

Labour & Development

North East Special Issue

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Introduction

Otojit Kshetrimayum*

The North Eastern Region (NER) of India, a group of eight states, is surrounded by the Himalayas in the North, the Garo-Khasi-Jaintia hills in the East, the great Brahmaputra in the West and Indian state of West Bengal and Bangladesh in the South. The region is barely connected to the major part of India through the narrow Siliguri Corridor. The topographically secluded region, therefore, has often been collectively called as the "North East". The establishment of the North East Council (NEC) in 1971 comprising of the eight states namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Assam, Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Sikkim with its inclusion in 2002 gave political validity to the nomenclature and grouping.

Nevertheless, collapsing the region into a homogenous identity does a serious injustice to the cultural heritage of the region. In fact, the eight states of the North East are a conglomeration of multiple tribes, with each of them carrying their unique tradition. This gives the North Eastern region its distinctive identity. Its topographical seclusion from the rest of India – which is primarily urban and cosmopolitan, has helped these tribes maintain their exclusivity and cultural purity.

However, the North East has been a trouble-ridden region. The long history of violence in the form of inter-tribal clashes, insurgency and the subsequent implementation of the AFSPA has continuously vexed the region, affecting the rate of development in the region. Lack of educational facilities, unemployment and poverty has taken the North East to a back-of-beyond status. Major issues concerning the youth in North East are education, employment, community engagement and migration. The fact that 15-18 percent of the educated youth are unemployed in the north-eastern states is a cause of grave concern. This has led to mass-scale migration of the youth from the region. The desire for better opportunities and the desperation to escape the violence has forced the young generation to move into the metropolis. Yet, it will be wrong to state that migration has come as a solution for the North East youth. They remain victims of seclusion, violence and exploitation in these cities.

This North East special issue of Labour and Development has twelve articles. The first five articles highlight various socio-economic conditions and their implications on the lives of the people of the region. The other seven articles are related to migration of the North East people to other regions, particularly to cities like Delhi and their experiences. Minaketan Behera in his article "Reflection on Socio-Economic Transformation of Scheduled Tribes of North East India: The Way

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Ahead" highlights that the North East India holds a special place on India's tribal map with its rich natural resources and home to recognized scheduled tribes. The tribals of NER are culturally and traditionally diverse communities with their own set of religious beliefs, rituals, language, and political organizations. Tribals face hunger, malnutrition, poverty, low literacy, inadequate health care, and a lack of access to natural resources. The central and State governments have initiated many development programs for the development of tribes, but the socio-economic conditions of tribal are not developed to the desired extent. The purpose of this study is to examine the socio-economic situations of tribes in NER, as well as key challenges and government initiatives for their development. It also discusses a future plan for promoting the inclusion of Scheduled Tribes in the nations' growth. The article is based on secondary data as it presents the poverty rate, literacy rates, health indicators, per capita income etc. Thus, a substantial effort is required on the part of the State to fill up the holes in different development programs for tribal so that they can reap its benefit and provide income-generating activities to improve their socio-economic status.

In the article on "Mapping Village, Employment and Social Security in Rural Manipur by Ningombam Victoria Chanu & Otojit Kshetrimayum explains that for sociologist and social anthropologist, villages are invaluable observation centres where she or he can study in detail social processes and problems. The village profoundly influenced the behaviour pattern of its inhabitants as it is not only an important social unit but also an administrative unit. An abundance of micro-studies on rural India has already been coming from all sides; macro-issues have been extensively studied and discussed in both government and academic research. This paper attempts to integrate and analyse research results from a set of village studies of Manipur to highlight rural development in the state of Manipur. Pranati Das and Purusottam Nayak in their article on "Valuation of Unpaid Domestic Work of Women: A Study of Four Districts of Assam" mention that unpaid domestic works generally carried out by women are common in every household in any society. Though it nourishes and replenishes human life, its contributions to the economy are either unaccounted for or are underestimated. If household chores are officially recognized and their valuations are made then the contribution of a homemaker would gain importance and society at large would start treating women as equal partners to men. This would enable women empowerment in a society. An attempt has been made in the present paper to make an estimation of unpaid domestic works of women and their valuation using replacement cost method and minimum wage for which micro-level primary data were collected from the state of Assam. Findings reveals that there are wide variations in no. of hours spent for different activities between male and female across different socioeconomic and demographic categories. Value of unpaid works have also been varying across geographical regions, social groups, religions, age and educational levels of workers.

In the article on “Bank Credit for Manufacturing in Rural Assam: Have the Trends Changed?” by Bibhuti Bhushan Mohapatra and A. Jiran Meitei highlights that rural Manufacturing in Assam is one of the important economic activities. It can provide a large number of environmentally sustainable non-farm employment to different sections, especially to socio-economically backward and women members of the society. It, however, in the absence of access to institutional finance, inherently suffers from the problems of dualism. Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) are the major sources of institutional finance in India, including the rural economy of Assam. On the other hand, on the planks of development, there has been a political change both at the center and the state almost since 2014. Against this backdrop, the study assesses the delivery of SCBs credit to rural manufacturing in the state of Assam from both overall and comparative perspectives. The study finds that although the overall trend of credit delivery for manufacturing in rural Assam is depressing, there are some clear signs of hope in terms of growth and consistency post-political change. Further, the aforesaid trends have been corroborated by those of other key non-agricultural and non-manufacturing sectors. As a policy implication of this study, it may be prescribed that the SCBs need to increase their credit supply to rural manufacturing in Assam continuously. Ritwika Patgiri and Syed S. Kazi’s article on “Factors Hindering Tea Tribe Community of Assam in Accessing Social Security Schemes: A Study” is an attempt to understand the factors that affect access to public and social protection schemes, information on them, enrolment, and linkages of the tea tribe community. This paper attempts to bridge the gap on information needed for the implementation of the Social Security Code on the tea community of Assam and how the new Code might benefit the community.

In the article, “Quality of Higher Education in the North Eastern States and the Exodus of the North East Youth for Quality Education: An Analysis”, Debosmita Paul & Kingaule Newme attempts to analyse the quality of higher education in the various institutions in the North East region to determine these cause/cause(s). Interviews and surveys of several scholars, faculty members residing and working in the North East and in the urban metros are used in this paper to help determine the causes of out migration of the youth from the NER. Sharon Songamla’s article on “Factors Determining Youth Migration from North-Eastern Regions of India (NERs) To National Capital” highlights that since the early 2000s, migration of youths especially amongst North-Eastern Regions (NERs) to national capital has been escalating and is noticeably increasing ever since. The study was undertaken generally for the purpose of investigating the causes of youth migration from NERs of India to National Capital. The study suggested that the concern government needs to find more innovative strategies by setting up adequate infrastructures and offering income generating activities to improve overall livelihood in the region.

Nabanita Deka in her article, “Outsiders in their own Land: North East Indians in Metropolis” examines the geo-political and economic reasons leading to large

scale exodus of Northeast youths to metros. It investigates the discrimination and its resultant alienation effect faced by the Northeast youths in metropolis by analysing R.G. Lyngdoh's poems "The Migrant Labourer" and "Equal Citizens" and Nandita Haksar's ground-breaking book *The Exodus is not Over*. To further elucidate the 'Insider vs Outsider' debate, the study concludes by focusing on real-life incidents when NE people were called Corona.

In the article on "Reflecting on the Migrant Kitchen: Gender and Food in the City" Pooja Kalita attempts to manoeuvre around questions such as – What does the migrant kitchen look like? What are the gendered practices in such kitchens? Who and what constitutes it? What definitions of masculinity and femininity we can derive from them? This study draws its narrative from the domain of reflections, memories and some ethnographic ramblings. Namra Sultan in her article on "Migration Experiences of Sylhetis" explores the life of a North-eastern migrant in a city through the narratives of Babu in Sidhharta Deb's *The Point of Return*. In an age of heightened mobility and increased rates of migration, this paper establishes migration as a pluralistic experience and problematises the idea of home to be place-bound. It also reinstates the lesser-known Partition narratives from the North-east by demonstrating their continued impact.

Md. Chingiz Khan in his article on "Pangal Students Migration to Delhi" highlights that some youth of the Pangal community have started migrating and studying in Delhi to seek research-oriented work and preparation for competitive examinations since the last four decades. This study tries to examine the historical journey of the migration of youths of the Pangal community towards the city of Delhi for higher studies. In the article, "Safety at Workplace for Women from North East in Delhi-A Legal Enquiry", Mercy K Khaute argues that migration of women from North East states of India has been significant and certainly a contributing factor to the percentage of women workforce in the cities. However, racism often disguised under the veil of the sexual harassments as in the case of women employees from the Northeast states in Delhi, makes it a case rather peculiar. This study outlines the various challenges encountered by women from this region at their workplaces in the city of Delhi, which reports the highest number of cases against racism.

Reflection on Socio-Economic Transformation of Scheduled Tribes of North East India: The Way Ahead

Minaketan Behera*

The North East India holds a special place on India's tribal map with its rich natural resources and home to recognized scheduled tribes. The tribals of NER are culturally and traditionally diverse communities with their own set of religious beliefs, rituals, language, and political organizations. Tribals face hunger, malnutrition, poverty, low literacy, inadequate health care, and a lack of access to natural resources. The central and State governments have initiated many development programs for the development of tribes, but the socio-economic conditions of tribal are not developed to the desired extent. The purpose of this study is to examine the socio-economic situations of tribes in NER, as well as key challenges and government initiatives for their development. It also discusses a future plan for promoting the inclusion of Scheduled Tribes in the nations' growth. The article is based on secondary data as it presents the poverty rate, literacy rates, health indicators, per capita income etc. Thus, a substantial effort is required on the part of the State to fill up the holes in different development programs for tribal so that they can reap its benefit and provide income-generating activities to improve their socio-economic status.

Keywords: Hill tribes, NER, Isolation, Livelihood, Education, Policy, Betterment

1. Introduction

North East India occupies an area of 255,000 sq km which covers a total of 7.98% of India's geographical area. North Eastern Region (NER) comprises both plains and hilly areas however the majority of its region about 70% is covered with hills and mountains. It comprises eight states namely- Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura (all together known as the seven sisters of northeast), and Sikkim with scheduled tribes spatially distributed across these 8 states. All these tribes differ in terms of population, means of subsistence, religion, language, and levels of socio-cultural and economic development. The ST constitutes 27% of the total population in the NER. The rural NE population is highly dependent on rich natural resources such as land water, forest, and minerals for their livelihood. The NE tribal population is unfortunately subjected to marginalization and discrimination when compared to the larger general population of the country. Along with being geographically and socially isolated, they are also economically marginalized communities. The regional disparities among the states in NER are one of the obstacles that hinder the sustainable development of India (Singh, 2018). The NER states have a history of this proximity to political uncertainties, insurgency, and ecological barriers. Unemployment,

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lags in infrastructure growth, lack of industrialization, politics of identity crisis, and state fragility in terms of violence, ethnic conflicts, and insecurity have led to underdevelopment in these states (Banik, 2018).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of seventeen goals chalked out by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 in global partnership with the developed and developing nations to eliminate poverty, abate inequalities, improve the status of education, health, boost the economic growth and in the process to ensure efforts to fight climate change by preserving our water, forests and the nature (United Nations, n.d.). The untapped potential of the NER can be fast-tracked with the implementation of the SDG goals to contribute to the nation's economic growth. The indicators to gauge the fulfillment of SDG in NER have been identified from NITI Aayog's SDG Index India, MoSPI's National Indicator Framework, State and District Indicator Frameworks. Among the 8 states of NER, all the districts in Sikkim and Tripura are 'Front Runners'. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Nagaland have 12, 10, and 11 districts respectively in the 'performer' category which need to be worked on to reach the 'Front Runner' category (Table-1) (NITI Aayog, 2021). The overall index score of northeast states among the 28 states with ranks are- Assam (23), Arunachal Pradesh (26), Meghalaya (25), Mizoram (21), Manipur (13), Nagaland (18), Tripura (15) (Singh, 2022).

Table 1
State-wise Performance of Districts-based on Composite Score

State/No. of districts	Front Runner	Performer	Not Available
Arunachal Pradesh	13	2	-
Assam	23	4	6
Manipur	8	1	7
Meghalaya	1	10	-
Mizoram	7	1	3
Nagaland	-	11	1
Sikkim	4	-	-
Tripura	8	-	-

Source: SDG Vertical, NITI Aayog, 2021, Score- Front Runner: 65-99, Performer: 50-64

Health issues like AIDS and the mortality rate is a serious concern for the NER. An inadequate number of PHCs, CHCs, and SCs exist, particularly in rural areas. A shortfall in number of doctors, nursing staff is an added concern (Gogoi, Hazarika, Phukan, & Gogoi, 2021). Even after seven and a half decades of independence and five decades of nationalisation of banks, the NER still remain largely excluded from the formal channel of financial services. The financial inclusion in these states is much lower when compared to the average national level. Reasons for this low inclusion is due to the states' geographical location, other economic and social factors etc. (Maity, 2019).

The government has taken several initiatives to uplift and develop them. However, the results of such attempts to uplift the tribal people have not been satisfactory and are yet to reach a desired level of development. In order to get a clear view of this issue, the paper attempts to examine the socio-economic condition of the Tribes of NER. The paper also presents challenges and the way forward to improve their status.

2. Data Sources and Methods

The present paper is the outcome of secondary sources collected from Census reports, NITI Aayog reports, Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region, Ministry of Tribal Affairs reports, Census data, Ministry of Human Resource and Development reports, data from MOSPI, other Government Reports and research papers. The studied area includes all the eight states of NER in India.

3. Discussion

About 145 ethnics Communities inhabit here and about 78 tribes are with a population of more than 5000. These tribes were found to be around 12% of the overall tribal population of India and 25.81% of the overall population of Northeast India. "Some tribes among them are scattered while others are concentrated into relatively small territory" (Taher, 1977). The tribal population in Tripura, Manipur and Assam is 30.95%, 34.41 % and 12.82% respectively.

Arunachal Pradesh is the largest state based on area, followed by Assam and Meghalaya. Sikkim is the smallest state. On the other hand, Assam has the highest density per sq.km with Tripura next in line. Four states of NER have performed better than the national Sex ratio. In 2011, the total population of NER was estimated to be 4.54 crore (table 2).

Table 2
State wise Area, Density, and Sex Ratio Rate in NE Region

State	Area in Sq. Km.	Density per sq. km.	Sex Ratio (females '000 males)
Arunachal Pradesh	83743	17	938
Assam	78438	398	958
Manipur	22327	115	992
Meghalaya	22429	132	989
Mizoram	21081	52	976
Nagaland	16579	119	931
Sikkim	7096	86	890
Tripura	10486	350	960
All India	3287240	382	940

Source: Census 2011.

Across the NER the population is observed to be varying among its eight states with Sikkim holding the record of the lowest population of 6.10 lakhs (i.e., 1.33%) and Assam standing with the largest population size of 3.12 crore (i.e. 68.37%) in NER. Since independence the, states of NER have witnessed a significant change in the decadal growth rate in its population.

Table 3
Population of North East India from 1971 to 2011 (in thousands)

State	1971	Percentage	1981	Percentage	1991	Percentage	2001	Percentage	2011	Percentage
Arunachal Pradesh	468	2.36	632	2.66	865	2.71	1098	2.82	1383	3.03
Assam	14625	73.89	18041	75.84	22414	70.14	26656	68.37	31169	68.37
Manipur	1073	5.42	1421	5.97	1837	5.75	2294	5.88	2722	5.97
Meghalaya	1012	5.11	1336	5.62	1775	5.55	2319	5.95	2964	6.50
Mizoram	332	1.689	494	2.08	690	2.16	889	2.28	1091	2.39
Nagaland	516	2.61	775	3.26	1210	3.79	1990	5.10	1981	4.35
Sikkim	210	1.06	316	1.33	406	1.27	541	1.39	608	1.33
Tripura	1556	7.86	2053	8.63	2757	8.63	3199	8.21	3671	8.05
NE Total	19792	3.61	23788	3.48	31954	3.78	38986	3.79	45588	3.77
India	548160				846303		1028737		1210193	

Source: Census of India 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

As per table 3, the decadal growth rate from the period 1971 to 2011, we can observe that all the states except Nagaland, have experienced a fall in the population growth rate. Further, an observation can be made that during the period of 1981-1991 all the NER states except Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura, have experienced a population growth which can be due to the growing illegal immigration into these states during that time period. Though the North eastern states have been experiencing a lower population growth rate compared to earlier decades yet most of the state's record a growth rate larger than the nation which should be a major concern in this region. As per the figures for 1991-2001 and 2001-2011, there has been a continuous record of most of the states in the region (except the states of Assam, Sikkim, and Tripura) having a higher growth rate than the national level of 21.54% and 17.64 respectively.

Table 4
Decadal Growth Rate of Population in the North Eastern Region

State	1971-81	1981-91	1991-2001	2001-2011
Arunachal Pradesh	35.15	36.83	27.00	25.92
Assam	23.36	24.24	18.92	16.93
Manipur	32.46	29.29	24.86	18.65
Meghalaya	32.04	32.86	30.65	27.82
Mizoram	48.55	39.70	28.82	22.78

State	1971-81	1981-91	1991-2001	2001-2011
Nagaland	50.5	56.08	64.53	0.47
Sikkim	31.92	34.30	16.03	12.36
Tripura	50.77	24.47	33.06	14.75
India	24.66	23.85	21.54	17.64

Source: Census of India 1971, 1981, 1991 2001 and 2011.

Apart from having a higher population growth rate the NER also has an uneven distribution of population across the states. This can be reflected in terms of its varying population density. In 2011, the North East region was to have a population density per sq. kilometer varying from Arunachal Pradesh with 17 as the lowest to 397 in Assam being the highest. It was then followed by Tripura (350), Meghalaya (132), Manipur (122), Nagaland (119), and Sikkim (86). Out of eight states, Assam and Tripura bag the position of being the most densely populated states sharing almost 76.4 percent of the total NER population in 2011.

The ST population constitutes 56.11% of the total population in NER. According to the 2020-2021 census (Table 5) Mizoram has the highest record of ST population percentage of 94.4% among the states of the NER however among the 8 NE states Assam with 3.7% has the largest ST population in the total ST population of India and Tripura has the lowest ST population in the region with only 31.8% in the state.

Table 5
State and Percentage of STs in the State to Total ST Population

S. No.	State	Total population	Total ST population	% STs in state to total populations of state	% STs in state to total ST populations in India
1	Assam	3,12,05,576	38,84,371	12.4	3.7
2	Arunachal Pradesh	13,83,727	9,51,821	68.8	0.9
3	Manipur	28,55,794	11,67,422	40.9	1.1
4	Meghalaya	29,66,889	25,55,861	86.1	2.4
5	Mizoram	10,97,206	10,36,115	94.4	1.0
6	Nagaland	19,78,502	17,10,973	86.5	1.6
7	Sikkim	6,10,577	2,06,360	33.8	0.2
8	Tripura	36,73,917	36,73,917	31.8	1.1

Source: MoTA, 2020-21.

In Assam out of the total rural-urban population, the state (3884371) rural areas has the highest concentration of the ST population i.e. about 3665405 (Table 5). A similar trend is found in every state of the region. The distribution of the ST population by sex then we can find that apart from Assam in all the other 7 states of NER, the number of ST women population residing in the urban are more as compared to

their counterparts. With increasing female literacy and job opportunities, several informal sectors have resulted in the out migration of women from the rural to urban areas. From Table 6, it is evident that Meghalaya has the highest number of ST women residing in the urban areas (219799) as compared to men (199171).

Table 6
Population of Scheduled Tribes by Sex and Residence
in North east India

Sl. No.	India / State / UTs	T/R/U	Person	Male	Female
1	ASSAM	Total	3884371	1957005	1927366
		Rural	3665405	1847326	1818079
		Urban	218966	109679	109287
2	SIKKIM	Total	206360	105261	101099
		Rural	167146	86059	81087
		Urban	39214	19202	20012
3	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	Total	951821	468390	483431
		Rural	789846	390625	399221
		Urban	161975	77765	84210
4	NAGALAND	Total	1710973	866027	844946
		Rural	1306838	665351	641487
		Urban	404135	200676	203459
5	MANIPUR	Total	1167422	588279	579143
		Rural	1055808	533856	521952
		Urban	111614	54423	57191
6	MIZORAM	Total	1036115	516294	519821
		Rural	507467	257987	249480
		Urban	528648	258307	270341
7	TRIPURA	Total	1166813	588327	578486
		Rural	1117566	563908	553658
		Urban	49247	24419	24828
8	MEGHALAYA	Total	2555861	1269728	1286133
		Rural	2136891	1070557	1066334
		Urban	418970	199171	219799

Source: MoTA, 2020-21.

Further, Table 7 represents the Sex Ratio of the scheduled tribe population indicates that the sex ratio of the Scheduled Tribe population per 1000 males in urban areas is much better when compared to the rural areas of the state and the sex ratio at the national level which is at 980 in 2011. Arunachal Pradesh has the highest sex ratio

in the urban areas as compared to the rural areas. This indicates that women are starting to migrate in large numbers to urban areas as a result of growing literacy rate, alternative employment opportunities, etc. However, the fact that rural areas have lower sex ratio than in urban areas draws out attention towards the need for the state authorities to take up necessary action to reduce the gap of sex ratio of ST between the urban and the rural areas in NER. Sikkim has a wide sex ratio gap between the rural and urban areas with 942 and 1042 respectively.

Manipur (55%) and Sikkim (3.5%) reported having the highest and least prevalence of domestic violence across the country (As per NFHS-4). The rates of physical violence and emotional violence among women in the North-East are 24.7 % and 11.8 % percent respectively. Severe physical violence was reported at 5.3% and sexual violence was 6.4 %. Stress in the family, the weak education background of the husband, poverty concerns, and many children are causes of domestic violence (Haobijam, & Singh, 2021) .

Table 7
State-UT wise Sex ratio of Scheduled Tribe Population

Sl. No.	State	SEX RATIO 2001			SEX RATIO IN 2011		
		Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
1	Arunachal Pradesh	1003	1000	1020	1032	1022	1083
2	Assam	972	974	929	985	984	996
3	Nagaland	943	942	946	976	964	1014
4	Manipur	980	977	1040	984	978	1051
5	Mizoram	984	959	1012	1007	967	1047
6	Tripura	970	971	921	983	982	1017
7	Meghalaya	1000	987	1072	1013	996	1104
8	Sikkim	957	950	1024	960	942	1042
	India	978	981	944	990	991	980

Source: Census 2001 and 2011, Office of the Registrar General, India.

