presence of many.

Written at Suddeea on Friday, the 5th May, 1826 or *Sukabda* 1740 or 24th *Bysakh*, 1233 BS.

Name of Singpho Chiefs who have signed this agreement :

Chowto	Chekhang La	Tunrong
Topomka	Moonlankoo	Chowun
Towallah	Sing Nien	Samtang
Hokap	Beesa Bum	Chowra
Chow cha (Zan Ja)	Koomjoy	Chowdoo
Insala	Meejong	Chowkam
Donphoom La	Chowkhen	Scero La San
Ahring La	Chowra	Panjow
Katan Chow Pha	Sowdoo	Latxe Jabong
Yang Sung Zung	Chow	Pooing Nong
Dothen Jow Pha	Changlong	Oraon
Latham Thoirung	Mingon	

Translation of an Agreement entered into by the Singpho Chiefs

We, four of Beesa, Koomjoy of Sookhang, Meejong of Wakhet, Jaow of Ningrow, Chowken of Kotah, Jowra of Chookhang, Jowdoo of Leechoo, Chaow of Nenem, Chang nang of Nenem, Nem Gong of Kuza row, Tamrang of Kasan, Jawan of Peehee La, Jamtong of Set, fourteen Gams enter into the written (Agreement) Engagement with the British government in the year 1748 *Sukha*. We acknowledge subjection to the British government, and bind ourselves to observe the following conditions approved by David Scott, Esquire, political agent in Assam.

1st We and our dependent Singphos were formerly subjects to the Assamese government and now the honourable company having become the rulers of the country, we acknowledge allegiance to them and adjure all connections with the Burmese or any other foreign Prince. Regarding political matters we will not hold any sort of intercourse with foreigners but will act agreeably to the orders of the British government.

2nd If an enemy comes from any foreign country to invade Assam we will supply the British troop with rice and other necessaries, we will provide road and *ghat* and ourselves make such resistance as we may be required to do. If we act in this manner we will be entitled to protection from the British government.

3rd If we abide strictly by the terms of this Agreement no revenue is to be demanded from us, but if hereafter any Assamese pykes should of their own pleasure desert to our village we will in that case pay for them the capitation tax.

4th We agree to release and to cause to be released all Assamese captives detained by us as our dependents such of them as choose to remain in our village being at liberty to do so.

5th If hereafter any Singpho should commit depredations on the Assamese territories we bind ourselves to arrest and deliver them up for punishment and in case our being unable to do so, we declare ourselves jointly responsible for the damage sustained by the people of Assam.

6th We will administer justice in our respective villages according to former custom, and settle all disputes amongst our dependents, and any quarrel that takes place between two Gaums, we will not have recourse to arms, but refer the matter for the decision of the British authorities.

7th We solemnly promise to abide by the above written conditions and as hostages for the performance thereof, we agree each to deliver into the custody of the political Agent, a son or a nephew or brother as that officer may direct. To all these articles we have in common agreed...

Dated 24th *Bysakh*, 1748

Signed :

<i>Jowdoo</i>	<i>Judoo</i>	<i>Koomjoy</i>	<i>Chaow</i>	<i>Jowra</i>	<i>Meejang</i>
<i>Changnang</i>	<i>Jaen</i>	<i>Jaow</i>	<i>Neenggan</i>	<i>Chowken</i>	<i>Tamrang</i>
<i>Jowra</i>	<i>Jamtang</i>				

Similar agreements were signed by Koomreeng Lu two and by Tao Gobryn, with some modification in the case of latter to the articles be being gentled in consequence of his having submitted to the terms required at least by Nenfuike to retain such slaves as he possessed before the capture of Rongpur.

Post Singpho British agreement

The release of 6,000 slaves severely affected the economy of the Singphos. To compensate, David Scott proposed to establish a regular trade between Assam and upper Irrawaty basin which passed through their lands. It was settled that Beesa Gaum should have a general control over the rest of the tribe who had submitted that the rest of the tribe who still held out should be warned that if they did not come in within two months they would not be allowed to settle in Assam. Meanwhile Neufville laid before the government of India his plan for the solution of the Singpho problems.

As David Scott arrived on 20th April, the land in the eastward of Rongpur being now almost entirely waste there is abundant space for the settlement. Singpho chiefs under the circumstance liked to wean them from their predatory habits and in situations where the authority of Government could always and without difficulty be enforced while useful employment might be given to the more restless part of the community by establishing a corps upon the same plan as that of the Bhauglepore Rangers or by incorporating certain numbers of men furnished by each chief in the Rongpur light infantry.

With a view to conciliate the Singpho chiefs by providing them lucrative engagement so that they would be busy and get no time to forment trouble against the British, Ningroola and other Singpho chiefs were financed to grow tea at their own risk and at their respective tea *barees* (garden). Consequently Ningroola was a successful tea planter of the country in comparison to other Singpho chiefs. In 1838, Ningroola was able to produce tea and sell it to Calcutta market amounting to £ 480.

But peace did not last long. On January 10th, 1843 a large party of Singphos from Burma attacked the British outpost at Ningroo and killed seven. A simultaneous and successful attack at the guard at Beesa was reported and Sai Khowa was threatened by a large body of combined Khamtis and Singphos. All the Singphos on the Noa and Buridihing joined in revolt. Eventually

Ningroola surrendered at the outset and Beesa Gaum soon after.

It was the last revolt of the Singphos against the British government. The Singphos latter gave absolutely no trouble to the government. The following is an extract from a Report by Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur district dated May 9th, 1871, "The Singphos have settled down to agriculture and do now for themselves what formerly they depended on their Assamese slaves to do for them. They sufficiently do meet their own consumption for a portion of the year, the remaining months they live upon wild yams and other jungle products and what they can procure from other places.