4. Education

Education is one of the indispensable requirements necessary for ameliorating the socio-economic status of marginalized communities in the society. In the NER, apart from few states like Mizoram and Nagaland the literacy rate of the ST for the rest of the NE states is much lower than the literacy level of the States as such. Indicating that the educational status of the tribals in this region need immediate attention. Consistent efforts have been made by the state government to uplift the literacy rate of the deprived population (ST). A decadal growth can be observed in (Table 8) which shows that the literacy rate of ST in Arunachal Pradesh has increased from 37.04% in 2001 to 64.6% in 2011. Similar growth is observed for all the tribals in the remaining NE states. In 2011, the literacy rate of the STs of

Mizoram (91.5%), Nagaland (80%), and Meghalaya (74.5) is higher than the total literacy level of their respective states when compared to 2001 and also higher than the national literacy rate of India i.e. 73 %. However, the educational status of tribes is still a matter of concern in the region as there still remains a significant gap between the majority of the ST population and the general non-tribal population of the NE states. For instance, there is an 8.1% gap between the literacy rate of ST in Tripura and its non-tribal general population. This indicates that in terms of education the performance of majority of the tribals in NE India is not at par with the rest of the general population (J.V. Arun and A. Premkumar, 2020).

Table 8
**Literacy rate of total population/ STs- North Eastern States/
 India: 2001-2011**

States/ country	Literacy rate -2001		Gap in Literacy rate	Literacy rate -2011		Gap in Literacy rate
	Total	ST		Total	ST	
Arunachal Pradesh	54.34	37.04	17.03	65.4	64.6	0.8
Assam	63.25	62.52	0.73	72.2	72.1	0.1
Manipur	70.53	65.85	4.68	76.9	72.6	4.3
Meghalaya	52.56	61.34	1.22	74.4	74.5	-0.1
Mizoram	88.80	89.34	-0.54	91.3	91.5	-0.2
Nagaland	66.59	65.95	0.64	79.6	80.0	-0.4
Sikkim	68.81	74.14	1.67	81.4	79.7	1.7
Tripura	73.19	56.48	16.71	87.2	79.1	8.1
India	64.84	47.10	17.74	73.0	59.0	14.0

Source: Census of India, 2011.

It is found that there is a huge gender gap in the literacy rate in the NER of India. The literacy rate of the majority of ST males is found to be much higher than that of ST females. In Table 8, the literacy rate of ST males in Arunachal Pradesh is 71.5% whereas the literacy rate of ST females is only 58%. The literacy gap between ST and the general population of the NER for both male and female, it is found that the literacy rate of both the ST males and females is lower in comparison to the states literacy rate of all males and females population. Tripura has the largest literacy gap of 11.1% for females and Manipur has the largest literacy gap of 6.3% for males. However, Nagaland and Mizoram, are performing well in terms of educational status and has shown a negative literacy gap for both males (Nagaland: -0.3, Mizoram: -0.3), and females (Nagaland: -0.8, Mizoram: -0.2) in the respective states (Table 8).

The ST females of NER are doing much better as compared to the ST males. For instance: in Meghalaya's literacy gap between ST and state total population the

females have a negative literacy gap of -0.6% while males have 0.5%. This indicates that ST females are surprisingly performing quite well in terms of educational status in the NER. This can be due to the higher GER of the ST girls in the. A similar case is observed in almost all the states of the region.

Table 9
Literacy Rates of All Population, ST Population and Gaps

	State	Persons			Male			Female		
		All	ST	Gap	All	ST	Gap	All	ST	Gap
1	Assam	72.2	72.1	0.1	77.8	79	- 1.2	66.3	65.1	1.2
2	Arunachal Pradesh	65.4	64.6	0.8	72.6	71.5	1.1	57.7	58	- 0.3
3	Sikkim	81.4	79.7	1.7	86.6	85	1.6	75.6	74.3	1.3
4	Nagaland	79.6	80	0.4	82.8	83.1	- 0.3	76.1	76.9	-0.8
5	Manipur	76.9	72.6	4.3	83.6	77.3	6.3	70.3	67.8	2.5
6	Mizoram	91.3	91.5	- 0.2	93.3	93.6	- 0.3	89.3	89.5	-0.2
7	Meghalaya	74.4	74.5	- 0.1	76	75.5	0.5	72.9	73.5	-0.6
8	Tripura	87.2	79.1	8.1	91.5	86.4	5.1	82.7	71.6	11.1
	INDIA	73	59	14.0	80.9	68.5	12.4	64.6	49.4	15.2

Source: MoTA, 2020-21.

Table 10
Gross Enrolment Ratio of STs – North Eastern States / India-2015-16

Class	State	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary (I-V)	Arunachal Pradesh	129.71	129.34	129.53
	Assam	118.96	122.02	120.46
	Manipur	115.75	120.9	118.22
	Meghalaya	143.55	147.72	145.61
	Mizoram	127.6	123.86	125.9
	Nagaland	95.89	99.77	97.76
	Sikkim	115.62	98.89	107.37
	Tripura	110.15	111.28	110.7
	INDIA	107.78	105.65	106.74
Upper primary (VI-VIII)	Arunachal Pradesh	109.43	115.09	112.19
	Assam	95.98	104.37	99.99
	Manipur	127.2	148.01	137.43
	Meghalaya	138.78	136.07	137.46
	Mizoram	97.55	106.61	101.87

Class	State	Boys	Girls	Total
	Nagaland	14.01	163.86	151.77
	Sikkim	123.05	124.86	123.86
	Tripura	95.36	98.18	96.71
	INDIA	128.71	131.17	129.93

Source: National Institute of Educational Planning & Administration, New Delhi.

From Table 10 (2015-16), the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of the ST in NER is shown exceeding all India tribal figures at most of the level of education. However, a fall can be observed in the GER of the ST in comparison to all India tribal figures in the educational level of senior secondary and higher education. Which again highlights the shortfall of the NER educational system. High drop-out rates among the ST students from NER can be one of the reasons behind why many ST students are not able to pursue or completing their specific educational level. As per the figures of 2010-2011 (table 11) the dropout rates in the class between I-VIII was much higher in all the states of the region as compared to the dropout rates in the class between I-V. This indicates that more ST students are dropping out from continuing with their education and hence putting a stop in their continuation in higher educational level. The drop-out rates of ST in certain states if the region (Manipur, Tripura, and Meghalaya) in elementary level of education is observed to be lagging behind the all-India figures. A gender disparity can be observed in the dropouts which indicates a gender gap in the literacy level among the ST males and females. The dropout rate of girls is higher than that of boys in Manipur for both primary and elementary level of education. However, the position of ST girls is better than boys in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Sikkim.

Table 11
Dropout Rates of Schedule Tribes- North Eastern States /
India: 2010 – 2011

State/Country	Class I-V			Class I-VIII		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	44.6	42.7	43.7	54.4	48.4	51.6
Assam	26.8	24.5	25.7	49.7	57.1	53.4
Manipur	47.5	55.4	51.3	74.3	75.7	75.0
Meghalaya	57.5	51.5	54.6	75.7	72.0	73.8
Mizoram	37.6	39.2	38.4	38.2	36.5	37.4
Nagaland	40.5	39.0	39.8	43.4	38.4	41.1
Sikkim	26.8	11.1	19.1	55.5	39.1	47.5
Tripura	41.6	41.5	41.5	60.4	62.8	61.6
India	37.2	33.9	35.6	54.7	55.4	55.0

Source: Statistics of School Education, 2010-2011.

5. Livelihood of Northeast India

The STs of NER share common drawbacks like geographical remoteness, underdevelopment, illiteracy, economic denial, indebtedness, impoverishment, and weaker access to public services and assets (Hanumantha and Grover, 1979). STs of NER mainly depend on shifting cultivation which is dominated in Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram. Sikkim is the only north-eastern state which does not practice shifting cultivation. Eventually, with the increase in the pressure on shifting, agricultural land has abruptly increased as cultivation areas decreased with the increase of its cultivators. Assam's richness in alluvial soil and its favourable climatic conditions made it fit for the cultivation of certain crops like coffee and rubber. Hence, the economy of Assam is mainly based on agriculture. More than 70% of the population is based on agriculture as a key source of livelihood. Rice is mainly cultivated in the interior hilly areas and other tribals practice shifting cultivation. The tribals practice mixed crops along with paddy in jhum cultivation. Besides these their livelihood is also based on vegetable growing, hunting, and fishing whereas in Nagaland some tribes, practice terrace wet rice cultivation. There exists a Konyak tribe who are also involved in some traditional practices such as iron smelting, brass work, gun powder making, and gum smiting besides hunting. The Chang tribe of Nagaland besides performing the jhum cultivation and headhunting, is also involved in the activity of crafts such as pottery, spinning, wood carving, and many more.

Over the years, the income from agriculture has notably declined. The NER still produces inadequate food grains that is not sufficient to cater to the increasing population (Marchang, 2018). The majority of this population depends on the underdeveloped traditional shifting agriculture for their livelihood which leads to the outcome as low productivity compared to wetland agricultural productivity. Gradually, the livelihood scenario of the STs and their economy is participating and placing towards the mainstream market economy. The employment pattern of the tribal population has witnessed a change from the agricultural sources to non-agricultural. However, this change is not uniformly visible across the NE states (Marchang, 2019). Interestingly, most of the ST families are now engaged in multiple sources of livelihood and their economic events has been expanded into varied occupations. Moreover, the access to education has driven them, especially the younger generation, for wage employment which shows an upward occupational flexibility in terms of constant salaried income and gains social status. Therefore, the rise in educational enrolment is transforming into better employability and productivity.

6. Migration into North-East India

The NER of India is a region that is largely occupied by the Mongoloid racial population who migrated from parts of the North and east at different time periods. During the pre-Independence period this region witnessed a consistent

flow of migration owing to pull factors like job opportunities in tea gardens, availability of cultivable land and other related factors. During this time the plains of Assam have received most of the in-migration. The growing tea industry 1855 encouraged the extensive practice of migration of migrant labourer into the tea estates of Assam. The passing of labour laws in the 1860s increasingly motivated importation of coolies from different areas, which ultimately resulted in the rise of immigration into the province of Assam. In the following years, influx of immigrants was experienced in other NER states in the form of farm labourers from Bangladesh and Nepal in 1900s which contributed significantly to the growing population size in the pre-Independence NER. Other than the migration factor natural growth due to birth and death was also responsible for the rise of population in NER. All of these together resulted in population growth rate of NER being higher than the population growth rate at all India level during the pre-independence period. However, after 1931 the census data showed that there was a drastic decline in the population growth from 23% in 1931 to 15% in 1941 (Maharatna & Sinha ,2011).

However, after independence the NER of India started receiving huge influx of illegal immigrants from the neighbouring countries particularly from Bhutan, Burma, Bangladesh and Nepal. Weiner (1983) observed this trend of continuous illegal in-migration particularly from Bangladesh to Assam during the period 1971- 1981. Tripura also experienced similar influx of immigrants from Bangladesh throughout the period. Apart from these two major states, other states were also receiving various kinds of immigration simultaneously during the same time period. Most of the immigrants from Assam illegally migrated to its neighbouring states of Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur. Thus, illegal migration to North-east India has been a continuous process, particularly during the partition of India and Bengal. Till 1981 net migration to Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Sikkim increased before gradually declining in the following years. However, Manipur and Tripura have been experiencing this decline since the earlier decade. This decline in net in-migration in NER still needs further investigation and monitoring by the state as most of the migration is carried out illegally. This may imply that the census collected may not be fully accurate and might be giving us false numbers regarding the net in-migration in post-1980s.

This experience of large-scale illegal immigration from Bangladesh, Nepal, and other parts of India into NER has severely affected the social harmony and social well-being of the tribals (Singh, 2009), as they are being pushed towards the brink of being reduced to a minority, their culture and identity are being homogenized to adapt with the growing population of non-tribal immigrants in the NER. As they are being reduced to a minority, they face behavioural prejudices from the non-tribal population which hinders their access to social and communal services as well as avail the schemes and policies provided by the Government. Due to

the influx of immigrants, the locals are forced to migrate and are displaced from their own tribal lands. In the contemporary era, an increase in the out-migration in the tribal society pattern is observed in intra-district, inter-district, and inter-state levels for both the ST male and female due to the increase in female literacy which has opened job opportunities in several informal sectors. Earlier the North east population was more concentrated Delhi and Kolkata but with time and positive policies of the government as affirmative action to support public employment and education of these groups, they have dispersed across the country. During the pandemic also migration increased. The existing insurgency, lack of quality higher education, limited employment opportunities and the epidemic law in force prompted residents to migrate to cities. They have found their place in organised and unorganised sector by finding jobs in hospitality industries, shopping malls, call centres, and retail outlets (Haokip, 2021).

7. House Amenities and Assets of Scheduled Tribes

Table 12
Percentage of ST Households and their Main Source of lighting

	Total number of Households		Main source of Lighting					
			Electricity		Kerosene		Solar energy	
	ST	ALL	ST	ALL	ST	ALL	ST	ALL
Assam	8,87,226	63,67,295	28	37	69.3	61.8		2.1
Arunachal Pradesh	1,72,913	2,61,614	66.2	65.7	12.3	18.5		4
Nagaland	3,49,022	3,99,965	81.2	81.6	15.9	15.6		0.3
Manipur	2,19,179	5,54,713	62.5	68.3	28.5	25.1		4
Mizoram	2,11,626	2,21,077	84.3	84.2	13.4	13.5		1.4
Tripura	2,59,322	8,42,781	46.9	68.4	48.6	29.1		3.8
Meghalaya	4,56,683	5,38,299	59.2	60.9	38.6	37		0.8
Sikkim	46,013	1,28,131	91.5	92.5	7.4	6.5		0.4
India	2,33,74,527	24,67,40,228	51.7	67.2	45.6	31.4		1.1

Source: Census 2011, Office of the Registrar General, India.

It can be observed from Table 12 that the sources of lightning available in NER include electricity, kerosene, and solar energy. Assam has the highest use of Kerosene and lowest use of electricity among all the NER states. The use of kerosene is next highest in Tripura and Meghalaya. Even today the tribes lag behind the general population in terms of electricity availability in their households and are a front runner in case of use of kerosene. Despite numerous efforts, electrification and uninterrupted power supply in these states remains a distant dream.

Table 13
**Comparison of Per Capita Income between the states
of NEI and the India**

Sl. No.	Name of the State	Per Capita Income (2012-13)	Poverty Rate (2011)
1	Assam	42,036	31.98
2	Arunachal Pradesh	77,647	34.67
3	Manipur	36,290	36.89
4	Meghalaya	60,156	11.87
5	Mizoram	54,689 ⁸	20.40
6	Nagaland	59,535	18.88
7	Sikkim	142,625	8.19
8	Tripura	55,004	14.05
	India	68,757	21.92

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI).

Multidimensional poverty was found to be disproportionately dispersed throughout the districts in NER. The multidimensional poverty index (MPI) emphasises the non-income facets of poverty. Assam and Manipur suffer from moderate MPI. The MPI is comparatively low in Tripura and Mizoram. In Mizoram, about one-fifth of the population lives below the poverty line and one-fourth are reported to be multidimensionally poor. The states are deprived of the electricity and LPG supply which also exacerbates their suffering (Bagli, 2017). The least per capita income was found among the persons of Manipur and the highest from Sikkim residents. A similar pattern was found in the case of the poverty rate.

Table 14
**State wise Annual Growth of Gross State Domestic Product
at Constant (2011-12) Prices: (As on 02.08.2021)**

State	% Growth over previous year								
	2012- 13	2013- 14	2014- 15	2015- 16	2016- 17	2017- 18	2018- 19	2019- 20	2020- 21
Arunachal Pradesh	2.14	9.20	16.57	-0.99	4.59	4.57	6.72	7.80	NA
Assam	2.91	4.88	6.92	15.67	5.74	8.83	5.06	2.95	NA
Manipur	0.61	8.64	8.00	7.73	4.01	9.77	2.93	7.11	NA
Meghalaya	2.19	1.83	-2.82	2.47	5.29	3.84	5.12	6.20	-7.52
Mizoram	7.15	16.21	24.59	9.44	10.32	8.55	8.91	12.20	NA
Nagaland	5.68	7.19	4.39	1.82	6.75	5.05	2.60	7.43	NA
Sikkim	2.29	6.07	7.90	9.93	7.15	14.78	5.38	5.77	3.73
Tripura	8.67	9.32	18.17	-0.66	14.00	8.37	11.06	9.40	3.96

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI).

Mizoram has shown a promising improvement in its GSDP in 2019-10 followed by Tripura. The least growth was exhibited by Assam and Sikkim. With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a decline in the GSDP rate. The pandemic has again pushed these states into a state of debt, poverty and dip in income. Several tribals were disproportionately hit by the pandemic as they remained aloof from the assistance from the state for Coronavirus as it does not cover them. During the first phase of the lockdown, about 70,000 tea workers of the Adivasi tea tribe community struggled to obtain one meal a day. Also, 104 tea gardens were closed in the state due to the lockdown which exacerbated their suffering (Chakma, 2020).

Table 15
Unemployment Rate and Worker Population in Northeast*,
2017-18 to 2019-20:

State	Worker Population Ratio			Unemployment Rate		
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Arunachal Pradesh	42.3	40.9	44.3	5.8	7.7	6.7
Assam	43.7	43.4	43.2	7.9	6.7	7.9
Manipur	42.5	44.3	45.5	11.5	9.4	9.5
Meghalaya	62.3	61.8	58.6	1.6	2.7	2.7
Mizoram	46.4	45.6	50.7	10.1	7.0	5.7
Nagaland	32.8	38.1	44.8	21.4	17.4	25.7
Sikkim	58.7	61.1	68.8	3.5	3.1	2.2
Tripura	42.0	41.9	49.6	6.8	10.0	3.2
All India	46.8	47.3	50.9	6.0	5.8	4.8

* 15 years and above

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

The Worker Population Ratio has shown signs of improvement and the highest participation was found in Sikkim followed by Meghalaya. The unemployment rates over the three years have displayed an uneven rise and decline. Nagaland has reported a high rate of unemployment. The reasons are attributed to a mismatch between the education and job requirement and also the limited job opportunities in the state (Yanthan, Sharma & Yadav, 2021).

Table 16
State wise Number of Total Worker, Main and Marginal Worker

State	Total workers			Main worker			Marginal worker		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
Arunachal Pradesh	587657	350273	237384	478721	301109	177612	108936	49164	59772
Assam	11969690	8541560	3428130	8687123	7034642	1652481	3282567	1506918	1775649
Nagaland	974122	547357	426765	741179	442204	298975	232943	105153	127790
Manipur	1159053	665463	493590	855012	554518	300494	304041	110945	193096
Mizoram	486705	290740	195965	415030	263305	151725	71675	27435	44240
Meghalaya	1185619	703709	481910	921575	585520	336055	264044	118189	145855
Tripura	1469521	1045326	424195	1077019	887881	189138	392502	157445	235057
Sikkim	308138	194358	113780	230397	160513	69884	77741	33845	43896

Source: Census of India 2011.

As presented in Table 16 the ‘main worker’ participating in the workforce was found to be the least in Sikkim and Manipur. The participation of women main workers was significantly lower than the males. In the case of ‘Marginal workers’, women participation was higher which shows that women were preferred in temporary and informal work.

8. Schemes and Policies for Scheduled Tribe

Provisions under the constitutions such as Article 15, Article 16, Article 338A and Article 275(1) ensures that these communities are not discriminated or exploited. These provisions are introduced to protect and prohibit any kind of discrimination, deprivation, and unequal treatment, towards the Scheduled tribes and to ensure that they are able to avail equal employment opportunities and reservations, so that the STs of the country are able experience holistic development and so that the responsible authorities work together towards planning for the development of welfare and well-being of the ST.

Apart from these, there is also the Forest Rights Act of 2006 implemented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. The main objective of this act is to not only protect the traditional lifestyle and livelihood of the tribal group but also to recognize the rights of the tribals to legally live and control their forest lands as well as its resources. Further, the Act enables construction of the social infrastructures on the forestlands. For example- schools, shops, water tanks etc. The government in order to ensure that the rights of the ST of NER are not violated and the tribal groups are not exploited, they have provided various schemes and policies for overall development of the tribal population. The following are the list of policies and schemes provided by the Government:

8.1 Tribal Sub Plan (TSP)

The TSP was implemented in the year 1974-1975. The main focus of TSP is to uplift the tribal’s standards of living and to protect them from any kind of exploitation

and oppression. Under this scheme the government attempts to reduce poverty and unemployment through initiatives like encouraging small scale business activities in these areas. In NER this scheme is implemented in 2 of the union territories i.e., Assam, Manipur, Tripura, and Sikkim. However, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram are not included within this TSP scheme as these states have more than 80% of tribal population. For the purpose of ensuring that the TSP functions efficiently, the Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs) was set up during the Fifth Five Year Plan. Currently there are a total of 19 ITDPs in Assam, 5 in Manipur and 4 in Sikkim. Since its implementation there has been some favourable improvement such as in the field of tribal literacy. However, due to several loopholes in the system, most of the times the funds meant for the use of tribal development are being diverted for other personal purposes. This deprives the tribal population from having access to the benefits allocated for them and this is why till today we find that the tribal population of NER in comparison to the rest of the population are lagging far behind in terms of development in various sectors of life.

8.2 Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (VKY)

The Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana was implemented in 2014 by the State government under the supervision of center. It is an approach designed to ensure that the benefits provided by the State and the Central Government schemes reaches the Scheduled Tribes. This also focuses on bridging the gap between the STs and other groups through the improvement in the tribal's living standards, education and health, and by generating sustainable employments. This policy promotes welfare and development of the tribal communities without jeopardizing the rich traditions, culture and heritage of the tribal communities in NER.

8.3 Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR)

The NER due to its geographical location even today, many parts of the region are not able to have access to proper roads, hospitals, schools, etc. In order to address this problem the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DONER) has a particular amount of unutilized funds from the Central Ministry funds called the Central resource Pool. This fund is set aside so that the region does not run out of funds for the infrastructural development in NER. This is closely monitored and supervised by the NLCPR Committee that consist of members from the ministry of DONER, and NITI Aayog. This committee ensures that the funds are used appropriately for the infrastructural development of NER and that the state does not run out of the funds for the same.

9. The Way Forward

The Central Government has been taking various initiatives for the protection, development, and welfare of the tribal population through its various schemes,

policies, and provisions. However, most of these schemes and policies exclude states that have a larger concentration of tribal population, especially the NER. Due to lack of supervision, the proper implementation of the schemes and flow of benefits have been severely compromised. The government in order to uplift the tribal population they must ensure that all these schemes and policies are accessible to other NER states through strict monitoring and supervision of the effects and its efficiency of the schemes.

Though there have been some improvements over the last few decades in terms of educational status among the ST in the NER, unfortunately the figures of literacy rate, GER, and Drop-out rates remains pale in comparison with the all-India averages. Therefore, there is a dire need for the government to employ an exclusive policy and schemes oriented towards upliftment of the educational systems for the ST in NER.

The practice of shifting cultivation among the tribes is difficult to eliminate but must be urgently stopped to preserve the environment. This can be done by opening up alternative means of livelihood for the tribal population. One such way is to develop the NER as an 'organic hub' of fruits, vegetables, and spices. NER's share of the country's spices production is 11.1 %. This region has a niche market for kiwis, passion fruit, and pineapple but suffers huge wastage due to weak cold chain logistics and poor growing and harvesting practices. As a part of the recent initiatives taken by the government to encourage Bamboo, an industrial park and bio-refining plant based on bamboo have been set up in Assam. The NER is gifted with bamboo and has immense potential for building an industrial base (Singh, 2021). Products of Bamboo like stools, baskets, cutlery, toothbrush, and bottles are gaining popularity. The textiles can be given a boost by ensuring that the tribal-made products are promoted across the country and globally. Woollen shawls, Sweaters, strolls, jackets and other traditional clothing are of excellent material and liked by tourists.