The government has no fixed relation with them. They are generally obedient, and in such way recognize the British supremacy. The Singphos meet the government officers yearly at the *Mela* held at Sadiya and they are on the habit of visiting officers in military command at the place."

Economy

90% of the Singphos are based on agriculture. Tea cultivation is a tradition of every Singpho family in the society. But the non stop aggression of the non tribal outsiders in the tribal belts and blocks and the concentrated tribal areas are threatened day by day. As a result, they become outnumbered than tribal population. The chances they have in various business sources in their areas become hindered.

Since the green revolution was started by the small tea growers in Assam, the Singphos had a vision of introducing traditional Singpho tea in the world and the contact with Peggy Carswell of Canada since 1999, some of the Singpho youth have started wild tea cultivation and manufacturing traditional hand processed Singpho natural tea which is exported to Canada.

Education

If we see, the percentage of qualified Singphos at present, are a few in number which indicates clear cut negligence and failure of the implementation of government's education policy in the tribal areas. It is strange that there is only a full fledged government high school in Tirap transferred tribal belt.

Therefore, the government should adopt a separate educational policy to impart education for the tribals in Assam so that they could be ready to complete higher studies. The government should also adopt measures to preserve and encourage immediately the minority languages. It is a constitutional right of the tribal people.

Social evils in the tribal society

The main hindrance of the tribal society is lack of consciousness of social values and the prevalence of drugs abuses and drugs trafficking are gradually deteriorating the new generation and also spreading like epidemic to other parts of the region. Therefore, the government should take stern action to eradicate the bad elements from the society.

Conclusion

After independence in 1947 the Singpho chief Bisa Ladoi's areas are recognized as a tribal belt comprising 100 square miles by the then Honourable Governor of Assam by a notification No. 11881 dated 31.8.1953. These areas were ultimately divided into two units, one of which was included in the modern Arunachal Pradesh known as Tirap district and the other was included in the plains of Assam with the designation as Margherita Tirap Transferred Area and this was placed under the administration of the Deputy Commissioner of Dibrugarh. However, this area was recognized as a tribal belt, and a Special Officer (A.P.O.) with his limited power for supervision, etc., (under D.S. Dib.) was appointed with his headquarters at Margherita.

Time rolled on. The vast areas of Singpho frontier tribes had been fallen under countless conspiracies. In spite of its recognition as a tribal belt, it has been losing its original character (which, once the home for Singpho and other frontier tribal people) on account of different reasons, many of which are mainly of political character, which clarifies that in the name of far greater political protection and further presentation of Singpho and other frontier tribes has been now threatened of losing identities, and perhaps it is likely to defraud in the name of the protection of the constitutional rights of these people. Even the highest judicial body connives to protect the very rights of the Singphos and others. Since the history comes to record the incidents we are attached evidently the facts of suppressing domination by the government officers indirectly

patronizing the outsiders non tribals illegally to grasp the tribal lands in the Tirap tribal belt who always jeopardize the interest of the tribals. This is the total violation of Chapter X, Assam Land Revenue Regulation Act of 1886. The present political arrangement is with the absence of reservation in Panchayat of L.A. constituency seats. The political representation of the tribal areas is always from non tribals, for which, tribal people are deprived from implementation of various welfare schemes provided by the state and central governments for the tribal areas. As a result, these tribal people are forced to remain backward in the economic and educational spheres. It is extremely regretful to us that the then AGP government revoked the post of A.P.O. without proper consultation with tribal leaders and tribal organizations of the Tirap Transferred Tribal Belt. Again, the last Congress government issued a direction vide Notification No. RSD.17/85/PT.1/12-A dated 19th March, 1996 that the emigrant Nepali graziers are recognized as a "protected class" in tribal belts and blocks ; which was only to ensure Nepali vote bank for political interest.

It is strange that no cabinet decision was taken nor any consultation was taken from the tribal leaders and tribal organization of tribal belts and blocks which is a clear cut violation of Assam Accord (No.10) and, the total negligence to the sentiments of the tribal people. Since independence these tribal people come to have a lot of sad experiences of negligence, frustrations, suppressions, dominations, and disappointments only. Consequently, the tribal people of Assam have been demanding autonomy for the safeguard of their own identity and existence and all round development which is a constitutional right to them.

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Sanskritization of tribes in Assam with special reference to the Tiwas : problems and prospects

Lakhinanda Bordoloi

The process of sanskritization is much widespread in comparison to the other processes of social change among the tribes of Assam. It is a process as is defined by Indian origin sociologist M.N. Srinivas in his book "Social changes in modern India" – by which a low Hindu caste or tribal or other group changes its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently twice-born caste. The term was first used by M.N. Srinivas in his book "Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India" published in 1952. But it was the source of change throughout the courses of Indian history.

In the case of the Tiwa tribe of Assam, the process has adopted and has changed their rituals, customs, culture and lifestyles by other high groups such as Koch, Kalita, Borah, Baruah, Hazarika and constitutionally recognized advance group of Assamese society. It was because of feelings of members of the Tiwa tribe as 'low' themselves. It was the process whereby the Tiwas who fall outside the Hindu caste structure enter into the Hindu fold by entering into social contacts with the caste Hindus.

Points of features

In the process of sanskritization among the Tiwas the following points of features have been stressed :

1. By the process of sanskritization the Tiwas or tribal communities venture to gain higher status in the *Varna* dominated Assamese society.
2. In sanskritization the Tiwas and other backward sections of castes and tribes take to conduct customs, ideologies, values, etc., of the high group of Assamese society.
3. The process is not same as the conversion of tribes is seen in *varna* system.