Skills training for textile designing and weaving will help to enhance the earning capacity of people, design work, and handloom up-gradation. There is huge scope for the establishment of essential oil-based industries such as cinnamon leaf oil, agarwood oil, lemongrass oil, turpentine oil, citronil oil, and others. These oils are used in soaps, perfumes, varnishes, cosmetics, paints, detergents, rubber, pharmaceuticals, and confectionaries. Turmeric is also widely used in cosmetic industries. Plants can be used to produce herbal medicines, cosmetics, and perfumeries. This will lead to the establishment of food processing industries in each case. The scenic surroundings also provide a huge potential to develop in the area of the tourism industry (Mohan, 2003). The beautiful waterfalls, lakes, mountains, and wildlife are major attractions for tourists.

The possibilities to harness investment avenues using private investors, financial institutions, and internal development agencies to pitch in money to build the

infrastructure involving the roads, railways, communication, and waterway. The structure with good sustainability to carry heavy goods and machinery will help to transport goods for the setting up of new power plants, distribution networks, etc. The set-up of a new trade corridor connecting the neighbouring states and countries will largely boost the political relations among countries and improve trade (Anbumozhi, Kutani & Lama, 2019). The state also experiences long power cuts. Thus, there is a need to increase the power generation capacity to meet the rising demand for electricity. Promoting the NER as a potential investment avenue will help to attract FDI which will help to improve the condition of the states.

Therefore, there is a need to bring the attention of the policy makers, state authorities and the administrative towards the tribal situation of the NER of India. The planners must orient their new developmental policies and planning taking into consideration the problems, cultures, tradition and interest of the tribals. They must be given the rights to live in their own way and the economic developmental processes must ensure that it does not cause further disruptions and trouble, and must be carried out in such a way that the status quo of the ST in NER is maintained and protected. The rapid transformation of the NER by harnessing the agriculture, power, handicrafts, handloom, industries potential will significantly contribute to attaining the SDGs and also rise to be an active engine for India's development.

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Mapping Village, Employment and Social Security in Rural Manipur

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For sociologist and social anthropologist, villages are invaluable observation centres where she or he can study in detail social processes and problems. The village profoundly influenced the behaviour pattern of its inhabitants as it is not only an important social unit but also an administrative unit. An abundance of micro-studies on rural India has already been coming from all sides; macro-issues have been extensively studied and discussed in both government and academic research. This paper attempts to integrate and analyse research results from a set of case studies of villages in Manipur to highlight rural development in the state of Manipur, one of the North Eastern states of India.

Keywords: *Rural development, Village, Manipur, Social security, Employment*

1. Introduction

Manipur has a geographical area of 22,327 sq. kms. which constitutes 0.7 percent of the total land surface of India. 90 percent of the total geographical area of the state i.e. 20,089 sq. kms. is covered by hills, the remaining area is a small valley covering only 2,238 sq. kms. and accounting for only one-tenth of the total area of the state. According to final figures of the 2011 population census, the population of the state is 28.56 lakhs registering a population density of 128 per sq.km. Population of Manipur constitutes nearly 0.24 percent of the total population of India. The population has increased by 5.62 lakhs during the decade 2001 to 2011. The sex ratio for the state as a whole has improved from 974 females per 1000 males in 2001 to 985 females per 1000 males in 2011. The population growth rate of Manipur is found to be higher than that of India. The population growth rate (decadal) of Manipur in 2011 is 24.50 percent as against All India growth rate of 17.70 percent. Out of the 28.56 lakh population, 3.41 percent are scheduled castes communities and 40.88 percent are of scheduled tribes.

Manipur lives in villages. The rural population constitutes about 70.79 percent of the total population according to the Census, 2011. Enhancement in the quality of life of the economically weaker sections of the society has been one of the basic objectives of development planning of the state. Agriculture sector has a vital place in the economy of the state. It contributes a major share to the State Domestic Product. 52.81 percent of the workers in Manipur are engaged as cultivators and Agricultural labourers. However, the performance of agriculture in the state

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mainly depends on timely rainfall and weather conditions. Permanent cultivation is generally practised in the valley districts while terrace cultivation is practised in some pockets of the hills where jhuming or shifting cultivation is widely adopted in most of the hills.

Due to ever-increasing number of educated job seekers including technical and professional job-seekers, the problem of unemployment is continuing to be a matter of serious concern to Manipur's economy. In totality, among the number of job seekers registered (ended December, 2016) in the employment exchange of the state, the number of applicants who are matriculate constitute the highest with 32.33 percent followed by under matric with 29.43 percent, intermediate with 20.13 percent and graduate with 14.01 percent.

2. Methodology

For sociologist and social anthropologist, villages are invaluable observation centres where she or he can study in detail social processes and problems. The village profoundly influenced the behaviour pattern of its inhabitants as it is not only an important social unit but also an administrative unit. An abundance of micro-studies on rural India has already been coming from all sides; macro-issues have been extensively studied and discussed in both government and academic research. This paper attempts to integrate and analyse research results from a set of village studies of Manipur. As a village selection method, random sampling was used. Random sampling applies to a number of selection methods, but with a known probability of selection, in which samples are selected by probability. Prior training in the fundamentals of statistical techniques and field study methods was given to the trainees.

There were two stages in the socio-economic study of each village: data collection and review of the data collected. Data was collected at two levels after selecting the village based primarily on random sampling methods but also often on administrative convenience factors. Data for the entire village was collected at district/block and village level from existing official records available to the administration. A complete list of households was collected from the Gram Panchayat for the preparation of data. For the selection of households to be interviewed, random sampling was used. The 2011 Census Report and the District Gazetteer were used to gather the necessary supporting material. Various aspects of rural life such as demography, agriculture, economy, rural infrastructure, social structure, health, education, poverty alleviation programs and the Panchayati Raj system were the focus of the study.

This study is based on case studies of 10 villages. The villages are spread across the Hill and Valley regions of Manipur. There are three villages from the three valley districts of the state, namely Top Dusara of Imphal East district, Chakpa Phayeng of Imphal West and Khekman of Thoubal district. Seven villages under the hill

districts of the state are covered in this study. Four villages, namely M. Songgel, Tuibong, D. Phailien and Dongjang are from the hill district of Churachandpur. Two villages, namely Shirui and Lunghar and one village, namely Chawainamei Khunou are from the hill districts of Ukhrul and Senapati respectively. To predict the condition of the village of Manipur on various socio-economic indicators, the case study method was implemented.

3. Distribution of workers and non-workers of Manipur

According to 2011 Census, out of the total population of Manipur, 46 percent are workers and the remaining 54 percent are non-workers. The proportion of main workers and marginal workers are 34 percent and 12 percent respectively. Table 1 presents the workers and non-workers of Manipur during the census years 1991, 2001 and 2011. It is observed that the total number of workers in the state has an increasing trend with 42.18 percent in 1991, 43.62 percent in 2001 and 45.68 percent in 2011. However, the gap between the male and female workers has increased from the year 1991 to 2011 (6.31 percent in 1991 to 9.1 percent in 2001 and 11.52 percent in 2011). Another trend is that the number of male main workers are higher than the female main workers in all the three years. But, the number of female marginal workers outnumbered male marginal workers.

Table 1
Distribution of workers and non-workers of Manipur

Category	1991	% to Total	2001 *	% to Total	2011	% to Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Main Workers:						
Male	4,14,812	44.21	4,30,227	39.27	6,15,135	42.76
Female	2,93,471	32.65	2,29,137	21.39	3,59,028	25.33
Person	7,08,283	38.55	6,59,364	30.43	9,74,163	34.11
Marginal Workers:						
Male	9,958	1.06	96,989	8.85	1,24,273	8.64
Female	56,663	6.31	1,88,860	17.63	2,06,174	14.55
Person	66,621	3.63	2,85,849	13.19	3,30,447	11.57
Total Workers:						
Male	4,24,770	45.27	5,27,216	48.12	7,39,408	51.40
Female	3,50,134	38.96	4,17,997	39.02	5,65,202	39.88
Person	7,74,904	42.18	9,45,213	43.62	13,04,610	45.68
Non-Workers:						
Male	5,13,589	54.73	5,68,418	51.88	6,99,178	48.60
Female	5,48,656	61.40	6,53,157	60.98	8,52,006	60.12

Category	1991	% to Total	2001 *	% to Total	2011	% to Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Person	10,62,245	57.82	12,21,575	56.38	15,51,184	54.32
Total Population:						
Male	9,38,359	100.00	10,95,634	100.00	14,38,586	100.00
Female	8,98,790	100.00	10,71,154	100.00	14,17,208	100.00
Person	18,37,149	100.00	21,66,788	100.00	28,55,794	100.00

* Excluding Mao Maram, Paomata and Purul Sub-division of Senapati District.

Source: Office of the Registrar General, India.

The district-wise distribution of workers according to economic classification as per 2011 Census is presented in Table 2 and Table 3. It is observed that 52.8 percent and 7 percent of the total workers in the state are engaged in agricultural related activities (cultivators and agricultural labourers) and household industry respectively.

Table 2
Distribution of Workers by Category in 2011 Census

District/State	Main + Marginal Workers				
	Total	Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Household Industry	Other Workers
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1. Senapati	233622	175127	11210	2185	42307
2. Tamenglong	70675	48849	1924	1710	18192
3. Churachandpur	122655	64834	8282	5067	44472
4. Chandel	76238	43255	8315	3040	21628
5. Ukhrul	87929	56815	3852	2233	25029
6. Imphal East	194848	36355	20250	21826	116417
7. Imphal West	213387	37107	12870	19918	143492
8. Bishnupur	109937	34358	15109	11567	48903
9. Thoubal	195319	77331	33106	21017	63865
Manipur	1304610	574031	114918	91356	524305

Source: Office of the Registrar General, India.

Of the total population of 28.56 lakhs of the state as per 2011 census, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes population constitutes 40.88 percent (11,67,422 persons) and 3.41 percent (97,325 persons) respectively. The majority of the scheduled tribe people live in the hill districts of the state and on the other hand, the scheduled castes people mostly reside in the valley districts. The distribution of total working force in the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes are indicated

in the Table 4. Out of the total scheduled tribe workers, 67 percent are cultivator, 6 percent are agricultural labourers and 3 percent are engaged with household industries. While 39 percent, 13.5 percent and 7.3 percent of the total scheduled caste workers are cultivator, agricultural labourers and those engaged with household industries respectively.

Table 4

Number of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by Category of Workers in Manipur, 2011 Census

Category of Workers	Scheduled Tribe	Scheduled Caste
(1)	(2)	(3)
(a) Cultivator	3,71,498	17,374
(b) Agricultural Labourer	32,752	6,029
(c) Household Industries	16,103	3,257
(d) Other workers	1,33,445	18,024
Total	5,53,798	44,684

Source: Population Census 2011, Registrar General of India.

As per the final report of the 6th Economic Census (EC), 2013, there are 2,29,838 establishments in Manipur as against 1,04,732 in 2005. Out of total number of 2,29,838 establishments found in Manipur, 62.7 percent are in rural areas and 37.3 percent in the urban areas. There are 57,004 establishments engaged in Handicrafts/ Handloom activities in Manipur according to the 6th Economic Census. Total number of persons working in all the establishments in Manipur is found to be 4,09,617. Out of the total workers, 61.3 percent are found to be working in the establishments operating in the rural areas while 38.8 percent are in the urban areas. Table 5 provides number of establishments and persons employed.

Table 5

Number of Establishments & Persons Employed according to 6th EC, 2013

District/ State	Total Number of Establishments				Number of persons employed on last working day		
	Rural	Urban	Combined	Handicraft/ Handloom	Rural	Urban	Combined
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1. Senapati	9198	339	9537	1094	22161	1011	23172
2. Tamenglong	3008	645	3653	358	8656	2282	10938
3. Churachandpur	22362	154	22516	4466	39333	221	39554
4. Chandel	7519	2592	10111	1145	14193	4149	18342
5. Ukhrul	7621	1483	9104	1204	15750	3291	19041
6. Imphal East	27007	18339	45346	14061	41922	33250	75172

District/ State	Total Number of Establishments				Number of persons employed on last working day		
	Rural	Urban	Combined	Handicraft/ Handloom	Rural	Urban	Combined
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
7. Imphal West	16699	35084	51783	12024	31653	68430	100083
8. Bishnupur	20251	11593	31844	8036	26463	21405	47868
9. Thoubal	30431	15513	45944	14616	50742	24705	75447
State Total	144096	85742	229838	57004	250873	158744	409617

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Manipur (Final Report of the 6th EC, 2013).

The district-wise percentage of Establishments and Persons Employed on last working day according to the 6th Economic Census in the rural and urban areas of Manipur is shown in Table 6. Among the districts, Imphal West District has the highest number of establishment (22.53 percent) and employment (24.43 percent) while the least is recorded in Tamenglong District in respect of both establishment (1.59 percent) as well as employment (2.67 percent).

Table 6
Percentage of Establishments and Persons Employed on Last Working Day

District/ State	Establishment			% Share of District in total no. of establishments	Persons Employed			% Share of District in total no. of persons employed
	Rural	Urban	Combined		Rural	Urban	Combined	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
1. Senapati	96.45	3.55	100.0	4.15	95.64	4.36	100.0	5.66
2. Tamenglong	82.34	17.66	100.0	1.59	79.14	20.86	100.0	2.67
3. Churachandpur	99.32	0.68	100.0	9.80	99.44	0.56	100.0	9.66
4. Chandel	74.36	25.64	100.0	4.40	77.38	22.62	100.0	4.48
5. UTHRUL	83.71	16.29	100.0	3.96	82.72	17.28	100.0	4.65
6. Imphal East	59.56	40.44	100.0	19.73	55.77	44.23	100.0	18.35
7. Imphal West	32.25	67.75	100.0	22.53	31.63	68.37	100.0	24.43
8. Bishnupur	63.59	36.41	100.0	13.85	55.28	44.72	100.0	11.69
9. Thoubal	66.23	33.77	100.0	19.99	67.26	32.74	100.0	18.42
State Total	62.69	37.31	100.0	100.00	61.25	38.75	100.0	100.00

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Manipur.

4. Status of Economic Activities of the Surveyed Villages

In Top Dusara village, out of total population, 1972 were engaged in work activities. 72.4 percent of workers describe their work as Main Work (Employment or Earning more than 6 Months) while 27.6 percent were involved in Marginal activity providing livelihood for less than 6 months. Of 1427 workers engaged in Main Work, 243 were cultivators (owner or co-owner) while 25 were agricultural labourers.

Table 7
Working Population of Top Dusara Village as per Census 2011

Category	Total	Male	Female
Main Workers	1427	974	453
Cultivators	243	202	41
Agriculture Labourer	25	23	2
Household Industries	89	14	75
Other Workers	1070	735	335
Marginal Workers	545	172	373
Non-Working	2,567	1072	1495

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Manipur.

The economy of Top Dusara village is mainly agriculture based which is not yet commercialized due to inadequate irrigation facilities, lack of improved farming techniques. There are no major industrial activities except cottage and small-scale industries. Predominant economic activities prevalent in the district include agriculture, handloom, wool-knitting, cane and bamboo works, pottery, black smithy and carpentry, retail trade/ small business. The industrial activities are concentrated in Small Scale Industries (SSI), cottage and house-hold sectors. Regarding seasonal nature of agricultural works, MGNREGA is a real boon to the villagers. They no longer have to go to nearby Imphal (Capital city) area as MGNREGA has provided works during the non-agricultural seasons. The scheme has certainly made a positive impact towards the employment and economic condition of the people. As for economic activities of women, the women weavers of the village have a name since ancient times for weaving of "Phige" phanek, a necessity of the Meitei bride. These women are financially independent as the cloth is of great demand. However, with competition from women of the neighbouring villages, they fear of losing some of their customers.

In Chakpa Phayeng village out of total population, 1,168 were engaged in work activities. 75.2 percent of workers describe their work as Main Work (Employment or Earning more than 6 Months) while 24.8 percent were involved in Marginal activity providing livelihood for less than 6 months. Of 1,168 workers engaged in Main Work, 490 were cultivators (owner or co-owner) while 128 were Agricultural labourer.

Table 8
Working Population of Chakpa Phayeng village as per Census 2011

Category	Total	Male	Female
Main Workers	878	599	279
<i>Cultivators</i>	490	321	169
<i>Agriculture Labourer</i>	128	106	22
<i>Household Industries</i>	21	2	19
<i>Other Workers</i>	239	170	69
Marginal Workers	290	58	232
Non-Working	1,560	677	883

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Manipur.

There are a few government employees and some people are engaged in private companies. Most of the people are farmers. So, the main occupation of Chakpa Phayeng Village is agriculture. Kitchen gardening and rearing of domestic animals like cows, pigs, hens, ducks etc. are very common for almost all the households. Most of the villagers are engaged in MGNREGA. Pig rearing is also undertaken by the households. But this is done at the small scale.

In Khekman village out of total population, 2,869 were engaged in work activities. 72 percent of workers describe their work as Main Work (Employment or Earning more than 6 Months) while 28 percent were involved in Marginal activity providing livelihood for less than 6 months. Of 2,869 workers engaged in Main Work, 652 were cultivators (owner or co-owner) while 164 were Agricultural labourer.

Table 9
Working Population of Khekman village as per Census 2011

Category	Total	Male	Female
Main Workers	2,065	1,392	673
<i>Cultivators</i>	652	562	90
<i>Agriculture Labourer</i>	164	81	83
<i>Household Industries</i>	305	54	251
<i>Other Workers</i>	944	695	249
Marginal Workers	804	310	494
Non-Working	4,288	1,945	2,343

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Manipur.

In Chowainamei Khunou village out of total population, 2,012 were engaged in work activities. 86.4 percent of workers describe their work as Main Work (Employment or Earning more than 6 Months) while 13.6 percent were involved in Marginal activity providing livelihood for less than 6 months. Of 2,012 workers

engaged in Main Work, 1,491 were cultivators (owner or co-owner) while 6 were Agricultural labourer.

Table 10
Working Population of Chowainamei Khunou village
as per Census 2011

Category	Total	Male	Female
Main Workers	1,738	808	930
<i>Cultivators</i>	1,491	640	851
<i>Agriculture Labourer</i>	6	3	3
<i>Household Industries</i>	20	8	12
<i>Other Workers</i>	221	157	64
Marginal Workers	274	145	129
Non-Working	1,184	676	508

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Manipur.

People are majorly engaged in agriculture and earn livelihood from it. People are also engaged in MGNREGS. The MGNREGS rate is Rs.190 per day while the local rate of unskilled and skilled labor is Rs. 200 and Rs. 300 respectively. Still people opt for MGNREGS when there is no option for a skilled or unskilled labour or in lean season. The other work in which the villagers are employed are carpentry, weaving, poultry, piggery, construction works etc. Women folks are mostly helping their male counterparts in cultivation of crops and handloom weaving and handicraft adding to family income. The rice is grown during kharif season (May to October), while vegetables are harvested twice in a year giving way to more farm related employment. A few villagers are employed in timber and firewood business with abundance of tree growth in the hills. Few people are engaged in government jobs from the village. Some have migrated to the other places like Imphal and other parts of the nearby states for similar jobs.

Majority of the villagers of Shirui village are engaged in agriculture and earn their livelihood from it. Many of them also work and earn their daily wages under MGNREGS. Almost 50 percent of the households have one of their family members working as government employees and most of them are teachers. There is tremendous increase in educated unemployed youth due to the lack of employment opportunities in Manipur. Womenfolk are mostly helping their male counterparts in cultivation of crops and handloom weaving and handicrafts form favourite pastime besides adding into the family income. There is hardly any household solely dependent on salaried income and has found one or more economic activities to augment family income.

In Lunghar village out of total population, 1,280 were engaged in work activities. 59.6 percent of workers describe their work as Main Work (Employment or Earning more than 6 Months) while 40.4 percent were involved in Marginal

activity providing livelihood for less than 6 months. Of 1,280 workers engaged in Main Work, 482 were cultivators (owner or co-owner) while 6 were Agricultural labourer.

Table 11
Working Population of Lunghar village as per Census 2011

Category	Total	Male	Female
Main Workers	763	364	399
Cultivators	482	189	293
Agriculture Labourer	6	4	2
Household Industries	11	3	8
Other Workers	264	168	96
Marginal Workers	517	260	257
Non-Working	637	319	318

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Manipur.

People of D. Phailien village do not practice agriculture because there is no land for cultivation. As a result, people of this village are engaged in different activities such as carpenters, blacksmith, rickshaw pullers, auto drivers etc. If they don't get work in the vicinity of village they migrate to other district of Manipur in search of work. Agriculture, forestry, and smaller piggery farm are major livelihoods for villagers of Dongjang. The majority of households are engaged in agriculture and local liquor production. Poultry also help in improving the socio-economic status of the village. Few people are also employed in the government service. In Dongjang village out of total population, 233 were engaged in work activities. 95.3 percent of workers describe their work as Main Work (Employment or Earning more than 6 Months) while 4.7 percent were involved in Marginal activity providing livelihood for less than 6 months. Of 233 workers engaged in Main Work, 175 were cultivators (owner or co-owner) while 6 were agricultural labourers.

Table 12
Working Population of Dongjang village as per Census 2011

Category	Total	Male	Female
Main Workers	222	98	124
Cultivators	175	70	105
Agriculture Labourer	6	2	4
Household Industries	41	26	15
Other Workers	11	6	5
Marginal Workers	269	148	121
Non-Working	222	98	124

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Manipur.

In M. Songgel village out of total population, 400 were engaged in work activities. 62.5 percent of workers describe their work as Main Work (Employment or Earning more than 6 Months) while 37.5 percent were involved in Marginal activity providing livelihood for less than 6 months. Of 400 workers engaged in Main Work, 143 were cultivators (owner or co-owner) while 15 were agricultural labourer.

Table 13: Working Population of M. Songgel village as per Census 2011

Category	Total	Male	Female
Main Workers	250	195	55
<i>Cultivators</i>	143	117	26
<i>Agriculture Labourer</i>	15	8	7
<i>Household Industries</i>	4	3	1
<i>Other Workers</i>	88	67	21
Marginal Workers	150	17	133
Non-Working	735	311	424

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Manipur.

In Tuibong village out of total population, 3,041 were engaged in work activities. 72.5 percent of workers describe their work as Main Work (Employment or Earning more than 6 Months) while 27.5 percent were involved in Marginal activity providing livelihood for less than 6 months. Of 3,041 workers engaged in Main Work, 303 were cultivators (owner or co-owner) while 36 were Agricultural labourer.