4. In sanskritization the Koch, Brahmin and other group of high castes alone are not object of imitation. Kshatriyas and other dominant tribe of same rank are also taken as model.
5. The process of sanskritization acts as responsible factor for loss of culture, language and other elements of tribe identity.
6. The process of sanskritization can act a tribe dysfunctional.
7. The process can bring only positional change not the structural change in the society.
8. The process is vertical and horizontal as well.
9. The process can be considered as anticipatory socialization.
10. De-sanskritization and tribalization trend is present and it is assessed as solution to the problem of culture, language, etc., of the tribes.
11. The process of sanskritization is a bundle of concepts.

Motivating factors

The factors of motivation among the Tiwas behind the process of sanskritization were raising of their feeling of status in the social hierarchy and the hope to enjoy the influential powers which the higher castes enjoyed. This motivation to raise up their standard comes from a sense of 'relative deprivation'. The society of Assam has been rigidly composite and stratified with the Hindu caste social order. It is from the earlier to the present that the life chances, social opportunities and privileges – everything was determined on the basis of castes. The recognized top castes have the monopoly over social privileges in greater Assamese society. All these things have motivated the tribes like the Tiwas as their feeling of 'relative deprivation'.

Some historical, political elements

During the pre-British Tiwa society the Rajas were considered to occupy the topmost position. Although the Rajas of Gobha, Nellie, Khola were under the subordination of Jayantias and Rajas (Raja poowalis) of 'Satrajya' and 'Panchrajya', Topakuchi, Rani, Luki, Khaigar, Baropujia, Saragaon, Sahari, Raha, Mayong, Dhing, Salmora, Bhurbandha, Danduwa, Tetelia, Baghora were under the subordination of Ahom dynasty; they used to control the populace as local chieftains. It was during the period of Ahom rule that *thapita-sonshita* principle led them sanskritize with the Ahoms. It was in the year 1412 that Tiwa Raja of Baghora Joydhaj Singha had devoted 400

bighas of land to the Brahmins. It is regarded that the Tiwas had given Lakheraj grant to historical Batadrawa *than*. The establishment of Kachari *satra* of Kampur area of Nagaon district can be cited as the example of sanskritization.

In all the princely smaller kingdoms of the Tiwas during pre-British period there was a lot of political mobility, although the rate of mobility was not similar for all the princely states. Due to political instability there was social mobility. The Rajas had the power to raise or lower the status of his subjects. Because Rajas used to offer appointments to various posts in their social system. Since time immemorial it is seen that the Tiwa society is composed of certain categories of persons. At the top of the society the king and his deputies like Patramantri, then the Lora, Doloi, Hatari, Pator, Jela, Hari, Pisai, Sangdolo, Sangmaji, etc., and at the bottom the general people. In their system of administration the authority had the power to determine and take decisions on sanskritization. Example of sanskritization order coming from the kings is rare, but was there in the Tiwa society. The Tiwa Raja of Baghora is the example as cited. So, the establishment of Ahom rule over 'Panchrajya' and 'Satrajya' and rule of Jayantias over Gobha, Khola, Nellie kingdom of the Tiwas, political exchanges, war and conflicts during the period brought about changes in socio-political field of the Tiwas. The British rule over their kingdom and the introduction of bureaucratic administration, the network of trade and commerce brought new factors to play their roles in the process. During and in subsequent period the Brahmin, Koch, Kalita, etc., were universally the top castes which had monopoly over social privilege. There was gradual denial of rights of the lower strata in the caste hierarchy. The only way to achieve the higher status was to raise one's caste position.

Multiplicity in the models

The study on the Tiwas establishes the fact that though caste system is rigid it did not have much effect on them. The very ban on the Tiwas' adoption of sanskritization had an opposite effect. Though earlier the Koches and Brahmins were reference groups but towards the later phase there was multiplicity in the models of sanskritization. It is in view of the multiplicity that one may introduce the concept 'dominant caste'. It was found, the dominant castes serve as the models of imitation of the Tiwas. Traditionally they had highest ritual status and occupied more of the economic and political power. But in the subsequent period they lost due to over domination

of certain castes as they were accorded high status and position because of political patronage and their entrance to the new system. The Tiwas looked at the dominant castes as their reference group and tried to imitate their behaviour, ritual pattern, customs and ideology. In this way, the dominant castes of the locality played an important role in the process of cultural and linguistic transmission of the Tiwas. Thus, it was prime factor that the Tiwas living in 'Pancharajya' and 'Satrajya' (plains areas) have lost their language, culture and tradition and evolved different models of sanskritization. Alongwith Brahminic and Vaishnavite model 'dominant model', Kshatriya, Vaisya models were visible among the members of the Tiwas.

Some important aspects

The process of sanskritization among the Tiwas shows certain aspects of their thinking. They are :

1. Recognition to other's religion, social values, morals at the cost of own.
2. The inferiority complex among certain sections due to their traditional way of life, dirty food habits and dresses.
3. The process of building greater Assamese society with composite culture and linguistic assimilation.

In all the processes along with the adoption of new customs and habits, occurred imitation of new ideas and values which are sacred as well as secular in their belief. The sanskritic theological ideas of *Karma*, *Dharma*, *Papah*, *Maya*, *Samsar* and *Moksha* occurred frequently in the words of the Tiwas become sanskritized. The institutions like *Namghar*, *Monikut*, Temple, etc., were also imitated. In the process they avoided their age-old traditional, cultural institutions like *Samadi* (youth dormitory), *Nobaro* (Borghar), etc. They avoided the traditional dresses like *Kasong*, *Phaskai*, *Joskai*, *Tagla*, *Thana*, etc., and festivals like *Yangli*, *Sagra*, *Lukhumi*, *Sangkhong*, *Wanshuwa*, *Borot*, *Pishu*, etc. This results the amount of loss of identity of the Tiwas. So, sanskritization was the process of social, cultural as well as ideological changes which occur in the field of language, literature, art, religion and philosophy.

The philosophy of sanskritization could have accelerated in the plains by the *satras*, vaishnavism, temples, etc. The *Krishna Katha* and *Hari Katha*

are gaining more popularity in the plains and the narrator of *Krishna Katha* and *Hari Kotha*, *Dharma*, *Karma*, *Papah*, *Maya*, *Moksha* reaches a large number of the Tiwas. This enables the large section of the Tiwas to build *Namghar*, Temple, *Monikut* and to visit religious centres. The Vaishnavite and other religious papers, journals and other publications have been contributing towards the popularization of sanskritic values and ideologies. The places of religious importance and philosophies were main source of sanskritization.

Sanskritization as process of confusion

The process of sanskritization among the Tiwas reveals as confused with other processes of change such as tribalization, de-sanskritization, christianization, westernization, urbanization, etc. These processes have been in operation since recent past and crossed with the process of sanskritization. There have been certain dominant castes which have been found imitating the habits and exchanged lifestyles. It is in this context Wadel in his Census Report of 1881 once wrote, "The Lalungs got mixed up with the Garos and Mikirs. They have numerous exogenous clans." The process imitating with the tribals by other non tribal groups is called 'Tribalization'. In this process the other castes have also been found shedding some of their cultural patterns which have been termed 'De-sanskritization'. The demand for inclusion of certain group of higher castes in the list of tribals can be considered as one exemplified process of tribalization and de-sanskritization. There have been phenomenal conversion from tribal community to Christianity in the North-east region. It is in this context that a section of the Tiwa people living in the hilly areas converted themselves into Christianity. Apart from this conversion and process of sanskritization the existing Tiwa culture has undergone certain changes under the influence of others. Thus, there has been a visible pattern of cultural exchange between Hinduism and Christianity and between Tribalism and Christianity.

Economic aspect of sanskritization

There are certain cases of the Tiwas in the plains where economic betterment adds to the increment of their status. So, the relation between economic betterment and sanskritization deserves attention which is positively co-related. In the case of the Tiwas, of course, acquisition of wealth is not becoming the

necessary pre-condition of sanskritization. For certain cases economic betterment induces a desire for sanskritization. Sometimes, access to political power adds to acquisition of wealth. There are other relevant factors and each case of sanskritization may show all or some of these factors mixed up in different measures.

The achievement of higher status

The process of sanskritization is always backed by a desire and claim for a higher status. The study on the Tiwas reveals the fact that the achievement of claimed status depends on the extent to which such a claim gets social acceptance. It is not enough that the Tiwas claim a higher status. What is decisive is the social acceptance of their claim, at least by the advanced and higher groups. There is no any time period within which their claim gets acceptance as the process depends on many other socio-economic and historical conditions. Instead, it may so happen that it may incur the disapproval of others.

Reference group behaviour and anticipatory socialization

The higher caste which is imitated serves as the reference group. The imitation of cultural norms, behaviour, styles, ritual patterns of the dominant and high group leads to a sort of anticipatory socialization. The anticipatory process of socialization arising out of the process of sanskritization has both functional and dysfunctional consequences as exemplified by the Tiwas. It becomes functional by aiding the rise into desired higher stratification and by easing the process of adjustment after the claim for a higher status acquires social acceptance. It is indeed the case is very rare among the Tiwas. In fact, the members of Tiwas become dysfunctional when the claim does not get social acceptance. Society of Assam has a rigid system of stratification and the claim of the higher status is likely to be accepted. Further the system is disputed system and the caste hierarchy does not have universal character. So, the acceptance of the aspiring members by the real members of the reference group depends on the structures of the society. In the case of the Tiwas being the claim disapproved, they become very dysfunctional and now the members who have adopted the process, their existence as separate social entity is threatened.

Structural changes

In the case of Assam the dominant groups move upto higher status by strengthening their own groups. Hence, it is in this context that structural changes among the Tiwas don't become explicit. When the groups of Tiwa family move upto the higher status creating vacancy to their language and culture and in its own position leaving behind the fellows what happens to vacancy created by vertical mobility. The process of de-sanskritization and tribalization sometimes may be considered as solution to the vacancy problem. But the process contradicts the process of sanskritization. It is because of these ambiguities the process of sanskritization among the Tiwas cannot be said in structural terms, but described it in cultural and positional terms as exemplified.

Untouchability and uplift

The process does not always lead to the achievement of the higher status or assimilation with other dominant groups of Assamese society. It is because in the case of the Tiwas, they have not even been able to overcome the age-old social barriers and ritual stigmas in their society. But by this process the Tiwas have succeeded in entering the Hindu fold and occasionally at a high level. In the Hindu fold they are to remain as untouchables. For removing untouchability, recently the Tiwas have adopted the process of modernization. They are shedding their dirty food habits and dress habits very rapidly than before. There have been a countable number of progressive provisions for the uplift of tribal community and a number of protective and safeguarding measures are being taken by the government and other organizations to bring them into mainstream of social life.

A bundle of concepts

By now, one must be in a position to realize that sanskritization is not a simple and singular concept. It is extremely complex and multiplicity concept. It is related with a bundle of concepts like caste hierarchy, deprivation, status, dysfunctional, structure, tribalization, de-sanskritization, socialization, values and ideologies, untouchability, etc. It is a wide range of complex processes of socio-cultural changes in the society of Assam and the broad historical spectrum.