Table 14
Working Population of Tuibong village as per Census 2011

Category	Total	Male	Female
Main Workers	2,206	1,825	381
<i>Cultivators</i>	303	229	74
<i>Agriculture Labourer</i>	36	24	12
<i>Household Industries</i>	76	39	37
<i>Other Workers</i>	1,791	1,533	258
Marginal Workers	835	333	502
Non-Working	5,044	2,143	2,901

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Manipur.

5. Anti-Poverty and Other Rural Development Programmes

Poverty is the root cause of all other problems. It is synonymous with poor quality of life, deprivation, malnutrition, illiteracy and low human resources capacity. The

eradication of poverty has been an integral component of the strategy for economic development. Defining a poverty line is the first step in estimating poverty. It is cut-off line that separates the poor from non-poor. The percentages of population below poverty line are presented in Table 69.

Table 15:
Number and percentage of population below poverty line in Manipur
 (No. in lakhs)

Year	Rural		Urban		Combined	
	No. of persons	Percentage	No. of persons	Percentage	No. of persons	Percentage
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1993-94	6.33	45.01	0.47	7.73	6.80	33.78
1999-00	6.53	40.04	0.66	7.47	7.19	28.54
2004-05	3.76	22.30	0.20	3.30	3.95	17.30
2011-12	7.45	38.80	2.78	32.59	10.22	36.89

Source: Planning Commission, Govt. of India.

According to the 61st Round of the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) Sample Survey (July 2004 to June, 2005), the poverty ratio (on a 30-day recall basis) fell to 17.3 percent in 2004-05 from 28.54 percent in 1999-2000. It declined from 40.04 percent to 22.3 percent in rural areas and from 7.47 percent to 3.3 percent in urban areas. Thus, the incidence of poverty expressed as a percentage of people living below the poverty line has steadily declined from 50.01 percent in 1973-74 to 17.3 percent in 2004-05. The number of persons below poverty line in 2004-05 was 3.95 lakhs as against 5.86 lakhs in 1973-74. However, in 2011-12, the percentage of persons below poverty line stood at 36.89. The number of people below poverty line is 7.45 lakhs (38.8 percent) and 2.78 lakhs (32.59 percent) in the rural and urban Manipur respectively according to 68th Round (2011-12) of NSS. Thus, the incidence of poverty is higher in the rural areas than the urban. It is important to note that the percentage of population living below the poverty line in Manipur is much higher with 36.9 percent than that of the country which is 21.9 percent as shown in Table 16. This implies that the issue of poverty in Manipur is very serious that needs to be alleviated with the implementation of various anti-poverty schemes.

Table 16
Percentage of population below poverty line, India vis-à-vis Manipur

Year	Rural		Urban		Combined	
	Manipur	India	Manipur	India	Manipur	India
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1973-74	52.7	56.4	37.1	49.2	50.0	54.9
1977-78	59.8	53.1	37.6	47.4	54.8	51.8

Year	Rural		Urban		Combined	
	Manipur	India	Manipur	India	Manipur	India
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1983-84	42.6	45.6	26.4	42.2	38.1	44.8
1987-88	39.4	39.1	17.3	40.1	32.9	39.3
1993-94	45.0	37.3	7.7	32.4	33.8	36.0
1999-00	40.0	27.1	7.5	23.6	28.5	26.1
2004-05	22.3	28.3	3.3	25.7	17.3	27.5
2009-10	47.4	33.8	46.4	20.9	47.1	29.8
2011-12	38.8	25.7	32.6	13.7	36.9	21.9

Source: Planning Commission, Govt. of India.

The Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), which was launched on 1 April, 1999 with disbanded erstwhile schemes viz., IRDP, DWCRA, TRYSEM, MWS, SITRA, GKY etc., was restructured into the NRLM. With the launching of the NRLM in June 2011 at the national level, the NRLM has since been renamed as Aajeevika whose mission is to reduce poverty by enabling the poor households to access gainful self-employed and skilled wage employment opportunities resulting in appreciable improvement in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis through building strong grassroots institution of the poor.

The scheme is being implemented in Manipur as a centrally sponsored scheme on a cost sharing ratio of 90:10 between the centre and state. The Manipur State Rural Livelihood Mission (MSRLM) was constituted under the Manipur Societies Registration Act, 1989 and programme implementation started in 2015. Several awareness programme on NRLM have been conducted in four blocks i.e, in Machi and Tengnoupal blocks of Chandel District and Sawombung and Keirao Bitra blocks of Imphal East District. These 4 (four) blocks are implementation as Resource Blocks.

In March 2016, MSRLM entered a tripartite MoU with Orvakal Mandal Podupu Laxmi Ikya Sangham (OMPLIS), in Andhra Pradesh and Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) to support and strengthen its capacity by providing technical assistance in implementation of resource block strategy. Further, it also facilitates continuous flow of high-quality CRP (Community Resource Persons), Facilitator cum Translator and training cum field immersion assistance from OMPLIS through SERP to MSRLM.

6. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin (PMAY-G)

In view of Government's commitment to provide "Housing for All" by 2022, the scheme of IAY had been restructured into Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin

(PMAY-G) and launched on 20th November, 2016 to provide pucca houses with basic amenities to all houseless households & households living in kutchha houses by 2022. The immediate objective is to cover 1 crore households living in kutchha houses by 2018-19.

The frame for identification and selection of beneficiaries is the Socio-Economic Caste Census, 2011. The district-wise number of beneficiaries under PMAY-G in Manipur during the year 2017-18 & 2018-19 are shown below:

Table 17
District-wise number of beneficiaries under PMAY-G in Manipur

District	2017-18				2018-19			
	SC	ST	Minority	Others	SC	ST	Minority	Others
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
1. Senapati	0	0	0	0	8	793	3	208
2. Tamenglong	0	0	0	0	0	862	1	0
3. Churachandpur	0	8	0	0	2	1396	16	36
4. Chandel	0	17	0	0	2	857	5	1
5. Ukhrul	0	0	0	0	1	284	2	0
6. Imphal East	1	0	0	0	115	49	271	408
7. Imphal West	0	0	0	0	32	2	22	257
8. Bishnupur	0	0	0	0	19	6	71	232
9. Thoubal	2	0	0	38	37	3	366	922
Total	3	25	0	38	216	4252	757	2064

SC: Scheduled Caste, ST: Scheduled Tribe

Source: Department of RD & PR, Manipur.

The MGNREGS formerly known as National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is a new and unique job scheme introduced by the Government of India to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work to enhance livelihood security in rural areas in a financial year. The scheme is implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) on cost sharing basis between the Centre and State in the ratio of 90:10.

The MGNREGS was launched initially on 13th April 2006 at District Headquarter, Tamenglong by distributing Job Cards to registered applicants. During 2007-08, Chandel and Churachandpur districts have also been covered while in 2008-09, Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, Bishnupur, Senapati and Ukhrul have also been covered.

As required under the MGNREGS, the Government of Manipur has formulated a scheme called the Manipur Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MREGS). The permissible works under the scheme are as given below.

- (i) Water conservation and water harvesting;
- (ii) Drought proofing (including afforestation and tree plantation);
- (iii) Irrigation Canals including micro and minor irrigation works;
- (iv) Provision of irrigation facility to land owned by households belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes or to land of beneficiaries of land reforms or that of the beneficiaries under the Indira Awaas Yojana of the Government of India.
- (v) Renovation of traditional water bodies including desilting of tanks;
- (vi) Land Development;
- (vii) Flood control and protection works including drainage in water logged areas;
- (viii) Rural connectivity to provide all weather access; and work which may be notified by the Central Government in consultation with the State Government.
- ix) Construction of Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Sewa Kendra as Knowledge Resource Centre at the Block level and as Gram Panchayat Bhawan at the Gram Panchayat level;
- x) Agriculture related works, such as, NADEP composting, vermin-composting, liquid bio-manures;
- xi) Livestock related works, such as, poultry shelter, goat shelter, construction of pucca floor, urine tank and fodder trough for cattle shed, azolla as cattle-feed supplement;
- xii) Fisheries related works, such as, fisheries in seasonal water bodies on public land;
- xiii) Works in coastal areas, such as, fish drying yards, belt vegetation;
- xiv) Rural drinking water related works, such as, soak pits, recharge pits;
- xv) Rural sanitation related works, such as, individual household latrines, schooltoilet units, anganwadi toilets, solid and liquid waste management;
- xvi) Construction of anganwadi centre
- xvii) Construction of playfields
- xviii) Any other work which may be notified by the Central Government in consultation with the State Government.

The achievement of the MGNREGS during 2017-18 & 2018-19 are shown in the Table 18 below. It is interesting to note that the average number of days provided employment under MGNREGS in the state in 2017-18 was 12.47 and it was 22.88 in the year 2018-19.

Table 18
Employment generated under the MGNREGS

Sl. No.	District	2017-18		2018-19	
		Cumulative No. of HH provided employment	Average nos. of days provided employment	Cumulative No. of HH provided employment	Average nos. of days provided employment
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1	Senapati	75942	10.29	76692	20.87
2	Tamenglong	30089	14.26	31348	14.15
3	Churachandpur	61397	11.31	56161	21.94
4	Chandel	34459	14.32	34735	19.96
5	Ukhrul	46429	9.17	45641	19.95
6	Imphal East	80106	11.25	104646	25.37
7	Imphal West	53301	13.58	55229	24.36
8	Bishnupur	47061	13.72	49739	27.66
9	Thoubal	62242	16.10	58851	25.18
	Total	491026	12.47	513042	22.88

Source: Department of RD & PR, Manipur.

7. Status of Anti-Poverty Programmes in the Surveyed Villages

In Top Dusara village, most of the SHGs have got assistance from SGSY up to 2.5 lakhs and the stakeholders have expanded their business in a profitable manner. As for IAY, the beneficiaries are selected through the Gram Sabha and moreover AWAAS-SOFT developed at the district level has been a great help in making the waitlist of beneficiaries. The Gram Panchayat has an important role in the implementation of MGNREGS. Its bank account is used in the transaction of MGNREGA & Finance Commissions funds. The Gram Panchayat also plays a key role in issuing the Utilization Certificate for the Public Distribution System received at the village. The development in connectivity, drainage system, irrigational facilities, and the drinking water availability etc. which are seen in the recent times has been the fruit of the proper implementation of these schemes.

Table 19
Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Top Dusara Village

Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Top Dusara Village				
Ward	MGNREGS Beneficiaries	IAY Beneficiaries	Old Age Pension Beneficiaries	SGSY Beneficiaries
1	164	1	13	12
2	152	15	15	4

Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Top Dusara Village				
Ward	MGNREGS Beneficiaries	IAY Beneficiaries	Old Age Pension Beneficiaries	SGSY Beneficiaries
3	181	22	--	6
4	169	5	10	10
5	186	1	20	--
6	191	--	25	7
7	143	11	14	7
Total	1186	55	97	46

Source: Field Study

The MGNREGA was implemented in the year 2008 in the Chakpa Phayeng Village. The total number of job card holders in the Chakpa Phayeng Village is 1,937. Analysis of the various types of registers maintained by the Gram Panchayat is given below:

Table 20
Types of Registers Maintained by the Gram Panchayat

Register	Information Maintained	Yes/No
Register No. 1	Registration of Job Card Register	Yes
Register No. 2	Receipt and Expenditure	Yes
Register No. 3	Household Employment Register	Yes
Register No. 4	Job Card Stock Register	Yes

In the valley district of Manipur, rural development programmes are implemented by the gram panchayat. However, Churachandpur being hilly district, there is no system of gram panchayat in D. Phailien village. Most of the rural development schemes are implemented in coordination with the village chief. As part of the MGNREGS, work is allotted to the people as and when there is demand for work. Villagers possess job card in this village. Releasing of fund from the state government is a big problem. In the previous year, MGNREGS work was taken up only for 20 days in D. Phailien village. The income from 20 days is a very small amount.

There is one self-help group under the National Rural Livelihood Mission in the village consisting of 20 women. This group is in existence for the last 12 years. It manufactured soap and detergent for the buyers. It has been observed that women of the self-help group spend too much of their money on feasts and festivities. There should be proper training for them on financial saving and asset management. Self Help Group in D. Phailien village still requires hand holding. Women should be trained to take up those activities which would generate employment for the villagers. Similarly, the scheme called IRDP is also not very effective in this village.

The scheme faces its own problems of backward and forward linkages. No scope for horticulture in this village as there is no land for that. Similarly, self-help group also face the problem of absence of market infrastructure to sell its products.

While doing field study in Shirui village, it was noticed that there is no proper survey done to estimate BPL families and the BPL list is finalised on a rough estimate with the help of village authority and partner NGO. Almost every poverty alleviation programme of national level is currently under implementation in the village. The MGNREGS was implemented from the year 2008-09 as Ukhrul is one of the third phase districts. The village has 273 job card holders. In the previous year, the works undertaken were drainage work, inter-village road, pucca culvert, construction of cluster centre, afforestation and retaining wall. Village authority is responsible for the execution of work. The MGNREGS has proved to be a great relief for people in distress as they are able to plan their works and to augment their meagre income. With direct fund transfer to VA a/c, this has further reduced scope for diversion of money to non-social actors thus making money readily available to the beneficiaries in time. Still there is no guarantee of 100 percent to the beneficiaries as chances of cut by VA are always there in want of effective monitoring with the helpless beneficiaries fearing to oppose the VA. The scheme has worked wonders as far as economic security of masses is concerned as despite all the cuts, they are getting at least some money to spend. Women has come up in a great way in managing household budget with the wages paid under MGNREGS and thinking of future of the forthcoming generations, they are getting their children enrolled in schools. The scheme has proved to be a great binding force for the people in this insurgency marred part of our country thus putting confidence to government especially the district administration.

The Shirui village has four SHGs constituted exclusively by women. However, due to poor fund allocation in the district there is only one group which is selected under SGSY. The selected Ynagmiochon SHG was formed on 8 April, 2001 and its bank account was opened on 6 October, 2005 in United Bank of India branch in Ukhrul district. It meets monthly with members making a monthly contribution of Rs. 40 which is the monthly savings by each member. All members of the SHGs are not well-trained in resource management and are in learning by doing mode. Defaulters for the loans availed are rare as there is peer pressure and moral responsibility added to in this closely knit society. United Bank of India, the lone bank in Ukhrul district is reluctant in funding these SHGs due to insufficient staff, lack of facilities and guarantee of repayment. SHG members are quite optimistic of self-sufficiency provided they avail credit facilities without any hassles along with proper training and market linkages.

In the Shirui village, two beneficiaries were given benefit of new housing under IAY during 2004-2005, two beneficiaries during 2010-2011 and twelve beneficiaries during the year 2012. Under the scheme a total of Rs. 30,800 was sanctioned

and given in cash as first instalment and after the completion of house the final instalment of Rs. 7,700 was released. The total amount of construction of new house under the scheme is Rs. 38,500 and for upgradation is Rs. 15,000. The houses constructed were bamboo and wooden structures and CGI sheets as roof top. It is observed that the money from the scheme is mainly being used for other purposes than building the houses.

The major poverty alleviation programmes in Chowainamei village are the MGNREGA and IAY which are the Central flagship programmes. These programmes are being implemented by the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA). The works done under MGNREGA are construction of pucca drain, social forestry and construction of retaining wall. Under the IAY scheme only CGI sheets are provided to the families who have the means to arrange for other construction items. The paramount reason for all the deficits identified in the village in terms of the implementation of the central schemes is the non-release of central funds for the schemes. Senapati district has received fund for only 9 days in MGNREGA in the year 2015-16. MGNREGA is found to be successful in the village as it has helped in creating many durable assets for the village people. However, this year 9 days' work has been undertaken in the village under MGNREGA due to non-availability of the funds as compared to 48 days in previous years. Nearly every person in the village is having job card. The MGNREGA payment is Rs. 190 per day and is paid in cash.

Rural development programs have been implemented under village authorities. Some of the notable rural development schemes implemented in Dongjang village are MGNREGS and PMAY. It is demand driven public wage employment programme in which work is given to people of that respective village. Job card is the key document that records workers' entitlements under MGNREGA. Village Authority issues the job cards free of cost within 15 days of receipt of such applications in writing or orally. Only 12 days of work was provided to Dongjang village during year 2016-17. In the previous years, less number of days were provided to the distressed rural people who cannot remain reliant on the scheme for getting job for the guaranteed 100 days. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana is another scheme which is being implemented in this village. In year 2016-17, a total of 19 households who were living in Kutcha houses were given assistance of Rs 1.30 lakh for the construction of pucca house through Direct Benefit Transfer.

The MGNREGS programme was implemented from the year 2008-09 in M. Songgle village. The village has 233 job card holders. On an average, 39 man-days were provided to the beneficiaries. This scheme has proved to be great relief for people in distress as they are able to plan out their works and to support the less income households. It was highlighted that most schemes can be implemented effectively if all staffs come together and cooperate with one another. The problem occurs when some staffs try to play some mischief. There are also cases where the Village

Level Workers (VLWs) take money from beneficiaries and submit a fake report. It is also impossible to physically verify all ongoing works. There is a strong need for more monitoring by neutral party.

8. Analysis & Conclusion

From the Village Case Studies, we can understand various aspects of rural life in Manipur, for example, demographic and social structure, agrarian relations, the extent of sub-division and fragmentation of holdings, the conditions of landless labourers, economic activities, rural infrastructure etc. It definitely helps in planning rural development. Rural development is utilization, protection and enhancement of the natural, physical and human resources needed to make long-term improvements in rural living conditions. It involves provision of jobs and income opportunities while maintaining and protecting the environment of rural areas. Rural development as a process aimed at improving the well-being and self-realisation of people living outside the urbanized areas through collective effort (Copp, 1972). It is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of rural development (Chambers, 1983). Intervention of the Government in rural development is considered necessary in view of the fact that a sizeable population continues to reside in rural areas despite growing urbanization. It is also required, as the market forces are not always able to improve the welfare of the rural masses because of certain structural rigidities and institutional deficiencies existing in these areas. As a result, there is a danger of large sections of the rural population to remain outside the ambit of market driven growth processes. To enable the poorer sections of the rural population to participate more effectively in the economic activities has, therefore, remained the prime objective of India's policy and planning and the basic underlying theme of rural development programmes.

The rural economy of India is facing the problem of rural unemployment, rural inequality and rural poverty. These three basic problems confronting the rural economy are sought to be addressed by depending upon the efficiencies of agriculture and rural industries, which adopt the labor-intensive technique of production. A low income and labour surplus economy like India cannot dispense with the employment intensive industrial development. The state has been acting as the facilitator of development with application of various instruments. Anti-poverty programmes, self-employment programmes and wage-employment programmes are emphasized in rural development programmes. Most significantly, rural development policies concentrate on all poor individual households and enable them to rise above poverty.

Some of the observations made from the field study of the villages related to agricultural activities and returns from agriculture will give more insights on

the challenges of rural development. Very poor level of technology use has led to low productivity per unit area of land. Only one crop is grown in whole year while multiple cropping may be made popular with better farm management and improved cultivation practices. Seeds of improved varieties are seldom used and farmers rely upon last harvest for the seed which invariably results in low levels of production. Traditional tools and method are used since olden times. In the past few years, the villagers have started using tractor. Still the farms, which are smaller in area use buffaloes for ploughing the field for better economic returns. They are using both cow dung and fertilizers. Many farmers have now realized the importance and advantages using modern technology and application of scientific method. Although the need of the new techniques and methods for higher yield are strongly felt, proper training and orientation for actual application and practices are still needed. The growing population over the years has put a strain on agriculture to produce more to feed the adding numbers. With increasing input cost and overall cost of cultivation, diminishing rate of marginal returns is what one is getting thus rendering agriculture as a loss-making profession. The low return has made the youth to divert away from cultivation and opt for other options for employment. Labour, transportation and ploughing are the main expenses besides seeds. Transporting and marketing facilities are yet to be streamlined. Therefore, even though the yield is good, the net benefits are decreasing due to competition in the market over the last decade and absence of support services.

Another area of concern related to the agrarian relations in the state is on the issue of land reform. Land reforms are the need of the hour in the hill district. Lot of developmental projects do not take place in the hill district because the land and the village do not belong to the government. Therefore, it is difficult to plan and implement any developmental project. The lack of land records in villages under the hill districts will give rise to a lot of issues in the future. With the rise in population and distribution of land among children, along with the rise in land transactions there will be a lot of disputes. To settle such disputes land records are a must, without which it will become impossible. The land revenue system must be extended to the village so that proper survey and settlement can be done. Once the survey is done then the records so obtained can be used to settle a lot of disputes. Also, the information can be used to properly plan developmental works in the village. To protect tribal right certain well-thought-out protections can be inserted in the relevant acts and rules. With the absence of records, acquisition of land for developmental works is also a huge hassle and can take a long time. Apart from this the inability to sell land to anyone makes the owner unable to receive the full market value for his or her land. Thus, the extension of the land revenue system to the village is a top priority.

There is a need for harmonization of formal and land related customary laws. A mechanism needs to be evolved through which former laws can be harmonized with customary laws. Modifications can be suggested keeping in view the local

traditions and sentiments. The issue of gender in land holding in hill districts is very important as time is changing and even the tribes are undergoing dynamic positive changes. There is a need of sensitization of the local people regarding the need of survey of the land and the advantages attached with such service should be illustrated to them in local language so that they understand them and co-operate with the land record and survey office. The Department of Revenue does not have the required technical skills needed for the modern methods of land administration. Hence, the Department of Information and Technology of the State Government should be co-opted in this program.

In general, land reforms in Manipur and that too in hill district of Manipur have not seen a significant positive change. As per the needs of the people, there is a crucial need for re-survey of the lands covered during the earlier survey of 1960s and the need for survey of the Hilly Areas. The state as a whole needs such kinds of survey using the latest technology of ETS/GPS. There is certainly a need for computerization of property sale/gifts registration. There should be a revamp in the revenue collection of land. The officials and staffs in the Revenue Department must be given compulsory IT trainings to get maximum use of computer. Moreover, efforts are required to increase productivity through increased awareness on best practices, modern farming techniques, crop rotation, availability of irrigation facility, access to subsidized farming input etc. A true land reform which takes care of both the landless and land owners can only be achieved through parallel improvements in delivery of public services and public health and infrastructure accessible to the rural poor.

Some of the policy suggestions are related to identification of truly needy poorest of the poor so that welfare schemes are more target oriented, stopping the leakage of funds meant for the poor such as distribution of subsidized food grains at FPS centers at regular interval and as per their entitlements and direct benefit transfer of MGNREGS wages to beneficiaries' bank account by doing away with payments through the village authority accounts. The MGNREGS has put some serious efforts in addressing the issue of rural poverty by providing for some corrective measures in development of village infrastructure thereby generating wage employment for the unskilled labour in the vicinity of the poor's house. The formation of Social Capital out of the bonding and belongingness amongst workers has led to positive mindset and interaction on various plans for children and family health. This new social bonding has instilled confidence amongst the workers for better prospects of future. Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Mid-Day Meal (MDM) and Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) have contributed a lot in the poverty alleviation directly or indirectly.