Conclusion

As a matter of fact, adequate study on the cultural changes among the tribal communities of Assam has not been made to enable us to draw any safe conclusion. But, we will have to recognize that both the process of sanskritization and de-sanskritization or tribalization can be seen into operation in the society of Assam. At some paces the former can be more dominant and at other paces the latter. But in the absence of sufficient scientific data, it is difficult to determine conclusively which of the two is more effective. In order to arrive at a dependable conclusion more extensive research into this matter is important. On the other hand, mutual respect, preservation, peace, harmonious development, statusquo management can be regarded another way for the solution to the problem.

Socio-economic development of tribal societies through education : an overview

Leena Borah Hazari

Introduction

The composition of the people with a diversified ethno-religious group in the plains as well as various ancient tribal sects in the hills presents the North-east a colourful demographic picture. Article 46 of the Constitution provides that state shall promote with special care, the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, the 'scheduled castes' and 'scheduled tribes'.

Education has a major role to play in order to bring the deprived sections to a reasonable level of social and economic development. Assam, having a good number of tribes, needs more importance on education for all round development. The tribal societies are mainly engaged in unorganized agriculture, forestry and other part time jobs. They are mostly getting seasonal employment and minimum wage provision, which itself has not been implemented properly. Therefore, they have to face hardships in maintaining subsistence level of living and have failed to get the benefits of educational facilities provided by the democratic government, which has given educational importance, a means for development.

In pre-independent India, in feudal political system, education was the monopoly of the upper classes. The children belonging to tribes were not allowed to study with the students belonging to ritually, religiously and socially superior classes. By and large, educational facilities were not available in their habitation. Some Christian missionaries were the first to take interest in the spread of education among STs. They started opening schools in the predominantly tribal areas in the early eighteenth century, but their attempts were limited mostly to hilly areas.

Today, India is undergoing a rapid transformation through globalisation. Assam, along with the rest of the country, is also trying to reap the benefits

that globalisation could bring through increased trade and economic growth. But till now on the economic front, poverty is one of the most fundamental challenges before us. A large section of our population has no access to even safe drinking water. Lack of education continues to be another problem, which is closely linked to poverty. As the tribal societies are socially and economically backward, they are in general, educationally backward. So, it is the need of the hour to give more emphasis on education, particularly higher education as an effective instrument for upward economic and social mobility.

Objectives of the paper

1. To find out the problems faced by the scheduled tribe students while accessing education.
2. To review the government schemes and the provisions for the students belonging to scheduled tribes.
3. To analyse the future prospects for better education.

Educational safeguards

The empowerment of weaker sections, particularly scheduled tribes of India is taking place slowly through the active participation of state sponsored incentives and reservation in educational institutions and government jobs. Empowerment is directed towards nation building and socio-economic progress. It is an attempt to strengthen socio-economic development through empowerment policy in the context of empowering these backward classes.

In the Constitution of India, Articles 45, 46 and 15(4) are important for educational development of weaker sections. The Directive Principles of State Policy in the Indian Constitution endow on the State, the responsibility to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections.

Article 45 states, "The state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years."

Article 46 of the Constitution declares, "The state shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interest of the weaker section of the people and in particular of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

Article 15(4) empowers the state to make special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens, viz, SCs and STs. This provision was added to the Constitution through the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951, which amended several articles. This provision has enabled to reserve seats for SCs / STs in educational institutes including technical, engineering and medical colleges.

To promote the interests of the SCs and STs the Govt. of India provided three fold reservation for them in the legislature, educational institutions and govt./semi govt. services. These reservations are in proportion to their population in the union of India and the concerned states. In advanced scientific institutions and private institutions reservation policy is not being implemented. The policy of liberalization, privatization and globalisation (LPG) is working against the various safeguards.

Enrolment pattern

After independence, greater thrust had been given to universalisation of primary education and adult education. Even after this, the absolute number of illiterates has progressively increased in India. From among these numbers, certainly STs will be the largest social group as they are generally deprived of basic human facilities, i.e. to learn, read and write. There is a wide gap in the educational development of STs and other communities. The literacy rate among the ST women is increasing faster than that of the rest of population.

The drop out rate is also a crucial indicator in the field of education that reveals that there has been a steady decline in the drop out rates of STs. The hard-core of non-enrolled children especially at primary level, belongs to STs. It is only due to their historical socio-economic disadvantages. Even if they are admitted to schools, they do not continue their education at the academic level upto secondary stage. In the undergraduate classes in the Arts, Science and Commerce faculties, their strengths are not in proportion to their population. In comparison to the Arts and Commerce faculties, the tribal students in Science faculty are just below one thirds of both the faculties.

Reservation alone is not sufficient for their development and requires proper care of children from the very beginning of their education. Only recording of hundred percent enrolment at primary stage is no solution. It requires attention at very beginning of the educational level and improvement in their educational standard and raising their diversified interests in different faculties, particularly science.

Even after the government's thrust for opening schools in the hilly and tribal areas, around 25% of the small tribal hamlets did not have even primary schools. In the small villages the children have to go to school at a distance of two kilometres and more. In most cases, the primary schools in the villages happen to be one teacher school or schools without buildings and teaching aids. The Operation Blackboard was not implemented properly in the tribal and rural areas.

Important incentives

In 1948-49 the Govt. of India started scholarships for STs for educational development. But it was observed that the candidates belonging to the SCs and STs were not coming in sufficient numbers to enjoy the benefits of reservation due to the low level of education among them. Various Ministries of the Govt. of India are responsible for providing incentives to them. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Tribal Affairs and Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Home Affairs deal with the various schemes. At the State level, the Department of Education, Tribal Welfare Department and Social Welfare Department, etc., are running programmes for their education. Education is basically the responsibility of the State Governments. More incentives were provided in the field of education to remove poverty and alleviate their economic condition. It has been realized that incentives like free education, free text books, free uniforms, scholarships, reserved seats, hostel facilities, etc., will attract a large number of ST students in the field of education.

Present Central Government under the leadership of the Congress party is playing a very decisive role giving important incentives for educational development to weaker sections. The major programmes of the Departments, viz, the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Sarba Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Lok Jambish (LJ), Shiksha Karmi (SK), Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS and AIE)

and National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NPNSPE) accord top priority to areas of concentration of SCs and STs. Reservation facilities for STs in Central Government's and State Government's professional institutions are continuing. They are getting relaxation in cut off marks, upto 10% for the Junior Research Fellowships (JRF) test of UGC. All qualifying students are awarded fellowships. UGC provides ST candidates a relaxation of five per cent (i.e. from 55% to 50%) at the Master's level for appointment of lecturer. UGC has also reduced the minimum percentage of marks for ST students required for appearing in the NET examination to 50% at the Master's level.

Out of 43,000 scholarships at the secondary stage for talented children from rural areas, 13,000 scholarships are required to be reserved for SC/ST students subject to fulfilment of criteria laid down. The National Council exclusively reserves 225 scholarships for SC/ST students under the National Talent Search scheme conducted for Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

In general, incentives for the education of weaker sections have benefited a large number of students in educational institutions. Without the government assistance, they were finding too difficult to get admission to schools and remain deprived and isolated. Education has helped them to develop self confidence, awakened awareness for their rights and has opened new avenues in life. During the last ten years, according to an educational survey conducted by NCERT, New Delhi, percentage of their enrolment in all classes is increasing.

Although many schemes and policies have been initiated for educational uplift of STs, yet some more resources and better utilization and management of the incentives are needed. Various drawbacks are still witnessed at the level of policy making, the implementing authorities and management. Some major drawbacks are found as follows :

1. Because of multiplicity of implementing agencies there is always delay in the release of resources and their distribution. There are lack of implementation, supervision and co-ordination among the various departments related to it.
2. Lack of awareness among the STs towards the various incentives given by different departments also retards their educational advancement.

There is an urgent need for more widespread dissemination of the information among them about these measures. The proper and optimum utilization of these incentives is yet to be gained.

3. Till far, various welfare schemes were started. But due to paucity of funds, these incentives have not been properly implemented. Backward states have a small plan outlay as compared to relatively more advanced states and the central assistance is also insufficient.
4. Delay in disbursement is another reason. District Education Department depends on State Government for the release of grants for sanctioning scholarships, book grants, attendance scholarships and dress materials at school level. These grants are not sanctioned till the financial year is well advanced. Poor parents face hardships to keep their children in schools until the stipend grants are released. The amount paid at the end of the session is sometimes not used for education, but to fulfil family urgent needs.
5. At the school level, in the rural tribal areas, the enrolment records are not properly maintained. To check all misutilisations, political pressure and local vested interest, there is a need for proper supervision and monitoring.
6. In our state, incentives for primary education are ignored. The poor parents are not in a position to send their children to school. Children have to earn for their parents. Scholarships are given from Class VI onwards only.
7. Another reason of underdeveloped education system among STs is improper utilization of incentives. At the Secondary and Higher Secondary levels, particularly, in general education, they are interested only in getting scholarships. Only some of them are serious about their studies. Therefore, their academic standards are poor and most of them pass their examination in third division.
8. Most of the parents of the ST students of rural areas are first generation learners and not in a position to teach them at home. They do not get any extra coaching from school teachers and some basic facilities like laboratories and libraries are not available in rural areas. These students emerge merely as literates and not as competent persons to face competitions.
9. During the last sixty years, a lot of disadvantaged families have been enjoying the benefits of privileged treatment. Now, it needs to be decided whether the children of the new elite should be provided with the reservation facilities or not. The real poor with miserable economic

conditions, inhabiting the remote areas have been out of touch with the welfare schemes.

Remedial measures

1. It can be suggested that incentives like books, stationeries, dress materials, etc., should be given at the beginning of the session.
2. At the primary level also incentives of scholarship should be given to scheduled tribe students. It will increase the enrolment and improve attendance and retention.
3. The disbursement of the incentives should be done by the concerned department after consulting the school/college head through a bank or post office without much formalities.
4. In order to have an effective control over the progress of the incentives, strategies and measures, periodical meeting of the heads of the institutions, inspection by officers as well as proper maintenance of records and meeting of guardians of the students are required.
5. In place of a number of agencies running the schemes of incentives, it should be placed under one department to avoid unavoidable delays and misutilisation of funds.
6. In the appointment of teachers in the tribal areas priority should be given to that particular tribe and local people. They understand their language and culture and can encourage them for learning through regular teaching.
7. Establishment of community college as an alternative system of education for socio-economically weaker and disadvantaged sections of the society is becoming very important. A rural Community College has arisen as an urgent requirement for empowering the rural people through skill education for self employment as well as group employment in rural areas. The Community College can promote job oriented, work related, skill based and life coping education for scheduled tribes.
8. Reservation alone is not sufficient for their development and requires proper care of children from the very beginning of their education. Only recording hundred percent enrolment at primary stage is no solution. It requires improvement in their educational standard and raising their diversified interests in different faculties, particularly in science.