Interventions from the Government have positively enhanced the flexibility to decision making. Livelihood Security coupled with quality healthcare and

education can change their world altogether and make them barge into an era of socio-economic inclusion. The first and foremost thing is that the villagers themselves have to be more aware of their rights and responsibilities in the implementation of the schemes and the role of government officials is to bring more transparency to the village level. The utility and importance of RTI, Ombudsman, social audit etc., have to be spread far and wide to achieve further improvement and development of the village. The more the villagers are educated and become more aware, the better is the implementation of any government schemes. The importance of decentralization needs to be emphasized and any scheme should be bottom-up. There is certainly unnecessary political interference which needs to be controlled and thereafter the effective participation of all the stakeholders only can bring meaning to all the government endeavours for the village. There is a very strong need for convergence of schemes and a holistic approach towards the road map for developmental works to be taken up in the village.

Many of the families in these villages were not aware of the welfare schemes of the government. There are many schemes which are concentrated in the district headquarter and people in the interior village are not aware of these schemes. Therefore, the state government should make some arrangements for proper publicity of schemes till the last man. Administration must be taken to the people living in the villages. It is not expected from a poor villager to come to district headquarter for every small problem. Therefore, proper training of village level official must be done so that they are aware of different schemes and convey effectively about these schemes to the villagers.

Government schemes like anti-poverty and rural development programmes are very instrumental tool in helping a poor person improve his/her economic standing. However, it's also important to make them self-independent by some interventions like providing them vocational skills in various trades, developing capacity in entrepreneurship and then helping them in marketing their products. These skills will not only help them to earn some income during non-farming season but also provide them livelihood alternative opportunities like starting their own small enterprises, finding jobs in non-farm sectors and other economic avenues.

Another significant feature that we have observed in these villages is that there is active participation of women in economic activities. However, there is a wide gap in terms of women's participation in decision making and other social parameters like literacy and accessibility to social security benefits. It has highlighted that the participation of women, especially in matters related to decision making of the local self-government and Village Authority is very less. Empowering women has been the central agenda for most government driven sectoral intervention. Empowerment of women as a goal of development projects and programmes has gained wider acceptance since 1990s. Empowerment is defined as a process by

which the powerless gain control over the circumstances of their lives. It includes control over their life, body, behaviour as well as ideology and attitudes. It means not only greater self-confidence, and an inner transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external barriers to accessing resources or changing traditional ideology. The key elements of empowerment are: decision-making power, autonomy and self-reliance, entitlement, participation, and process of building awareness and capacity. Organized solidarity- in and by a group- can bring about significant changes in any system. The essential prerequisites for 'empowerment through organization' include the following elements: resources in the form of finances, knowledge and technology, skills training, leadership formation, building up of democratic processes, participation in policy and decision making and techniques of conflict resolution.

A hallmark of women's empowerment in development is a social transformation of poor women through collective action upon their consciousness of the dominance of patriarchy that underlines the day-to-day subordination of those women both in the home and the work place. Three different approaches in the context of women's empowerment have been identified by Batliwala, namely: (a) the integrated development approach; (b) the economic approach and; (c) consciousness raising cum awareness approach. The approaches are not mutually exclusive and have the potential to be linked with each other. Whereas (a) and (b) address the practical needs or material condition of women, (c) addresses the strategic needs or socio-political position of women. Consciousness and awareness raising approach has the potential to bring about long lasting change in the position of women and has deeper implications. This approach can really play a vital role in bringing about a change in the dynamics of rural development in India.

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Valuation of Unpaid Domestic Work of Women: A Study of Four Districts of Assam

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Unpaid domestic works generally carried out by women are common in every household in any society. Though it nourishes and replenishes human life, its contributions to the economy are either unaccounted for or are underestimated. If household chores are officially recognized and their valuations are made then the contribution of a homemaker would gain importance and society at large would start treating women as equal partners to men. This would enable women empowerment in a society. An attempt has been made in the present paper to make an estimation of unpaid domestic works of women and their valuation using replacement cost method and minimum wage for which micro-level primary data were collected from the state of Assam. Findings reveals that there are wide variations in no. of hours spent for different activities between male and female across different socioeconomic and demographic categories. Value of unpaid works have also been varying across geographical regions, social groups, religions, age and educational levels of workers.

Keywords: *Unpaid Domestic Work, System of National Account, Time Use Survey, Time Allocation, Valuation of Unpaid Work*

1. Introduction

Domestic works are carried out both by men and women in a household. In general, women share a greater burden of household work than men. These domestic activities are generally unpaid and are not included in the national income. However, in certain situations paid laborers be it men or women are engaged to perform these activities when members of households are not available for such activities. Such paid household activities are accounted for in the estimation of national income. Unpaid works are generally either not taken into account or is underestimated. However, it has its value and has its contribution to the welfare of the household and the nation as a whole. If household chores are recognized and their valuations are made then the contribution of a homemaker would gain importance and society at large would ultimately start treating women as equal partners to men in all aspects of their life. This would enable women to be empowered in society. Therefore, there is a need for the valuation of these activities. Valuation of household activities, however, is not a straightforward job since the work is unpaid and the services rendered are sometimes intangible. It is a well-

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known fact that many educated women are debarred to work outside the home after their marriage. Not only are they deprived of the freedom of their choice but also the respect that comes along with the earned money in today's world. Though unpaid work falls outside the purview of the national income account it is well within the production boundary as either care or work. Traditionally it was believed that the homemakers are the unproductive workers (Seccombe, 1974). But unpaid care works nourishes and replenishes human life (Beneria, 1999). Domestic labour carried out by women in households are the source of surplus value but are not paid (Menon, 1982).

Conventional economic statistics, such as national accounts and employment measures, are largely designed to measure the market economy and in most countries exclude unpaid household service/work. Economists have argued for many years that ignoring these services introduces biases in various areas of economic analysis. Clark (1958), and Quah and How (2008) pointed out that not taking into account income obtained through productive household activities significantly underestimates national income. The services that result from the own-use production work are unarguably a source of utility to households and contribute to their economic well-being. Nordhaus and Tobin (1972) contended that unpaid household service contributes to economic welfare, which the conventional approach of the gross national product (GNP) does not properly measure. Accounting for household production requires an expansion of the conventional national accounts production boundary. A complete household satellite account would contain a comprehensive and integrated presentation of household economic activities that contribute to individual welfare, such as production, income redistribution, and wealth accumulation (Hamdad, 2003). The women's household works are generally unpaid and therefore are unrecorded and underestimated as part of women's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of an economy. Despite its importance, the contribution of the household economy remains invisible in economic accounts. Although it is a productive activity it does not appear in the GDP, in employment statistics, or in any economic output measure because money is not exchanged (*Ibid*, 2003). Therefore, many researchers are concerned to do a proper valuation of the unpaid works of women.

The present paper has been organized in the following way: Section I is a brief introduction to women's work and its valuation; Section II is all about the review of the literature; The methodology adopted for the present work has been presented in Section III. In Section IV, results obtained from the data analysis have been presented and discussed. The summary and conclusion of the study have been presented in Section V.

2. Literature Review

The review of literature is thematically presented in three brief sections such as i) Capturing Unpaid Work Using Time Use Data; ii) Time Spent Pattern in Performing Unpaid Work; and iii) Time Allocation and Unpaid Work.

2.1 Capturing Unpaid Work Using Time Use Data: According to Hirway (1999), time use statistics are used mainly for measuring unpaid activities performed at home and to analyze the relationships between market and domestic labour, and serving as a basis for quantifying domestic work in monetary terms comparable to production included in national accounts. From the 1960s onwards researchers became aware of using time-use studies for the economic analysis of unpaid work. According to time-use expert Iiris Niemi, time-use surveys have their origins in the studies of family budgets in the early decades of the 1900s (as cited by Samantroy, 2015). There had been an increasing pressure internationally for household production to be included in the National Accounts in the 1970s. Waring's (1988) discussion of the invisibility of women's economic contribution worldwide contributed to this debate. As a result, in 1993 SNA revision recommended inclusion of all goods produced by households, whether for their consumption or sale, within the production boundary. In the 1970s and 1980s, feminist economists developed the concept of care to focus on and analyze an important part of women's lives, giving importance to the constraints from which they suffered and the insufficiency of value that the welfare state should have given to women for what they did at home. In due course of time, women increasingly entered into paid works and some elements of the care that they provided at home came to the responsibility of the state or the private sector. This paved the way for estimation of the care work (Himmelweit, 1995). After that, there was a transition of terminology from 'household labor' to 'care'. If household production is omitted, the picture of the economic welfare of the population does not include all goods and services and is therefore incomplete. Household work has a monetary value and the household work of wives who are not in paid employment should be given an estimated value in the assessment of their economic well-being (Bonke, 1993).

2.2 Time Spent Pattern in Performing Unpaid Work: A study conducted by Hamdad (2003) on time use in Canada found that on an average a person devoted 24.1 hours per week to unpaid work. Daly (1982) found that women are far more likely to be engaged in unpaid work than men, particularly in non-agricultural activities. In a family-operated farm or business, the husband is counted as self-employed whereas the wife is treated as an unpaid family worker. Meiners and Olson (1987) examined the time allocations of household paid and unpaid work; and found that a woman on an average spent 48.5 hours per week. While rural non-farm workers and urban women workers worked about 46 hours per week. Most of the time-consuming household tasks such as food preparation and dishwashing accounted for 31 percent of the total work. About 14.9 hours of work was devoted

to household tasks per week. Williams (2010) highlighted the role of government in supporting childcare that could facilitate and promote women's participation in the paid labour market by relieving their burden of unpaid care work. Through this, it could encourage women into the paid labour market. Barbara (2011) undertook a study in Burkina Faso and observed that women were spending more time on domestic works. Women were time deficits in different types of activities and facing time poverty in many aspects of their life. On an average, they spent 46.98 percent of their total work hours in unpaid works which is three additional hours compared to that of men. The time use survey of Australia 2018 found that a woman spends 60.10 minutes a day performing household activities. While the recent time use survey of India in 2019 found that a rural woman spends 301 minutes a day whereas an urban woman spends 293 minutes. Going into details, if we look at the different divisions of unpaid work, the unpaid domestic household chores is the main time-consuming activity for women. Habib et al., (2006) in the Middle East specifically in Lebanon found that women performed continuously more housework than men. But women's load of housework decreased as they joined the labour market and men's contribution to domestic labour increased with involvement in paid labour. In a comparative study of Germany and Israel by Lewin-Epstein et al., (2006) Israeli couples were found to be spending almost similar time in domestic work than German households. But in both countries, men spent fewer hours on housework than women. Another work by Mannino and Deutsch (2007) in England using both childcare and housework tasks with 7 point rating scale showed that wives do more housework and childcare than their husbands. On the other hand, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD,2011) conducted a study in India and released data that Indian men spent 53 minutes a day helping in household work which is 4 percent of the whole day women do all the household. Oshio et al., (2013) examined the division of domestic work in three countries Japan, Korea, and China. They found that among the three countries Chinese husbands do 29.4 percent of the housework which is more than that of the Japanese and Koreans but still women are responsible for domestic chores more than men. Similarly in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland division of domestic work is imbalanced among the disadvantaged women (Mikula et al., 2012). However, at the micro-level in the Indian context Kaur and Uppal (2015) found that based on gender, caste, and place of residence female has to spend more time while performing unpaid domestic activities compared to male in the state of Punjab. A similar study by Sengupta (2016) for the district of Hooghly, West Bengal revealed that irrespective of age, place of residence, and level of education women spent significantly higher durations of time in unpaid work compared to men.

2.3 Time Allocation and Unpaid Work: The value of the household services is usually not included in the GDP. If one wishes to measure household production it is necessary to calculate the economic value of the productive activity involved, but the difficulty with unpaid housework is that it has no market value in the

form of wages (Kulshreshtha and Singh, 1999). To value them, goods or services of the same kind must be bought and sold in sufficient quantities in the market to enable reliable market prices which can be used for valuation purposes. For many years, it has been debated whether its value should be included within estimates of economic growth. Unpaid work is of two types, unpaid SNA work, and unpaid non-SNA work. The former, which includes informal work (unpaid family workers in household enterprises) and subsistence work, are covered in national income accounts at least at the conceptual level; while the latter, which includes household work, care of children, old, sick, etc., in the household and voluntary community work, are excluded from the purview of these accounts (Hirway, 2009). The household unit is considered the non-market unit of production. The variety of literature that assigned monetary values to unpaid work are all based on the time spent on domestic activities using time use survey method.

2.3.1 Developed Country Scenario: Colman (1998) found that if the unpaid work were replaced for pay in the market economy, at the average rate of \$9.20 equivalent to 693.09 INR paid per hour to domestic help in the Nova Scotia (New Scotland) would be worth \$ 8.5 billion, equivalent to 51% of their GDP at factor cost. Using the output measure, another study estimated household production to be 30 to 60 percent of Gross National Product (Fitzgeral and Wicks, 1990). Study conducted by Venet. et. al., (2018) employing different methods of estimation adopted by different countries concluded that the level of GDP would increase by 15 to 20 percent. In some similar studies, the estimates of the valuation varied from one-third to one-half of GNP depending on the valuation method (Chadeau, 1985 and Murphy, 1982). Jokubauskaitė and Schneebaum (2021) in their study found that if the calculation of non-economic activities such as household work and child care is taken into account there will be an addition of about 22 percent in GDP in Australia. In 1996, the total assessed value of unpaid work in Japan was approximately 76 trillion yen to 116 trillion yen. De, et. al., (2003) made age group wise estimation of domestic work of Australian women and found that the women belonging to the age group of 25 to 44 years made highest contribution of their time (i.e., equivalent to \$ 45,617 per annum) and the valuation was found to decrease with the increase in age. A comparative study of Italy and Poland by Franacavilla (2011) on the value of unpaid family work by using opportunity cost and market replacement cost method revealed that Italians participated somewhat less than the Polish people in childcare but substantially more on elderly care because of their demographic factors. But overall the number of people performing family care work was higher in Italy as they had a large population. However, there was a huge difference in the value of unpaid family care work which was about eight times more in Italy compared to Poland.

2.3.2 Developing Country Scenario: A study by Budlender and Brathaug (2004), again revealed variations in values of estimations under different methods. While using opportunity cost method, average wage of a male was taken as Rs.13.65 per

hour and that of female Rs. 9.74 per hour. Whereas, for applying the Generalist method to labour force survey and census data they combined the figures for males and females respectively as Rs. 5.08 and Rs 3.02. Similarly, in another work by Gammage (2010) the estimates of the unpaid work in the household supplied by men and women in Guatemala varied from 26 to 34 percent of GDP. A pioneering study was undertaken by Budlender (2010) by taking into consideration seven countries viz., Argentina and Nicaragua of Latin America, India and The Republic of Korea of Asia, South Africa and Tanzania of Africa and cross comparing with a developed country like Japan. Study revealed that there was significant variation in participation rates, average times spent by women and men on different activities, and absolute and relative differences between women and men. Thu and Efroymson (2008) undertook research in Vietnam to estimate the women's contribution to the economy by using opportunity cost and market replacement cost method. Findings of theirs revealed that monthly contribution of women through household work fluctuated within the range of \$3.32 to \$244.38. Undervaluation of unpaid work might have cost around 30 percent of the total income per capita in Vietnam.

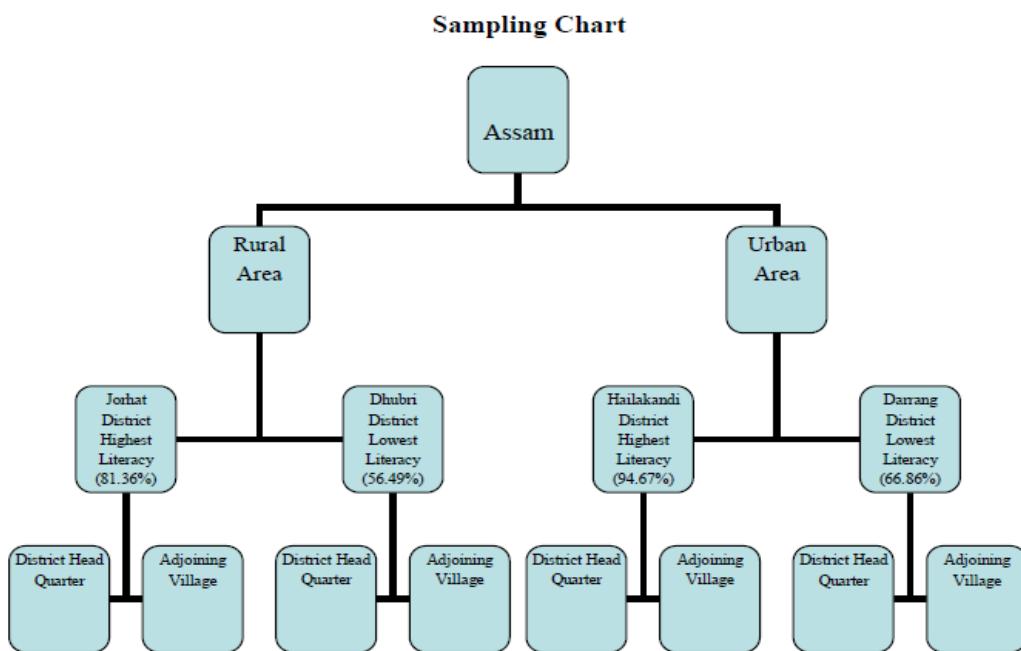
2.3.3 Indian Scenario: In the Indian context too, many studies were undertaken by researchers on time use and pattern of allocation of time for unpaid work focusing on methodological issues. However, only a few studies were undertaken on valuation of unpaid work. A study by Hirway (1999) found that women work in large numbers in SNA activities but the number of hours they put in is much less. This seems to be due to the large burden of Extended SNA activities they carry on their shoulders as well as the limited scope that they have in informal labour market. Women spend a lot of time while collecting fuel, fodder, water, forest produce, fruits, vegetables, etc. A micro-level study was undertaken by Kaur and Uppal (2015) using the market replacement cost method and by taking into consideration the average wage of women of a particular locality in the state of Punjab. Findings revealed a valuation of Rs. 4050 per week of UDW. Using the same method, Sengupta (2016) undertook a study in the district of Hoogly, West Bengal and found that the per capita valuation of women's domestic work was as high as Rs. 597.80 per week but this valuation varied with the levels of education of women.

Reviewing the above literature, it is observed that there is unequal distribution of unpaid work between men and women irrespective of countries they belonged to. Therefore, there was a need to look into the hidden services offered by woman and make valuation of their works in their households. For this purpose, we estimated the time spent by women and men on unpaid work using Time Use survey method. However, many macroeconomic studies were undertaken on the valuation of UDW using secondary data. Hardly a few studies have attempted to make the valuation of UDWs using primary data. More so, there has not been a single study being undertaken in the state of Assam. This makes the present study

to be unique. The objective of the present work is to examine the share of unpaid work performed by men and women. Another objective is to analyse the variations of unpaid work of women among different categories of household work.

3. Data and Methodology

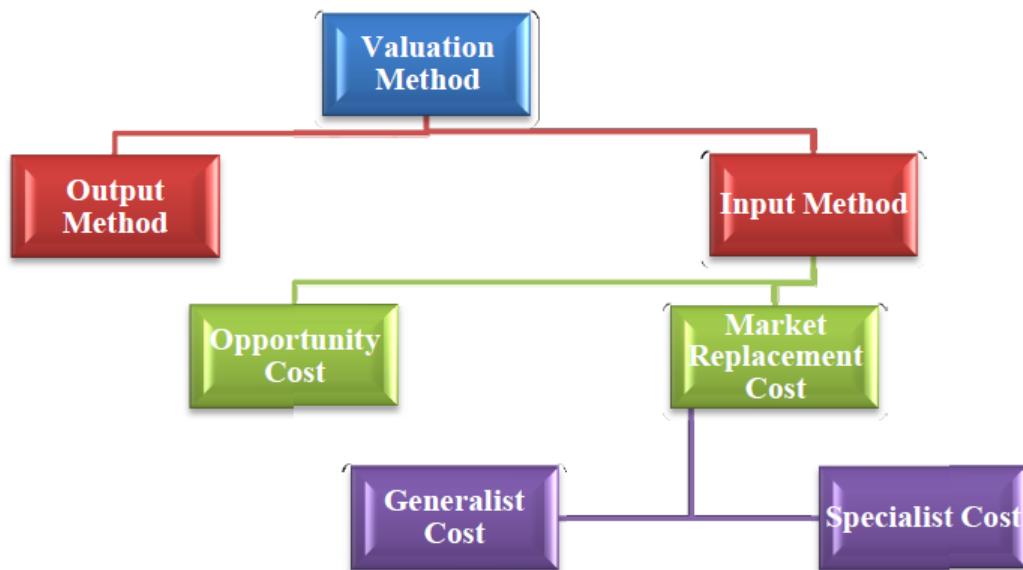
3.1 Sampling Frame: Assam has in total 33 districts. Data were collected from 400 workers from four purposively selected rural and urban districts representing highest and lowest literacy rates. As per Census 2011, Jorhat district in rural area was having the highest literacy rate of 81.36 percent, and Dhubri district with the lowest literacy rate of 56.49 percent. Similarly, in the urban areas, the highest and lowest literacy rate districts were Hailakandi (94.67%) and Darrang (66.86%). In the second stage of sampling, we identified eight sub-areas taking two sub-areas from each district representing the district headquarter (urban) and the adjoining village (rural). From each sub-area, we interviewed 25 males and 25 females from 25 households on random basis as per the Chart mentioned below:



3.2 Survey Method: For collecting data Time Use Survey method was adopted. Time use activities are classified into nine categories: (1) Primary production activities, (2) Secondary activities, (3) Trade, business, and services, (4) Household maintenance, management, and shopping for own households, (5) Care for children, the sick, elderly, and disabled for own household, (6) Community services and help to other households, (7) Learning social and cultural activities, (8) Mass media, etc. and (9) Personal care and self-maintenance. The first three activities are known as SNA activities, fourth to sixth activities fall under Extended SNA (E-SNA), while the rest of the activities fall under non-SNA activities. However, the first six

types of activities have the “*nature of transaction*” or “*purpose of work*” whether it is performed for monetary purposes or otherwise. Each of the first six activities are categorized into paid and unpaid works. As regards present study is concerned, we used the fourth category of work that included household maintenance and management, shopping for own households which are purely unpaid activities. We did not consider paid household maintenance that falls under E-SNA activities.

3.3 Conceptual Understanding of Valuation Method: To estimate the value of non-market household production, two approaches such as output approach and input approach are available in the literature:



The output method (OM) values the product, while the input method (IM) measures the burden. Under OM, the value of unpaid work is estimated by multiplying the units of output with the wage rate per unit of output. The direct valuation of unpaid work by the OM, need data on the output of the unpaid work, such as the number of meals prepared, clothes washed and ironed, area of the house cleaned, children taught, etc. as well as the data on the wage rate per unit of output. Though the OM has certain advantages, there are serious problems with the data. As the physical quantities of goods and services produced by households differ from one household to another, and to estimate with an output approach a study needs a macro level comprehensive data set on household output in physical units (Clermont, 1993).