9. For this, improvement of physical facilities of the primary and middle schools is necessary which includes school building, science laboratories, drinking water facilities, toilets, etc.
10. Development of social awareness about education can be achieved through NSS, NCC, Scout and Guide activities. These activities will lead a person with his capabilities and make him responsible towards their social and national duties. The tribal societies are becoming more weaker by liquor and drug delinquency. Liquor habit has become an open acceptance rather than an exception. The NSS, NCC and outreach activities should bring awareness in the minds of weaker section. They can also spread awareness about the threats of HIV/AIDS. In particular, knowledgeable teachers and students will have to play a key role in arresting the advance of the HIV, drugs and other social evils in the tribal areas.

Conclusion

For the deprived sections education is the passport to upward mobility. It makes them economically and socially strong and makes them competent for career opportunities.

It is appropriate time to take stock of the situation where we stand, country as a whole and what is the scenario with different sections of the society, particularly so with SCs / STs. A large number of schemes and programmes have been implemented to spread education amongst scheduled tribes and bring them at par with advanced sections of the society. The present condition of STs needs more allocation of funds and a serious review. Above all, the scheduled tribes should put forward from their own side through better education for social and economic empowerment.

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The quest for identity

Indrani Medhi

The word ethnic is derived from the Greek word *ethnikos*. It refers to a) Nations not converted into Christianity b) Races or large groups of people having common traits c) Groups in an exotic primitive culture. On the basis of these meanings we can define an ethnic group as any hereditary group with shared values, styles of life, symbol of identity and consciousness of kind. In other words, ethnic group comprises a) belief in real or assumed antecedent which may be subjective in nature b) attachment with a geographical centre which may be real or symbolic c) sharing cultural symbols or elements d) awareness towards their self ascribed distinctive character which they wished to be recognized by others. Therefore, ethnicity can be described as a process of ethnic mobilization by its leadership through the select use of ethnic symbols for socio-cultural and politico-economic purpose. Ethnicity is thus a human product which resurfaces when a group of people to secure their interest makes use of primordial bases like culture, religion, territory and racial identity. In contemporary world ethnic consciousness has emerged as dimension of interaction between society and state as well as social origination of production of culturally determined pattern of consumption. Increasing frequency of assertion of tribal identity among the regional polity, therefore, is a part of overall process of social change and modernization. The process of modernization largely in the form of large scale concentration of tertiary activities has also intensified and a search for identity on the part of the communities has also intensified. As a consequence small and distinctive local sub groups collectively formed bigger fora and adopted a common perspective objective approach. In many of the identity movements the need for wider social base encouraged the adoption of broader ethnic and political overtones.

Assam situated in the North-east corner of India also witnessed a series of ethnic movements in the last century. The Bodo movement was first of its kind which arose in the early part of the twentieth century when the need to protect the social and political identity was deeply felt. Their efforts resulted in the formation of Tribal League in 1933.

In the post independence period the integrative force of nation building ignored the specific needs of the people. There emerged an upsurge in the quest for socio-political identity. The relative economic deprivation of Bodos and other plains tribes had its roots in the plight of the people whose traditional entitlement of land suffered in the regime of recorded land rights introduced by the British. The 'line system' that sought to protect, which in the post colonial period took the form of policies of transferring land to tribals has been generally weak because there had been instances of illegal transfer of land from tribals to non tribals.

With strong currents towards administrative reorganization the Bodo elites organized the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) in 1967 with the purpose of seeking recognition of plains tribes of Assam. The PTCA advocated a separate plains tribal state called Udayachal and the reserved forest fell within the borders of that proposed separate state. With the passage of time the Bodo demand for autonomy hardened. The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and BPAC started a movement for a Bodoland state on the north bank from Sadiya to Sankosh and the creation of two autonomous districts of Nilachal and Lalung (Tiwa) on the south bank. Their demands also included ST status for the Bodo Kacharis of Karbi Anglong district. Altogether 92 demands were placed. A rival faction the Bodo Security Force (BSF) under Ranjan Daimary also emerged. They allied itself with NSCN (IM) faction of Nagaland. There followed a period of violence, extortions, kidnappings, intimidation and killing. Consequently a committee was appointed to chalk out a solution. But the Bodos rejected the recommendation. Finally, on 20 February, 1991 the ABSU president S.K. Bismutary signed the Bodo Accord and on 7 March, 1993 the Bodo Autonomous Council (BAC) was inaugurated at Kokrajhar. But the BSF denounced the Bodo Accord and resorted to acts of violence. In the riots that followed a lot of non Bodo people were killed. In 1994 the security force launched Operation Kranti against the BSF and captured a number of militants. The ABSU and the BPP revived their demands for statehood. Finally on 10 February, 2003 the Bodo people saw their demand fulfilled with the signing of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) between the Govt. of India and Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT). The BTC has jurisdictions over four newly created districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska and Udalguri.

Conceding the Bodo autonomy opened up the Pandora box and the government had to extend the principle of autonomy to other major plains tribes of Assam, namely the Rabhas, Mishings and Tiwas. On 10 March, 1995 an accord was signed with the Rabhas conceding a Rabha Hasong autonomous council with discontinuous 'satellite' areas in village having more than 50% tribal population. On 13 April a similar accord was signed with the Tiwas and with the Mishings on 14 June, 1995.

Earlier in 1976 the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district was separated into two to form the North Cachar Hills district and the Karbi Anglong (Mikir Hills) district. District Councils were established in these two hill districts under the sixth schedule to the Constitution of India. The Dimasas and the Karbis largely inhabited them respectively. In 1986 the Dimasa and Karbi people shot into prominence along with a newly formed Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC). The Karbis too launched a movement for the formation of a separate state comprising two districts North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong with the provision of the Article 244(A). Slowly the Karbi Students Union joined ASDC to intensify their agitation. The role of the students union was significant because they were able to bring together leaders of other organizations such as AASU, NSF, KSO, AJYCP with the demand for a separate state in the second half of 1980. Ultimately, their agitation bore a success when the MoU was signed between the government and the representatives of ASDC on April 1, 1995.

The plains tribes of Assam are scattered unevenly in different districts and they share a common history with the non tribal counterparts. The process of tribal identity construction started in the early part of the 20th century. Identity consciousness and a feeling of deprivation had sown the seeds of sub national. This sub national formation has significantly challenged Assam. Many factors contributed to this rise of sub national. Detribalisation of large areas for public purpose, encroachment on the reserved tribal belts, forests and grazing ground by land hungry immigrants, the imposition of Assamese language created an unrest among the tribals. In a situation a quest for identity becomes inevitable. The movement of the Bodos and the rebellion by other tribes has opened the eyes of the government that something should be done to provide a sense of security to the tribals. Today situation is alarming. That is why, Prof. B.G. Varghese has said, "No peace, no development, no development without peace."

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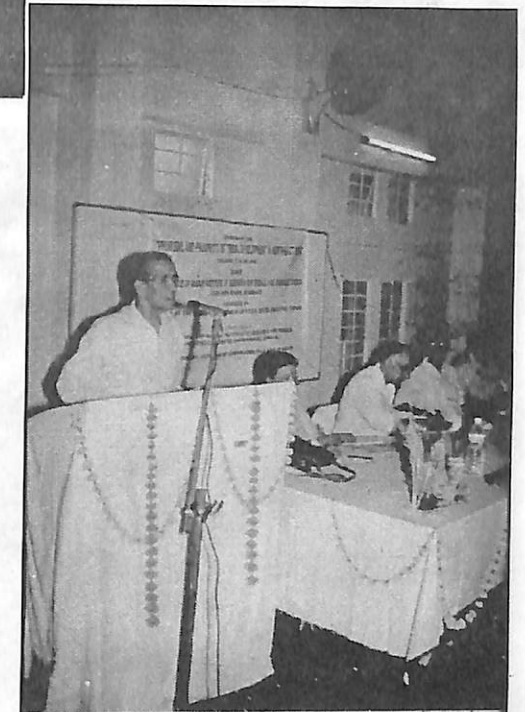
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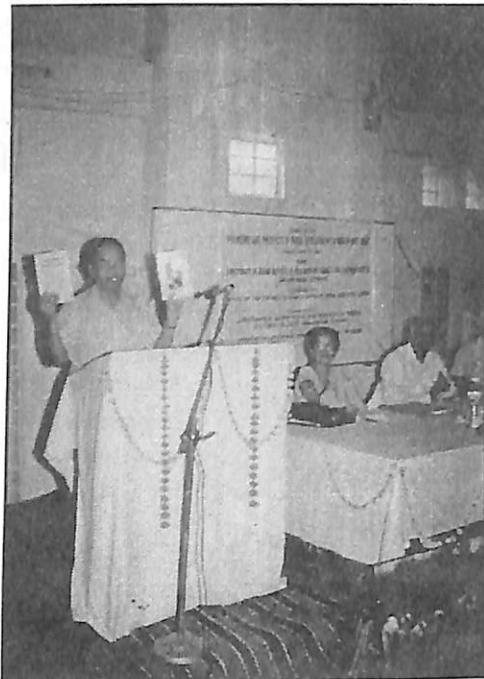
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*Dr. G. C. Sharma Thakur presenting the
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Dr. H. Kamkhenthang, Director, TRI, Manipur releasing two books as the chief guest



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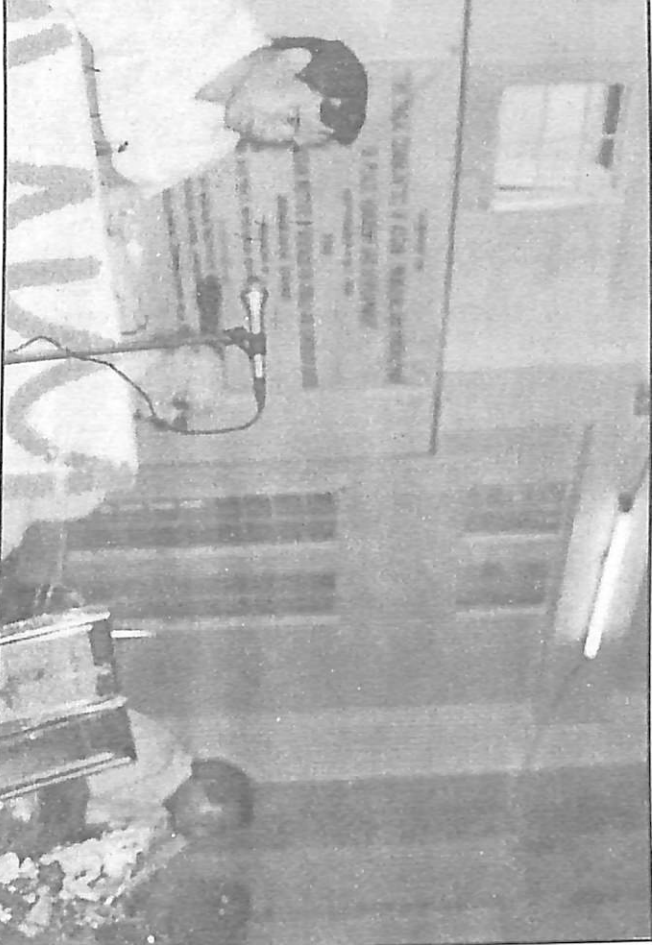
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Prof. P. C. Bhattacharyya being felicitated by Mrs. S. Das, Director, AIRTSC



Prof. B. M. Das delivering his lecture as the chief guest



Sri L. Phangcho, IAS delivering his lecture as the distinguished guest