On the other hand, the value of unpaid work at the individual level under IM is computed by multiplying the time spent by the person on unpaid work with an appropriate wage rate. At the aggregate level, the total time spent on unpaid work is multiplied by a set of appropriate wage rates (Hirway, 2005). Two types of

wage rates are used to compute value under IM such as market replacement cost (MRC) and opportunity cost (OC). The MRC is the wage rate paid to a person who produces a similar kind of service in the market. On the other hand, OC is the wage rate forgone by the person who is performing the unpaid work. The MRC is of two types: one is Generalist cost and the other one is specialist cost. The generalist cost is the wage paid for the domestic work prevailing in the local market whereas, the specialist cost is the wage paid for different specialized work¹ comparable with the relevant domestic activities (Sousa-Poza et. al.; 1999).

Several authors have pointed out that OC method may lead to serious inconsistencies with market valuation, as the valuation of a particular household's unpaid work depends on the lost earnings of the worker, and therefore, different values for similar tasks would arise. Moreover, the approach is based on several microeconomic assumptions which are rarely satisfied due to labour market and household functioning constraints, which prevent the individual from freely choosing the number of working hours (Francavilla, 2011).

However, we computed the value of unpaid work at the individual level by multiplying the time spent on unpaid work with an appropriate wage rate under the input method due to some methodological advantage. For standardization and simplification of valuation of unpaid works, we considered all types of unpaid workers at par irrespective of their educational status. We employed the formula used by Floro and Pichetpongsa (2010), Kaur and Uppal (2016), and Sengupta (2016) in their works to estimate unpaid works under the market replacement cost method as mentioned below:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Value of Unpaid Work} &= \text{Average Time Spent for Activity} \times \text{Wage Rate} \times \text{No. of Persons} \\ &= (\text{Total Time spent for activities}) \times (\text{Wage rate per unit of time})\end{aligned}$$

3.4 Wage Rate of Domestic Worker: Choice of wage rate for the domestic worker has been a very confusing issue among the researchers who have made valuation of unpaid works. There is no fixed rule to choose a particular wage rate to make proper valuation. It solely depends upon the researchers according to the needs of their study. However, in some studies both average wage rate and minimum wage rate were used (Jokubauskaitė and Schneebaum (2021)). To examine the variation of values of domestic work, three different types of wages per day could be used such as i) minimum wage, ii) average local wage, and iii) Average All-India wage. For the present study, in the absence of market wage for household work, minimum wage as a proxy for the foregone wages has been used which we expected to provide at least information on its minimum value.

¹ Some of the specialist activities for different domestic activities are 1. Cooking–chef, 2. Cleaning-building cleaner, 3. Laundry – laundry man, 4. Sewing &Knittiny- sewing machine operator, 5. Miscellaneous Household work- Janitor, 6. Shopping -Janitor, 7. Childcare- KG teacher, 8. Elderly care- Asst nurse, 9. Voluntary work- weighted average of service industry wages.

Table 1
Different Wage Rates used for estimating UDW in Assam

Minimum Wage of Domestic Worker in Assam		Hourly Average	
Category	Hourly Minimum Wage	Local Wage	All-India Wage
Sweeping, Swabbing, Dusting (Housekeeping), Washing Utensils, Washing Clothes	30	N/A	N/A
Cooking	35	N/A	N/A
Baby/ Old Age Care	35	N/A	N/A
Full-time Domestic Work irrespective of their Work (8 hours)	30	37.50	36.69
<i>Source:</i> Labour and Welfare Department, Government of Assam		<i>Source:</i> Local Area	<i>Source:</i> Labour Bureau, Government of India, Various Issues.

4. Results and Discussion

In most of the individual-level studies, we observed that pattern of time spent is analyzed either sex-wise (Barbara, 2011; Pavazanova et.al, 2015, Budlender & Brathug, 2004, Abdourahman, 2017, Kent, 2009) or based on age groups (Kent, 2009 and Montano, 2017). In this section, we first have made attempt to analyze pattern of time distribution between men and women. An analysis is carried out to examine how men and women belonging to different caste, age groups, religions, places of residence, etc. allocated their working hours for various activities undertaken by them (Table 2). Then we segregated the time used by women in different sub-activities under E-SNA such as household maintenance, care for children and the elderly, and community services. The women's work under segregated E-SNA has been represented in Figure 1. Out of the total time spent, the time spent on unpaid household activities in different categories, and their valuation has been presented in Table 3.

Gender stereotyping in work distribution patterns occurs frequently in everyday life. Women typically spend disproportionately more time on unpaid care work than men. Women across different regions, socio-economic classes, and cultures spend an important part of their day meeting the expectations of their domestic and reproductive roles. There is a significant difference between males and females regarding the allocation of their time in different types of activities. In the very first division, we can see that among the three divisions' men and women

spend their total time of work disproportionately. In each of the categories if we go into detail we will be able to find that the time spent by the male is more either on SNA considered as economic activities or purely on non-economic Non-SNA activities. Whereas, time spent by the female is on E-SNA those are under production boundary but considered as non-economic. E-SNA is the type of activities that is intermediate between SNA and non-economic personal activities. This category of activities like cooking, cleaning utensils, scrubbing the floor, etc. is also such that if males and females of the households go out for work these can be performed by hired laborers. This is why these are given the name of E-SNA activities. This category of activities is time-consuming and women remain busy almost throughout the day in the household.

Table 2
No. of Hours Spent Per Day in SNA, E-SNA and Non-SNA Activities

Category		Sex	Activities				
			SNA	E-SNA	Non-SNA	Total	
All Categories		Male	8.86	1.35	14.34	24.55	
		Female	1.99	12.42	11.58	25.98	
Area of Residence	Rural	Male	9.02	1.20	14.33	24.54	
		Female	1.96	12.12	11.91	25.99	
	Urban	Male	8.71	1.50	14.35	24.56	
		Female	2.02	12.71	11.25	25.97	
District	Rural District	Jorhat	Male	9.44	1.22	13.63	24.29
			Female	2.65	10.85	12.07	25.57
		Dhubri	Male	8.53	0.96	14.84	24.33
			Female	0.88	14.71	10.55	26.14
	Urban District	Hailakandi	Male	7.75	2.05	15.46	25.26
			Female	1.66	12.27	12.70	26.63
		Darrang	Male	9.56	1.4	13.32	24.28
			Female	2.79	11.85	11.01	25.65
Age	15-29 yrs	Male	9.75	0.88	13.88	24.50	
		Female	1.44	12.88	12.12	26.44	
	30-45 yrs	Male	9.92	1.11	13.54	24.57	
		Female	2.26	12.43	11.25	25.95	
	46-60 yrs	Male	7.77	1.71	15.02	24.50	
		Female	1.90	11.81	11.91	25.62	
Religion	Hindu	Male	9.16	1.40	14.15	24.71	
		Female	2.17	12.25	11.67	26.09	
	Others	Male	8.48	1.45	15.08	25.01	
		Female	1.33	13.76	11.27	26.36	

	Category	Sex	Activities			
			SNA	E-SNA	Non-SNA	Total
Caste	General	Male	8.91	1.51	14.49	24.91
		Female	1.77	12.71	11.58	26.06
	OBC	Male	9.29	1.08	14.27	24.63
		Female	3.30	14.50	11.00	28.80
	ST	Male	15.00	0.00	9.50	24.50
		Female	0.88	13.63	11.63	26.13
	SC	Male	8.50	2.02	14.39	24.90
		Female	1.60	11.96	12.31	25.87
Level of Education	Illiterate	Male	9.38	0.73	14.15	24.27
		Female	1.91	13.46	10.32	25.70
	Primary	Male	8.15	1.09	14.79	24.03
		Female	1.12	13.12	10.85	25.09
	Secondary	Male	8.73	1.06	14.83	24.63
		Female	1.46	13.38	11.49	26.33
	Higher Secondary	Male	9.22	1.99	14.11	25.31
		Female	1.58	11.94	12.38	25.89
	Graduation	Male	8.68	1.41	14.17	24.27
		Female	2.83	11.74	11.33	25.91
	Post-Graduation & above	Male	9.50	1.37	13.66	24.53
		Female	3.01	10.80	12.48	26.30

Source: Primary Data

The type of work undertaken in rural areas is generally to a certain extent different from that in the urban areas. Particularly in rural areas, females face discrimination in accessing resources and services that are needed to improve their productivity. Males spent a significantly higher number of hours in SNA activities than females both in rural and urban areas. As regards E-SNA activities are concerned, there were differences in results when it was compared with SNA activities. Further, higher allocation of time was made by females in comparison to males in both rural and urban areas under E-SNA activities whereas the reverse was true in the case of SNA activities. However, Females in urban areas devoted slightly more time in comparison to females in rural areas in E-SNA. This is because in urban areas females had to spend more time in day child care and for other family members, such as they had to reach the office and school in time, and hired help is costlier in urban areas. Fewer females had the same responsibilities within the household irrespective of their area of staying. While men hardly devoted any time to perform these activities.

Maximum time was utilized by females in the SNA activities of Jorhat district because of the obvious reason that it is a district with a high literacy rate among rural districts accompanied by a high rate of participation in economic activities (2.65 hours a day) whereas, surprising to see that the Darrang districts with a low literacy rate among rural districts spent maximum time on SNA activities among the males. Hailakandi being an urban district with a high literacy rate was witnessing low participation in economic activities by both males and females (7.75 and 1.66 hours a day respectively) in comparison to Darrang district (9.56 and 2.79 hours a day). It is amply evident from the table that the time utilized in SNA activities by the females was only one-fifth of the time devoted by males. On the other hand, females devoted much more time to E-SNA activities than males. From the table, it is clear that females were spending at least ten times more than their male counterparts on this category of work. Among the females, the highest time utilized in E-SNA was in the Dhubri district (14.71 hours) and the lowest in the Jorhat district (10.48 hours). Though the working hours devoted by males for these activities were quite lower than that of the females, the maximum and minimum percentage of their time spent was in Hailakandi (2.05 hours) and Dhubri (0.96 hours) districts respectively. In Non-SNA activities the highest time was spent by the males in Hailakandi district followed by Dhubri, Darrang, and Jorhat districts. A similar type of situation prevailed for the females in these districts. It is clear from the figure that in all the districts males spent higher time on Non-SNA activities. Similarly, females only in Hailakandi and Darrang districts spent higher time on Non-SNA activities. Whereas, in the other two districts such as Jorhat and Dhubri, females spent more time on E-SNA activities that were comparatively higher than that of their male counterparts.

Irrespective of different age groups males utilized more time under SNA activities than females while females utilized their maximum time on E-SNA activities. As persons in the middle age group bear varied responsibilities, therefore, the work burden among the persons belonging to the 30-45 years age group was observed to be more compared to the other two age groups irrespective of SNA, E-SNA, and Non-SNA categories of works. For the elderly, responsibilities were less, and accordingly, time devoted by them to various activities was relatively less. The reason behind the reduced work burden of SNA activities among males was that at a certain age, they were economically well-off and hence spent more time on Non-SNA activities. On the other hand, the burden of domestic activities under E-SNA among females in the different age groups was almost the same.

India is a country of rich social composition, as many religions have originated in the country and a few religions of foreign origin have also flourished here. The regional co-existence of diverse religious groups in the country makes it unique and unity in diversity is brought out clearly among the Indians. Since the majority of people were Hindus we thought of dividing them into two categories as Hindu and Others for our analysis. There was a noticeable difference as well as the

similarity between Hindus and others in the allocation of time for various works. Compared to the other category of religion both males and females belonging to the Hindu category spent more time in SNA activities. On the contrary, both the male and females who belong to the other category spent more time on E-SNA activities as can be seen in Table 2. Whereas, males of both categories spent more time in Non-SNA activities compared to females of the same categories.

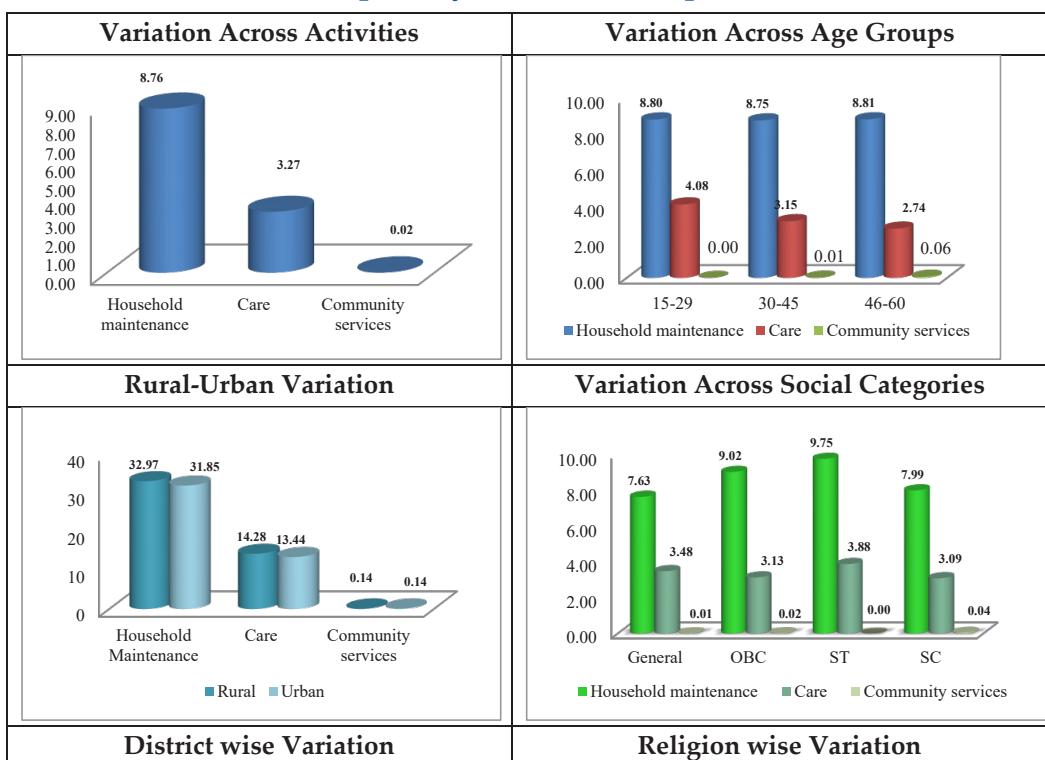
Societal hierarchy is evident amongst individuals, within families, in kinship groups, and more so across various castes. Castes are primarily associated with Hinduism; however, caste-like groups also exist among other religious groups like Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, etc. in India. In India, the world of works to be carried out and the economic status of the people are largely determined by their castes. The division of labour brought about by the caste system was not a division based on choice or preference. Therefore working patterns of different people belonging to various castes did vary. The working hours devoted by people of different castes varied significantly for various types of activities. These variations also differed between sexes across social categories. The allocation of time among males for SNA activities varied from as low as 8.50 hours for SC to 15 hours a day for the ST category. For similar activities, no. of hours for females varied from 0.88 hour for ST to 3.30 hours a day for OBC. Similarly, for E-SNA activities, it varied from as low as zero hour for ST to 2.02 hours a day for SC among males but for females, it varied from 11.96 hours for SC to 14.50 hours a day for OBC. As regards Non-SNA activities ST males and females were devoting almost the same duration of time but there were significant differences in the number of hours for these activities among General, OBC, and SC categories. What was common to all the social categories was that they all were spending maximum of their working hours on Non-SNA activities.

The time spent in different activities is not different from other above-explained categories in this paper. Among the different levels of education also found similar results. Here also we have found that time spent on SNA and Non-SNA activities is more among males compared to females at different levels of their education. The time spent in a day in SNA activities is highest among the males and females having post-graduation & above (9.50 and 3.01 hours). Surprisingly to see the lowest time spent on SNA activities is among both males and females having primary level of education. Under E-SNA, illiterate females spent highest duration of time (13.46 hours) as they had no other thing to do. Whereas lowest among Postgraduate and above category females as they are educated enough and could engage themselves in SNA activities. While under the division of non-SNA activities males spent comparatively higher time than their female counterparts.

Irrespective of sex, age, area of residence, districts, religious categories, social categories, and level of education female had to spend more time on E-SNA whereas male spent more time either on SNA or Non-SNA activities. There are

significant differences in time spent in both types of work. Further, if we segregate the activities of E-SNA as household maintenance, care, and community services we would find that females spent most of their time in household maintenance which is unpaid. Each of the activities of E-SNA is divided into two parts as paid and unpaid ones as many people hired help for household maintenance and care work. Our study revealed that irrespective of activities under different categories females spent highest time in unpaid household work as shown in Figure 1. A comparative representation of the time spent by women under different categories can be seen below:

Figure 1
Variations in Time Spent by Women in Unpaid E-SNA Activities



Source: Primary data.

Most of the work of women which form the major part of the household non-market production goes unreported in the accounting framework of the SNA partly because of convention and partly because the work which involves human effort devoted to the production of goods and services has utility, but it does not necessarily generate income by way of marketability and hence poses measurement problems. So, it is primarily the contribution of women to the economy and welfare that is made invisible (Eisener 1989, Ironmonger 1989, Goldschmidt 1990 and Chadeau 1992). As females spend most of their time on unpaid household work therefore it was necessary to make a proper valuation of the time spent on it.

Table 3
Valuation of Unpaid Domestic Work Performed by Women
across Categories

Categories	Average working hours on unpaid household activities	Total number of women	Wage per hour	Average wage per day per person $\{(2) \times (4)\}$	Valuation per day (Rs.) $\{(3) \times (5)\}$
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Total Female					
Female	8.76	200	30	262.80	52560
By Area of Residence					
Urban	8.96	100	30	268.80	26880
Rural	8.56	100	30	256.95	25695
Total					52575
Age Wise					
15-29 yrs.	8.80	46	30	264	12144
30-45 yrs.	8.75	114	30	262.50	29925
46-60 yrs.	8.81	40	30	264.30	10572
Total					52641
District Wise					
Jorhat	8.25	50	30	247.50	12375
Dhubri	8.25	50	30	247.50	12375
Hailakandi	7.82	50	30	234.60	11730
Darrang	10.73	50	30	321.90	16095
Total					52575
By Religious Category					
Hindu	7.51	159	30	225.30	35822.70
Others	8.60	41	30	258	10578
Total					46400.70
Social Category Wise					
General	7.63	82	30	228.90	18769.80
OBC	9.04	78	30	271.20	21153.60
ST	9.75	5	30	292.50	1462.50
SC	7.98	35	30	239.40	8379
Total					49764.90

Categories	Average working hours on unpaid household activities	Total number of women	Wage per hour	Average wage per day per person $\{(2) \times (4)\}$	Valuation per day (Rs.) $\{(3) \times (5)\}$
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
By Level of Education					
Illiterate	8.89	14	30	266.70	3733.80
Primary	10.56	17	30	316.80	5385.60
Secondary	9.58	65	30	287.40	18681
Hr. Secondary	9.00	33	30	270	8910
Degree	7.54	48	30	226.20	10857.60
Post Graduate & above	7.24	23	30	217.20	4995.60
Total					52563.6

Source: Authors' calculation.

Note: Column (5) can be consider as the per capita wage earn.

For 200 female workers, the estimated value of unpaid domestic chores worked out to be worth Rs. 52, 560/- per day using the replacement cost method. Variations in valuations were noticed across different groups be it area-wise, or on the basis of age group, district, religion, social category as well as education. In the urban area, the valuation of UDW is more compared to the rural area. As the middle age group is more confined to the labour market activities, therefore, the contribution towards the household activity is less therefore the value generated by them is less compared to the other two age groups. It can be noticed that among the four districts women belonging to the Darrang district generated Rs. 321.90 per capita which is higher compared to that of women in other districts. Similarly, under the religious category, the per capita value generated by the other religious category is more compared to the Hindu females. Among the social categories, the Schedule tribe (ST) women generated more value compared to the other three categories. As participation of women in the labour market is influenced by no. of years of educational attainment, therefore the value created by the women having post-graduate degree and above was less as they spent fewer hours in household activities compared to other categories. However, it was more for those who had primary-level education. From the above discussion, it can conclude that there was wide variation in the value of unpaid domestic works under different categories.

5. Summary and Conclusion

The paper was an attempt to make a valuation of the UDW performed by women within the household. Although many researchers have been working on the

valuation of unpaid work of women and its inclusion in SNA, till today it is on paper only and yet to be officially recognized. A large portion of the women's labour force that is having the potential to generate income is hidden in the economy. It is a humble attempt by taking a sample of four districts of Assam and making valuation of UDW. The paper has documented the gender pattern of time spent in SNA, E-SNA, and Non-SNA activities. As expected the women spent most of their time in a day performing unpaid household responsibilities whereas men spent on economic activities. The disaggregated analysis based on area of residence, district, age, religion, caste, and level of education also supported similar findings. It is found that males in both rural and urban areas spent more time on SNA activities. As regards E-SNA activities, females in urban areas devoted slightly more hours to it. The variation can be noticed in the pattern of time distribution irrespective of the age groups. However, both males and females belong to the age group of 30-45 years bearing more burden of any kind of activities. In Dhubri being the lowest literacy rate district, witnessed females spending the highest time in E-SNA activities compared to the other three districts. Again, between the religious groups, Hindu males spent more hours on SNA activities while females who belonged to the other religious categories spent more time on E-SNA activities. Among the different social categories ST males spent more time on SNA activities while females belonging to OBC categories spent on E-SNA. Lastly, both males and females who were having post-graduate and above level of education spent more time on SNA activities but there was a significant difference between them.

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Bank Credit for Manufacturing in Rural Assam: Have the Trends Changed?

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Rural Manufacturing in Assam is one of the important economic activities. It can provide a large number of environmentally sustainable non-farm employment to different sections, especially to socio-economically backward and women members of the society. It, however, in the absence of access to institutional finance, inherently suffers from the problems of dualism. Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) are the major sources of institutional finance in India, including the rural economy of Assam. On the other hand, on the planks of development, there has been a political change both at the center and the state almost since 2014. Against this backdrop, the study assesses the delivery of SCBs credit to rural manufacturing in the state of Assam from both overall and comparative perspectives. The study finds that although the overall trend of credit delivery for manufacturing in rural Assam is depressing, there are some clear signs of hope in terms of growth and consistency post-political change. Further, the aforesaid trends have been corroborated by those of other key non-agricultural and non-manufacturing sectors. As a policy implication of this study, it may be prescribed that the SCBs need to increase their credit supply to rural manufacturing in Assam continuously.

Keywords: *Bank credit, Rural manufacturing, Assam, Scheduled commercial banks, Employment*

1. Introduction

After independence, Indian planners inspired by then emerging state of economic development around the world and relying on the Lewisian model for a labour surplus economy emphasized the development of an advanced industrial sector. Over the years, the undue obsession of the state with the large industrial sector, economic growth, and trickle-down theory has led to a developmental pattern that is largely urban-centric, socially unjust, and ecologically fragile. Urban India accommodates around 33 percent of the population, out of which 9.4 percent are unemployed (as per CWS, PLFS, Jan-March, 2021) and nearly 9 percent are poor by multidimensional poverty index (MPI). On the other side, in rural India where the rest 67 percent of the population lives, nearly 4 percent are unemployed (as per usual status, PLFS 2019-20) and nearly 36 percent are poor, again in terms of MPI (Ayog, 2021). Further, Indian agriculture engages around 43 percent of our workforce and contributes a meager 17 percent to our GDP. Low productivity, unemployment, and poverty in the rural economy push the people into an urban informal sector which deprives them of a decent living.

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Pertinently, Assam being an important constituent of the union of India shares the same fate. In fact, the scenario of Assam is more precarious than that at the all-India level; urban Assam harbor only 14 percent of the population, as per the 2011 census. As per the latest available PLFS surveys, cited above, the unemployment rate is roughly 7 percent both in urban and rural Assam. And the incidences of poverty in terms of MPI overall, rural and urban Assam are 33 percent, 36 percent, and 10 percent respectively (Ayog 2021). Under such a situation, if there is something that can hold the hopes of the millions of unemployed Indians in the countryside in general and rural Assam in particular, it is the rural non-farm sector (RNFS) which is largely unorganized or informal in nature. Nevertheless, the RNFS deserves special attention as it uses locally available resources and skills, requires low investment, engages a large amounts labour, and encompasses environmental sustainability (Schumacher, 1973).

The RNFS may not only engage the people who are purely unemployed but also with increased productivity, it may provide avenues for the underemployed and seasonally unemployed. In this regard, the study by Ho (1986) indicates that there exists a strong inverse relationship between farm size and non-farm activities. And it is needless to mention that a large percentage of our farmers are small and marginal farmers. Further, RNFS can exert a significant impact on poverty by accommodating the vulnerable sections of the rural community such as women, SCs, and STs (Ranjan, 2007). Also, since it amounts to the diversification of the rural economy, its growth may reduce the vulnerability of the latter to external shocks. Moreover, its growth, it may discourage or slow down the process of rural-urban migration (Lanjouw and Lanjouw, 2001). Further, its growth may also boost the industrial sector with increased demand for industrial goods within the rural economy. Taking the lessons from China, a thrust on the rural enterprise system may be a panacea for the problems of dualism in the Indian economy (Pant, 2005). Kaur S et al., (2012) through the review of a wide range of literature such as Foster and Rosenzweig, 2004; de Janvry et al., 2005, Haggblade et al., 2007; Gaiha and Imai, 2007; Lanjouw and Murgai, 2008; etc, maintained that in rural areas across the developing world, given the constraints on farm expansion and continuing growth of the rural population, greater attention is being given to non-farm activities in view of their potential for economic development and poverty reduction. The RNFS can play a pivotal in economic development.

The RNFS however comprises a wide range of economic activities. The various rounds of economic censuses and surveys by NSSO have tried to capture the heterogeneity in tandem with the prevailing NIC classification at the two-digit level. The latest available NSSO Survey i.e., 73rd round pertaining to non-agricultural enterprises suggests that in the RNFS of Assam, manufacturing accounts for around one-fifth of shares in the number of enterprises and one-fourth of shares in both employment and value-added. Certainly, manufacturing is one of the important sectors of Assam's RNFS. Moreover, its backward and forward linkage effects amplify its importance.

However, being a part of the RNFS, manufacturing is unorganized in nature. In fact, in the entire economy, the manufacturing activity is largely unorganized. By collating the 73rd round of NSS and ASI data for 2015-16, it is found that the unorganized sector accounts for nearly 99 percent of enterprises, 76 percent of the total workers' workforce but only 17 percent of gross value added in manufacturing. This essentially indicates that in manufacturing a small number of very large firms account for a lion's share in Gross Value Added (GVA) but neither in the number of enterprises nor in employment. Like other developing economies, India's manufacturing sector is characterized by "duality and missing middle" (Tybout, 2000; Mazumdar and Sarkar, 2009; Krueger, 2013; Ghosh, Abraham, 2021). In fact, dualism is also evident within the unorganized manufacturing in India. In unorganized manufacturing, compared to urban India, rural India has a better share in the number of units and employment but not in GVA. As per NSS 73rd rural area accounts for 58 percent, 52 percent of enterprise and employment respectively, but 34 percent of GVA. And the picture of rural Assam in this regard is no different from that of all of India. Rural Assam accounts for about 81 percent of enterprises, 79 percent of employment, and 39 percent of value added in unorganized manufacturing.

On the basis of production relations, NSS divides unorganized manufacturing enterprises into two broad categories, Own Account Manufacturing Enterprises (OAMEs), which do not use any hired labour, and manufacturing establishments, which use hired labour. In general, OAMES are home-based and organizationally primitive units. Here also we find the traits of dualism. Usually, the OAMEs dominate rural manufacturing in terms of the number of units and employment but not in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA).

Saikia and Borah (2019) analyzed the growth and structural change of unorganized manufacturing in rural Assam using NSS data for 1994-95, 2000-01, 2005-06, and 2010-11. Their findings, apart from other things, suggest that the dominance of OAMEs is on the decline whereas the share of establishment is on the rise. Importantly, the NSS 73rd round suggests, that the share of OAMEs in employment and number of units is still considerable. The OAMEs account for 87% of enterprises and 82% of employment but just 30% of GVA in unorganized rural manufacturing.

However, going by the conventional wisdom about the process of industrialization one would expect a transition of OAMEs into establishments and a change in the composition of the rural manufacturing sector in favor of high-value-added products. Indisputably, the availability of institutional credit plays a crucial role in such transition. Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) are the major source of institutional credit. Hence, a study on the delivery of SCBs credit to rural manufacturing in Assam is essential. Further, the importance of the study is paramount because there has been a regime change in both state and centre since almost the mid of the last decade. Particularly, since 2014 i.e., when NDA came to

power in centre. In fact, since then there has been a political change in almost all the northeastern states barring Mizoram, and their ruling parties are directly or indirectly supported by the ruling party in the centre. Of course, for these ruling parties, development has been an important agenda, at least in their pre-election manifestos. And provisioning of institutional credit plays an important role in economic development.

Thus, taking the importance of regime change, Assam in the northeast, rural manufacturing in Assam, and SCBs credit for rural manufacturing, the major research question that arises is “has the delivery of SCBs credit for manufacturing in rural Assam improved since 2014?”

Although the aforesaid research question seems relevant on various grounds, we could not find a single study in this regard. However, a few related studies may be cited to assess the gap in the literature.

Goswami and Hazarika (2019) analyzed the delivery of institutional credit in Assam for small and marginal farmers till 2011. They found that although 75 percent of farmers in Assam are small and marginal farmers, they are grossly deprived of institutional credit and depend on informal sources which are usurious in nature. In spite of efforts toward financial inclusion, the delivery of institutional credit is not scaled neutral. Often poor families are excluded owing to a lack of collateral or guarantor (Shoji et al, 2012). Das (2018) estimated the rural credit demand in the lower Brahmaputra valley of Assam through a primary study. Deka and Sarmah (2013) discussed the strength and prospects of institutional finance for rural development in northeast India. Das and Dey (2015) analyzed the performance Kissan credit card scheme for one of the districts of Assam. Similarly, Sinha and Vanlalchhawna (2021) empirically analyzed the role of credit in the well-being of farmers in one of the districts in Assam. Finally, Das and Guha (2019) assessed the sustainability of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the context of microfinance in rural Assam. In rural India, SCBs play a pivotal role in the delivery of credit through the SHG-Bank linkage programme of microfinance.

Thus, the available literature, though talks about various aspects of institutional finance in rural Assam, is silent about the delivery of SCBs credit for manufacturing in it. Hence the present study intends to fill this research gap by taking the regime change into account. In particular, the study attempts to assess whether there has been any change in the delivery of SCBs credit for all and small borrowers of manufacturing in rural Assam post-2014.

The study is organized as follows. Apart from the current introductory section, there are three more sections. In the second section, we discuss the nuances of data and methodologies. We discuss the results of our analysis in the third section. Finally, we conclude with some policy suggestions and highlight the limitations of this study.

2. Data Source & Methodology

Although NSS captures the various aspects of rural manufacturing every five years through its economic censuses and non-agricultural unincorporated enterprise (excluding construction) surveys, it does not provide corresponding data with regard to the delivery of credit. Hence, we have used RBI data for SCBs credit to rural manufacturing in Assam by excluding the credit data for mining and quarrying, electricity, gas and water supply from that of Industry. However, such corrections have not been done for Small Borrowal Accounts (SBA) as it is not available at occupational disaggregation levels within the industry. Further, the non-manufacturing occupations constitute a minuscule proportion of SBA data for rural industry. Nevertheless, RBI provides the aforesaid data for outstanding credit and number of accounts on a financial year-end basis, the latest available data is for 2021. We have used the said data for the last 15 years i.e., 2007 to 2021, in terms of the financial years, the period is 2006-07 to 2020-21. We have chosen the aforesaid length because we want to assess the impact of regime change by taking 2014 as the breakpoint and dividing the entire period into two sub-periods (Period I: 2007-14 and Period II: 2014-21) with an equal number of data points on both sides. We have estimated the growth rates for the two subperiods as well as for the entire period using the following exponential function.

$$y = ab'; \text{ where } t \text{ is time, } t = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n$$

Accordingly, we have fitted a semi-log-linear model by the OLS method to estimate the growth rates as follows.

$$\ln y = \ln a + t \ln b$$

Where $\ln b$ gives the Annual Average Growth Rate (AAGR) and $e^{\ln b} - 1$, gives the Compound Average Growth Rate (CAGR).

In order to use the full information and avoid discontinuity bias in estimating growth rates for two sub-periods, we have used the kinked exponential model (Boyce 1986) by imposing linear restriction (Poirier, 1976) for the period k i.e., 2014.

$$\ln y_t = \alpha_1 D_1 + \alpha_2 D_2 + (\beta_1 D_1 + \beta_2 D_2)t + u_t \quad (1)$$

D_1 is the dummy variable that takes the values 1 during the sub-period 1 and 0 otherwise. Similarly, D_2 is the dummy variable which takes the value 1 for the sub-period 2 and 0 otherwise. In more general terms, D_j is the dummy variable that takes the value 1 in the j^{th} sub-period and 0 otherwise. Equation (1) is basically an amalgamation of the following two equations.

$$\ln y = \alpha_1 a + \beta_1 t; \text{ where } t = 1, 2, 3, \dots, k$$

$$\ln y = \alpha_2 a + \beta_2 t; \text{ where } t = k, k + 1, k + 2, \dots, n$$

Assuming that the series is broken at point k. The discontinuity between the two trend lines can be eliminated via a linear restriction such that they intersect at the breakpoint k:

$$\alpha_1 a + \beta_1 k = \alpha_2 a + \beta_2 k \quad (2)$$

Substituting for α_2 (and noting that $\alpha_1 D_1 + \alpha_1 D_2 = \alpha_1$) in equation (1) we get the restricted form:

$$\ln y_t = \alpha_1 + \beta_1(D_1 t + D_2 k) + \beta_2(D_2 t - D_2 k) + u_t \quad (3)$$

Like the previous, from the estimates of β_1 & β_2 in equation (3) we can estimate AAGR and CAGR for the two sub-periods.

Apart from estimating the growth rate we have also estimated the instability index for the aforesaid two periods using the methodology suggested by Wddy and Dellavalle (1978). In contrast to a CV which shows the variation of the variable from its mean, this index shows the deviation from its path of trend.

However, before estimating the growth rate and instability, we have deflated the credit data i.e., outstanding amount with deflator for Gross Domestic Fixed Capital (GDFC) calculated by the ratio of current price to constant price for the base year 2011-12, using back series data published by RBI.

3. Analysis & Discussion

The delivery of SCBs credit to manufacturing in rural Assam is analyzed primarily in terms of its changing share and growth from both overall and comparative perspectives. Overall perspective means the entire period under consideration, whereas by comparative perspective we mean a comparison between the two sub-periods Period- I (2007-14) and Period-II (2014-21). Each of the aforesaid analysis is discussed below in turn.

3.1 The Overall Trend: Shares and Growth

In this subsection, apart from shares and growth, we have analyzed the movement of the average size of credit for manufacturing in rural Assam. Further, we have also tried to explain the trends in terms of growth of SCBs credit to; SBA, a few key sectors of the rural economy, and we call those some explanatory trends.

(a) The Share of Manufacturing in Rural Credit

During the entire period under consideration, the share of manufacturing in total rural credit of Assam has gone down from as high as 22 percent in 2008 to as low as 5 percent in 2021. Also, when we compare the average share during the last three years with that of the first three years, the picture is almost similar—it has gone down from 21 percent to 7 percent (Table 1). In fact, barring a couple of years like 2008, 2013, and 2017, the decline has been continuous.

Table 1
Share and Average Size of Manufacturing Credit in Rural Assam

Sl. No.	Year	Rural Manufacturing		Total Rural	Share of Man- ufacturing in Total Rural (in)	Average Size of Credit for Rural Man- ufacturing (Rs. Lakh)
		Outstand- ing Amount (in Rs. Lakhs)	No of Accounts			
		A	B	C	(A/C)*100	A/B
1	2007	105110	32969	626872	17	3.18
2	2008	136589	28202	634862	22	4.84
3	2009	104000	26929	529455	20	3.86
4	2010	72135	27222	626219	12	2.65
5	2011	43432	24179	567557	8	1.80
6	2012	39499	23898	637356	6	1.65
7	2013	80970	44931	725069	11	1.80
8	2014	50915	42803	698948	7	1.19
9	2015	46799	40819	763029	6	1.15
10	2016	54749	50475	1020872	5	1.08
11	2017	92936	103266	1292969	7	0.90
12	2018	83052	97356	1331619	6	0.85
13	2019	77407	106211	1355313	6	0.73
14	2020	80907	106618	1570840	5	0.75
15	2021	91785	138502	1821840	5	0.66
16	Mean (1 st 3 Yrs.)	115233	29367	597063	19	4
17	Mean (last 3 Yrs.)	83366	117110	1582664	5	1
18	Mean (1 st Period)	79081	31392	630792	13	3
19	Mean (2 nd Period)	72319	85756	1231929	6	1

Source: Computed from Basic Statistical Returns for Commercial Banks, Vol.1, RBI, Various Issues.

(b) Growth of SCBs Credit to Rural Manufacturing

The overall declining trend of SCBs credit for manufacturing in rural Assam is also evident in terms of its absolute and relative growth. During the entire period

of 2007-21, in contrast to significant growth in total rural credit, the credit to rural manufacturing declined. The former has grown at around 9 percent while the latter has declined by around 1 percent in terms of CAGR (Table 2).

Table 2
Growth of SCBs Credit in Rural Assam (CAGR in %)

Characteristics	Variable	PERIOD I 2007-14	PERIOD II 2014-21	WHOLE PERIOD 2007-21
Credit to Rural Manufacturing	Account	5.49	22.37***	13.61***
	Outstanding Amount	-11.73**	11.19*	-0.93
Rural Trade	Outstanding Amount	5.17	22.15*	13.34***
Rural Personal Loans	Outstanding Amount	0.43	17.16***	8.48***
	Account	-1.26	5.82***	2.22**
Rural Small Borrowal Accounts for Industry	Account	5.33	25.47***	14.96***
	Outstanding Amount	-3.77	70.20***	27.98***
Rural Credit to Non-agricultural & Non-Industry	Outstanding Amount	-0.13	17.89***	8.51***
Overall Rural	Outstanding Amount	3.17***	15.12*	8.98***
Non-Rural Credit to Assam	Outstanding Amount	10.53***	11.17***	10.85***
Gross Bank Credit to ASSAM	Outstanding Amount	8.35***	12.23***	10.27***

Level of Significance: * p< 0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Source: Authors Calculations.

+: Annual Average Growth Rates (AAGR) are presented in Table 2A in appendix.

The negative growth indicates that it has declined in absolute terms in various years. In fact, it has been so in 8 out of 15 years under consideration. The outstanding amount of credit to rural manufacturing in 2021 is sufficiently lower than that of 2007 and the picture is not different when we compare its initial 3 years average with that of end 3 years (Table 1). Thus, the deceleration in the delivery of SCBs credit to manufacturing in rural Assam during 2007-21 is apparent.

(c) *Average Size of Credit and Growth of SBA*

The picture that appears above is further murky when we contrast the growth of the outstanding amount with that of the number of accounts. In contrast to

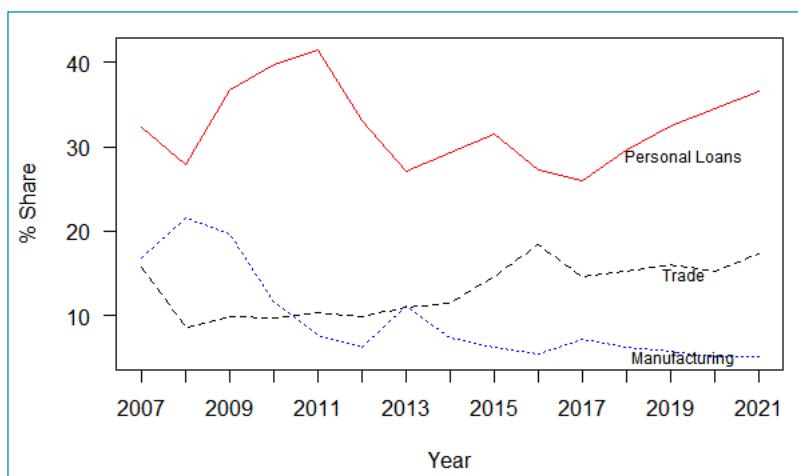
negative 1 percent growth in outstanding amount, the number of accounts for rural manufacturing has grown by almost 14 percent (Table 2). This indicates that the average size of credit has declined by almost 15 percent in terms of CAGR. In absolute terms, it has declined from as high as rupees 4.84 lakhs in 2008 to a meager of rupees 0.73 lakhs in 2019 and has remained around there since then. The decline in the average share of credit is corroborated by the phenomenal growth of outstanding credit and account of SBA. The number of accounts and outstanding credit for SBA has exhibited a CAGR of around 28 percent and 15 percent respectively (Table 2). The overall picture in a sense suggests a huge demand-supply gap in the delivery of SCBs credit to rural manufacturing in Assam.

(d) Some Explanatory Trends

Nevertheless, the aforesaid deceleration could have been either due to the same in total rural credit in comparison to its non-rural counterparts such as semi-urban and urban areas or due to the diversion of credit to other sectors of the rural economy or both.

The share of rural area in total gross bank credit of Assam has declined considerably over the years, of course, there are a few years, especially after 2014, when it increased but it has never been able to attend its initial levels (Figure 3). This is also evident from their respective growth rates. During the entire period, the CAGR of rural credit has remained behind that of total gross bank credit to Assam. As a consequence, the CAGR of non-rural credit outstrips that of rural credit during 2017-21 (Table 2).

Figure 1
SCBs Credit to Manufacturing, Trade & Personal Loan in Rural Assam



In order to explore some possible explanations, we glance at other important constituents of the rural economy, excluding agriculture, as the latter is usually credit-starved. Nevertheless, a snapshot of SCBs credit to other sectors suggests that the supply has increased almost consistently for trade and off late for personal

loans (Figure 1). Their respective growth during the entire period far outstrips that of rural manufacturing (Table 2). Their exorbitant growth assumes significance as they account for more than 50 percent of rural non-agricultural credit on an average basis. Further, in contrast to manufacturing, the high share of personal loans and its uptick in recent years is a matter of concern, as the latter is meant for consumption purposes.

However, the deceleration in the delivery of SCBs credit to rural manufacturing in Assam may be attributed to both its insufficient flow and diversion within the rural economy.

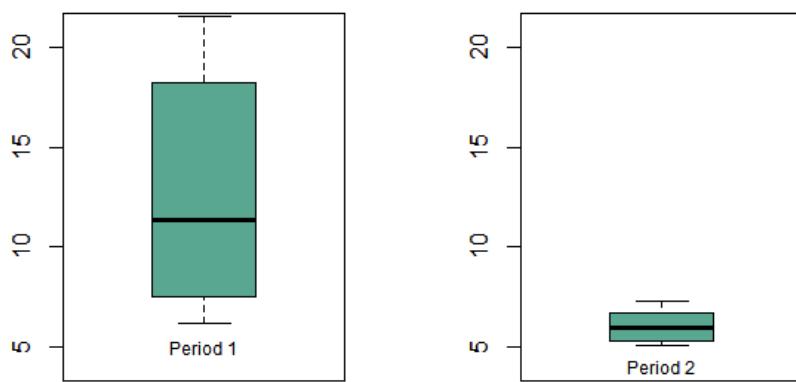
3.2 Comparative Trends: Change in Shares, Instability & Growth

In this section, we have attempted to dissect the overall trend in the delivery of SCBs credit to manufacturing in rural Assam, between the two sub-periods; Period-I (2007-14) and Period-II (2014-21) taking the regime change into account, as maintained earlier. Besides, we have assessed its instability during the aforesaid two sub-periods and like that of the previous section, we have traced some explanatory trends.

(a) *Changing Shares and Instability*

As observed in the previous subsection, the share of manufacturing credit in total rural credit has declined across the periods under consideration. The mean share, which was 13 percent during the 1st period, decline to 6 percent during 2nd period (Table 1). The median share also depicts a similar picture (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Share of Manufacturing in Rural Credit of Assam: Period I Vs Period II



In fact, the box plots reveal a lesser spread during the 2nd period than that of the 1st period. This indicates that the rate of decline in the share of manufacturing in total rural credit is less pronounced during the 2nd period in comparison to that of the 1st period. During the 1st period, it declined to a meager 7 percent in 2014 from a peak of 22 percent during 2008, but during the 2nd period, it varied between

just 7-5 percent. This also indicates better consistency in the delivery of credit for unorganized manufacturing during the 2nd period than that of the 1st period.

The expansion of economic activity in any sector not only depends on the flow of credit but also on the consistency of its delivery. Consistency is assessed through the instability index Wddy and Dellavalle (1978), as mentioned in the previous section. The estimated instability index suggests that the instability in the delivery of SCBs credit to rural manufacturing has reduced to 1.53 percent in period II from 3.16 percent in the period I.

Nevertheless, it may be safely asserted that during the II period, the share of manufacturing in rural credit has more or less stagnated or its continuous decline seems to have been arrested. These relative improvements in the scenario during the 2nd period are also reflected in terms of growth rates.

(b) The Changing Rates of Growth

The gap between the growth of total credit and that manufacturing in rural Assam has narrowed down during the 2nd period in comparison to that of the 1st period. The gap during the 1st period was around 15 which came down to just 4 percent during the 2nd period. Such improvement has been in the face of robust growth of rural credit during the 2nd period over the 1st period. The CAGR moved from a meager 3 percent in the 1st period to around 15 percent during the 2nd period. This indicates that compared to the 1st period there has been a considerable improvement in the growth of SCBs credit to rural manufacturing during the 2nd period. The CAGR which was around -12 percent in period 1 improved to around 11 percent in period 2.

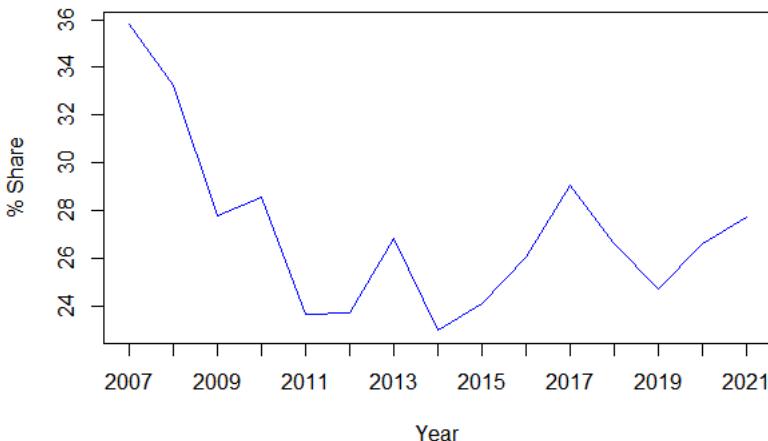
Importantly, for rural manufacturing, the recovery in credit growth during period 2, has been accompanied by significantly higher growth in a number of accounts. Compared to around 5 percent CAGR in period I, the number of accounts in period 2 grew by 22 percent. This has contributed to the erosion in the average size of the credit. The average size of credit during period II went down to rupees 1 lakh from rupees 3 lakh during period I. This is corroborated by the phenomenal growth of credit and high growth in the number of accounts for small borrowers of rural industry, during the 2nd period in comparison to that of the 1st period.

(c) The Change in Explanatory Trends

The relative improvement in the delivery of SCBs credit to rural manufacturing in period II could be either due to a similar trend in total rural credit or due adverse trends in credit for other sectors of the rural economy or both.

During the II period, although the share of rural credit in gross bank credit of Assam has not attended the pick of 1st period, an uptick is clearly visible (Figure 3).

Figure 3
Share of Rural in Total Credit of Assam



Further, the rural credit exhibits relatively better growth during period II. In fact, it has been better than that of gross bank credit for Assam. During period II, rural credit has grown at the CAGR of 15 percent whereas the gross bank credit has growth at the CAGR of around 10 percent. Also, the former gone up from a meagre 3 percent in Period I to 15 percent during Period II while the later has gone up from 8 percent in period I to around just 12 percent in period II (Table 2).

On the contrary, when we look at credit growth for other important constituents of rural economy excluding agriculture, we find that credit growth for trade and personal loan has deteriorated in 2nd period compared to the 1st period. In other words, there is relatively less diversion of rural credit from manufacturing during the 2nd period.

4. Conclusion

The state of unemployment and poverty in India, in general, and in the rural economy, in particular, amply suggests that our reliance on urban industrial sectors as a panacea for development has grossly failed. Not only the trickle-down theory has failed but also the nature of our economic growth in recent years has transited from jobless to job loss type. In these situations, if anything can address the distress in the countryside, including the issue of environmental sustainability, it is the rural manufacturing sector, as it is one of the significant parts of RNFS. This is truer for a state like Assam since nearly 84 percent of its population resides in its villages. But the rural manufacturing sector is largely dominated by primitive home-based units that hardly use any capital and mostly operate at a substantial level. Their transition to modern enterprises is constrained by several factors and one of them is a lack of access to institutional finance. The major sources of institutional finance in India are the SCBs. On the other hand, on the planks of development, there has been a political change both at center and the state almost

since 2014. Against this backdrop, the study aimed at assessing the delivery of SCBs credit to rural manufacturing in the state of Assam from both overall (2007-2021) and comparative perspectives (Period I: 2007-14 & Period II: 2014-21).

The findings of this study suggest that SCBs credit for manufacturing in rural Assam has declined considerably in terms of share, average size, and growth, during the entire period under consideration. This could be because of the diversion of credit to other key non-agricultural and non-industrial sectors of the economy, especially trade and personal loans, as appears from their respective growth rates and rising share in total rural credit. However, when we contrast the 2nd period with the 1st, we see a silver lining in dark clouds. There has been little improvement in terms of growth and stability in the delivery of credit to rural manufacturing, though not in terms of its share in total credit. This has also been corroborated by the relative decline in the growth of credit supply to its major competing sectors in the rural economy. Last but not the least, an increase in the supply of credit to manufacturing in rural Assam on a continuous basis could be one of the policy suggestions of this study.

5. Limitation

The study however suffers from various limitations and three important among them could be the followings. Firstly, there is a possibility of exclusion and inclusion errors in the credit data for manufacturing in Rural Assam. Although SCBs are the major source, the data for other formal sources like microfinance, no matter whatever little they contribute, is not readily available. Neither have we had adequate data pertaining to informal sources of credit, on which the rural folks noticeably depend. Secondly, establishing a causal nexus between regime change and delivery of SCBs credit is beyond the scope of the present study. Finally, 2014-21, is not a very large period to assess the impact of regime change on the delivery of credit for manufacturing in rural Assam.

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Appendix

Table 2A
Growth of SCBs Credit in Rural Assam (AAGR in %)

Characteristics	Variable	Period-I 2007-14	Period-II 2014-21	Whole Period 2007-21
Credit to Rural Manufacturing	Account	5.34	20.18***	12.76***
	Outstanding Amount	-12.48**	10.61*	-0.93
Rural Trade	Outstanding Amount	5.05	20.00***	12.52***
Rural Personal Loans	Outstanding Amount	0.43	15.84***	8.14***
	Account	-1.26	5.65***	2.20***
Rural Small Borrowal Accounts Industry	Account	5.20	22.69***	13.94***
	Outstanding Amount	-3.84	53.18***	24.67***
Rural Credit to Non-agricultural & Non-Industry	Outstanding Amount	-0.12	16.45***	8.17***
Overall Rural	Outstanding Amount	3.12*	14.08***	8.60***
Non-Rural Credit to Assam	Outstanding Amount	10.01***	10.59***	10.30***
Gross Bank Credit to ASSAM	Outstanding Amount	8.02***	11.53***	9.78***
Level of Significance: * p< 0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001				

Factors Hindering Tea Tribe Community of Assam in Accessing Social Security Schemes: A Study

Ritwika Patgiri and Syed S Kazi*

The Government of India has introduced four labour codes – the Code on Wages, Social Security Code, Industrial Relations Code, and Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code which are supposed to replace the 29 labour laws. Since 90% of India's workforce is in the unorganized sector, the Government of India wants to ensure that all informal and unorganized workers benefit from minimum wage and social security laws through these four codes. The Social Security Code empowers the Centre to notify various social security schemes for the benefit of all workers, organized or unorganized. The tea tribe community of Assam is one of the most vulnerable groups in the state while they produce 53% of India's total tea production. This paper is an attempt to understand the factors that affect access to public and social protection schemes, information on them, enrolment, and linkages of the tea tribe community. This paper attempts to bridge the gap on information needed for the implementation of the Social Security Code on the tea community of Assam and how the new Code might benefit the community.

Keywords: Tea tribe, Assam, Social security, Labour code, Vulnerability

1. Background

The tea garden community, also known as Tea and Ex-Tea Garden Tribes, recognized as Other Backward Classes (OBCs) by the Government, is one of the most vulnerable socio-economic groups in the state of Assam. The community constitutes 20 per cent of the state's population of 3.5 crore and plays the most important role in the production of tea in India, producing about 53% of the total tea production of the country. As such, their contribution to the economy of the state and the country is significant. Despite this, the community remains one of the most vulnerable communities in the state as well as the country, socially, economically, as well as politically.

We can define socio-economic vulnerability in terms of vulnerability to multiple stressors and shocks, including abuse, lower standard of living, socio-economic exclusion, and natural hazards. The myriad ways the tea community remains socio-economically vulnerable can also be understood by looking at the housing conditions of the tea workers, which are dilapidated while toilets are non-existent. Most workers do not have access to safe drinking water and water-borne diseases like typhoid and cholera are fairly prevalent. According to a news report in 2018, one-third of 170 tea plantations of Dibrugarh did not have toilet facilities for tea workers despite being mandated by the law. It is noteworthy that Dibrugarh is

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India's largest tea-producing district, with some 25 per cent of its population living in estates. As per the Plantation Labour Act, tea estates are mandated to provide 8ftx 6ft bath-cum-latrine to every labour quarter¹.

Similarly, the political vulnerability of the tea community of Assam has a long history. The tea workers of Assam have been facing identity conflict ever since their arrival in the region. The demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status by the tea tribe is not a recent struggle. Their struggle can be seen as one of assertion of identity as well as a political claim for citizenship rights. Organisations such as the All Assam Tea Tribe Students' Association (AATTSA), the All Adivasi Students' Association of Assam (AASAA), and tea workers' unions have played an important role in this struggle of identity assertion. The struggle has also been critical of the role of government as well as political parties (Sharma and Khan, 2018).

Why is it important to talk about the vulnerabilities of the tea community? Research has seen that the deplorable socioeconomic condition of this community has been a cause for their further exploitation (Sharma 2012). This can be further understood by analyzing the wage rate of the tea workers of the state. The wages of the tea workers are below the minimum wage for Assam's unskilled agricultural workers. The workers earn wages lower than the minimum daily wage (the tea workers earn Rs 157 per day while the minimum daily wage in Assam is Rs 240). Research has shown that only half of the tea workers have access to BPL ration cards. One-third of the tea workers experience recurrent debt. The tea workers have not seen a hike in their wage in the last 15-20 years.

The problem concerning the social welfare of the vast number of tea workers constituted one of the major considerations of the Assam Government since independence (Pio, 1990). In order to achieve socio-economic development of the tea garden community and provision of basic and need based entitlement and social protection support, the Government of Assam has been implementing welfare schemes through a separate Directorate viz. the Directorate for Welfare of Tea and Ex-Tea Garden Tribes, Assam since 1983-1984 for speedy implementation of welfare schemes. In 2004, the State government created the Tea Tribes Welfare Directorate in 2004 as Administrative Department with a multi sector strategy with a basket of welfare schemes in the areas of education, health, sports and youth welfare, culture, agriculture, skill development, public health and social welfare constitute the major concerns of the Tea Tribes Welfare Directorate (TTWD, Assam). Similarly, the Tea Board of India (under Ministry of Commerce & Industry) has come out with critical schemes and welfare programmes for the tea community (Tea Board, India).

In July 2019, the State Chief Minister focused on the socio-economic acceleration of Tea Tribes Community and stated that the implementation of welfare schemes

¹ Bose, P.R. (2018, June 14). *Assam Tea Workers Yet to Have Access to Toilets*. The Hindu Business Line. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/assam-tea-workers-yet-to-have-access-to-toilets/article24166007.ece>

has to be expedited so that the tea tribe community across all segments enjoys the benefits of the schemes (The Sentinel, 2019). That along with expeditious implementation of the welfare schemes, awareness generation among the grass root level members of the tea tribe community holds the key for the success of the government schemes (The Sentinel, 2019). Unless the beneficiaries are made conscious of this aspect, the purpose of social security programme is likely to be remain under fulfilled. (Pio, 1990).

2. What Can Vulnerability Do to a Community?

Vulnerability is a trap, where one kinds of vulnerability leads to another. Inability to access public schemes can lead to further vulnerabilities and this has been the case for the tea community in Assam. There is a lack of wider socio-economic-institutional arrangements in the absence of which have contributed to a poor and difficult access to basic amenities, services and entitlements by and for the tea garden community in Assam.

It is seen from past research that in situations of vulnerability, the socio-psychological state of minds is pushed deeper in silos and silence with no confidence or will to seek remedies or entitlements where the surroundings are appeared to have played a vicious role in distancing the vulnerable from the mainstreams. The common challenges as identified and faced by the lay tea tribe community member are ones that includes inconsistent or incomplete policies regarding eligibility, unscientific and unplanned enrolment of beneficiaries, inability to identify and enroll members, lack of portability, lack of understanding of the schemes, affordability, lack of trust in service agencies and local authorities and officials, and unfavorable timing and situational reasons. Past studies have largely identified factors in absence or lack of working conditions, lack of basic amenities and services of and for the tea garden working community without much focus on limitations around access to government schemes, social protection measures so critical of strengthening the capacities of tea households and supporting their decent living needs.

It is, thus, important to understand why the tea tribe community faces issues in availing public schemes and social protection information meant for them. This paper offers an in-depth understanding the access barriers of the tea community in availing public schemes information and enrolment and how the Social Security Code can benefit the community.

3. Brief overview of Public Schemes for the Tea Tribe Community

One of the prime arguments in favour of public schemes has been its ability to protect citizens of vulnerable and poorer segments. It is seen that schemes help in reducing vulnerability across the life-cycle of vulnerable population in such a way that the benefits are continuous and cumulative in total impact and also provide a regular and predictable household income (Cain, 2009).

There are two sets of public schemes targeted to reach out to the tea tribe communities in the State – (1) Special and focused schemes by the Tea Tribe Welfare Directorate (TTWD), and (2) Universal schemes by other State departments and Central government run schemes. The geographical context of the tea tribe community residing in a distinctly designated tea estates owned, run and managed by tea estate owners and corporate, makes a special case of distinctness of the community and their socioeconomic conditions and hence special provisions for empowerment of the community and their mainstreaming efforts.

In order to achieve socio-economic development of the tea tribes people, the Government of Assam have been implementing welfare schemes through a separate Directorate viz. Directorate for Welfare of Tea & Ex-Tea Garden Tribe, Assam since 1983-1984 for speed implementation of welfare schemes (TTWD, Assam). The mandate of the TTWD has been listed across a wide range of priorities and issues that it seeks to undertake for the overall development and empowerment of the community.

The TTWD over the years have been focusing on key need based areas and accordingly formulating schemes to deliver at community level. The schemes priority includes - Awareness Programme on Child/Human Trafficking, Family Planning, Legal Awareness, Health etc., Coaching for Higher Studies, Distribution of Power Tiller under Foigs, Financial Assistance for Higher Studies, Furniture and Furnishing Material for Tea Tribes Boys and Girls Hostel, Grants to Patients Suffering from Cancer and Malignant Disease, Grants to Women SHGs, Insurance Premium @ Rs.12.00 to 10.00 Lakh Beneficiaries, Post-Metric Scholarship for Tea and Tea Gardens, Pre-Metric Scholarship of Tea Garden etc., Promotion Sports and Youth Welfare Activities, Purchase of Training Materials/Equipment, Rural Water Supply, and Training of ANM for Self-Employment (TTWD, Assam). Guidelines of various schemes are also being put on the site for reference.

The department is also working on an Online Application System for scholarships to make the supply and demand process more streamlined. In October 2018, the State Chief Minister launched the Wage Compensation Scheme for Pregnant Women in tea gardens of the state. Under the scheme, each pregnant woman in tea gardens will get a sum of Rs 12,000 so that she can take better care of herself and her unborn baby without compromising the livelihood of her family. An amount of more than Rs 55 crore had been allotted in the State Health Budget for the financial year 2018-19 for this scheme which will benefit nearly 48,000 pregnant women every year. All temporary, permanent or non-workers living within the tea garden areas will be eligible for the scheme.

There are also grants for young meritorious students from the community for pursuing higher education. Grants have been given for pursuing entrepreneurship by the young people. 10,000 tea tribe youths will be provided one-time grant of Rs 25000 for encouraging entrepreneurship and one-time grant of Rs 10,000 would

also be provided to the meritorious students of the community who have passed HSLC and HS examinations with success (The Assam Tribune, 2019).

There are schemes to include housing aspect of the community as well. Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government will provide housing benefits that are at par with PMAY benefits subject to the garden authorities' willingness to provide long term lease in the name of the tea garden workers.

The universal schemes of other departments that equally covers and ought to cover the tea tribe community includes Mamoni scheme meant for pregnant women to encourage pregnant women to undergo at least 3 ante-natal checkups which are helpful in identifying danger signs during pregnancy with small financial aid (Assams Info, 2015); Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) with the objective of reducing maternal and neo-natal mortality by promoting institutional delivery among the poor pregnant women (HFW Dept. Assam).; the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) run by the Panchayat and Rural Development Department. One key aspect that comes to the fore is in such universality of schemes made out to reach the tea tribe community is, such practice has led to the proliferation of narrowly targeted interventions often administered by different government agencies, which are increasingly difficult to coordinate (Cook, 2009).

4. Methodology

The paper uses data from qualitative interviews and focus group discussions. The data collection was done in two parts. These were – (1) key informant / participant interviews via semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, and (2) focus group discussions (FGDs). The purpose of FGDs was to know the perceptions and views of stakeholders, especially the tea tribe community members, on the access aspects of public schemes and benefits for the tea tribe community and to identify the barriers they face in regard to schemes information, facilitation, grievances and end benefits including any issues pertaining to scheme service providers. Each of the potential target groups was stratified by sex (male/female) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Target Groups for Focused Group Discussions

Targeted population	Number of groups
Tea garden workers	12
Front line service providers and staff	6
Tea tribe district and Panchayat level members and staff	6
Total	24

For the key informant interviews, the stakeholders were identified by secondary content and information review and grouped into broad categories such as the Garden Managers, Welfare Officers, Sub-divisional Welfare Officers, Chairman of Sub-divisional Beneficiary Selection Committee, TTWD senior officers, NGOs, SHGs, community opinion and traditional leaders of the tea garden communities. Key informants from each of these categories were identified and interviewed (Table 2).

Table 2
Category of key informants

Category	Number
Sub-divisional Welfare Officers	6
Scheme managers	5
Additional District Deputy Commissioners in charge of Tea and Ex-tea tribe welfare	3
Director of Tea Tribe Welfare Department	1
Chairman of Sub-divisional Beneficiary Selection Committee	6
Social welfare officers	1
Panchayat Presidents, Secretary (with tea tribe community majority population)	12
NGO / CSO representatives	8
Member of Legislative Assembly	1
Community leaders/opinion leaders	12
Total	55

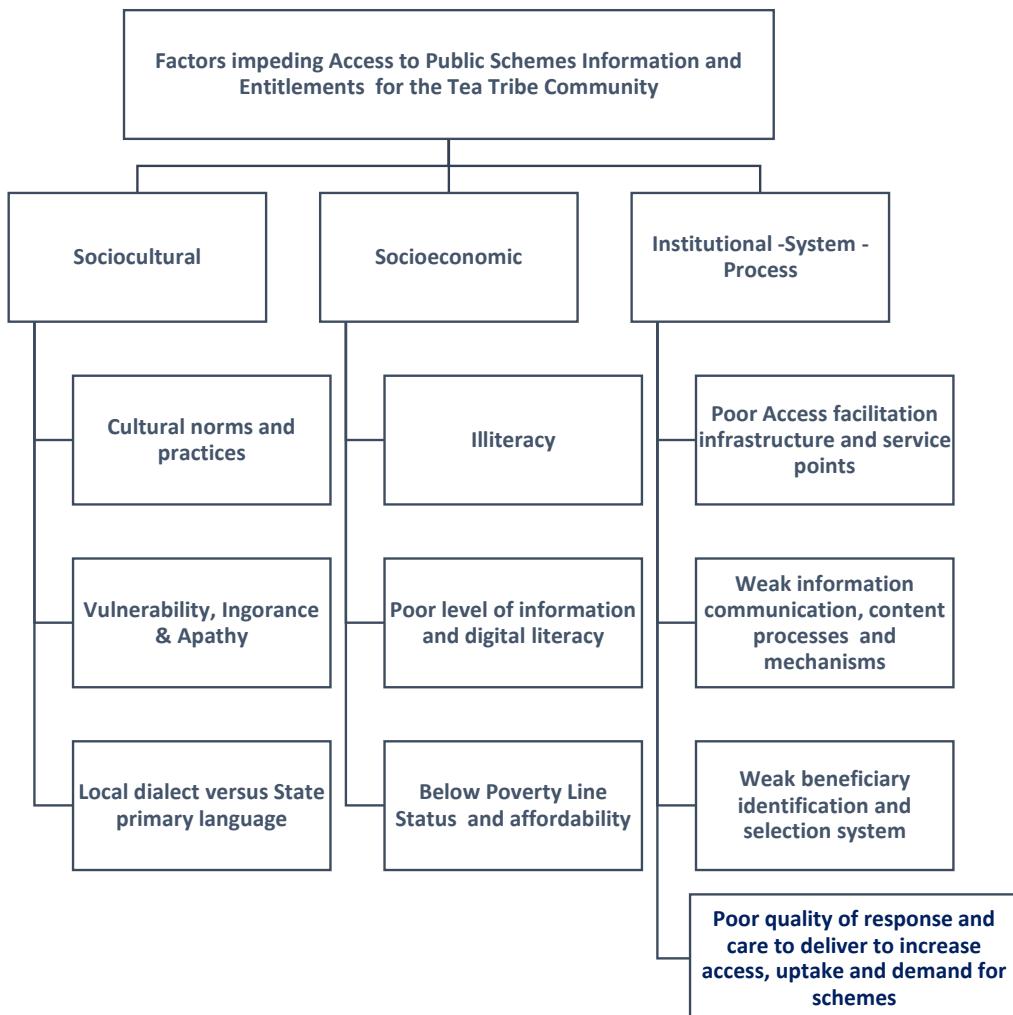
The data was collected in six selected tea tribe prominent districts including the two largest districts with tea tribe population of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia in upper Assam region. These selected districts presented facts and incidences of information and entitlement exclusion for the community, along with lower level of key socioeconomic indicators like health and hygiene, safe drinking water, school dropouts, unemployment, and widespread ignorance and apathy. This also has related relational connect with the normal non-tea garden community residing in the same Panchayat and villages and problems therein. The exclusion scenario includes both that are forcefully excluded as well voluntary excluded population due to lack of interest or apathy.

The selection of these districts was informed by their concentration of tea tribe population, state geographical divisions and distinctions, and high level of representation of tea tribe leaders, associations and agencies involved. Generic underdevelopment of the tea tribe community within these districts has been another determinant for selection.

5. Results and Findings

Our research found that constraints in accessing information are cultural, social, as well as economic. These have been categorized as shown in the figure below.

Figure 1
Schematic of Results: Themes and Categories



Socio-cultural Factors Hindering Access

- **Cultural norms and practices**

Past literature has seen that social and cultural norms in the form of closed social behavior can be a major constraint in accessing schemes and benefits. This was seen to be true for the tea community of Assam as well. A male tea garden worker from Dhekiajuli in Sonitpur District, Assam, describes a situation:

"We have been living in such remote and closed world for ages. We are not smart or our behaviour and communication abilities are still not developed to go out and interact with somebody from outside our community. In that case, you cannot expect the workers to go out and search for information, services and benefits from agencies and authorities, who are managed by people from largely Assamese community." (FGD-Dhekiajuli, Sonitpur, Assam).

The tea tribe communities have been a working class of tea garden labourers and families, residing in enclosed tea garden boundaries in garden lines (colonies). The formulation and display of social behaviour in an inter-community or society context and intra versus wider social context has been by and large restricted and controlled due to overall social, economic reasons largely 'managed' by tea garden management and authorities. In such closed behaviour context, the expectations from the broad community to come out, engage and interact with 'outsiders' as in service agencies, authorities and seek information, entitlement and benefits is a limiting one.

Following some of the old practices also inhibits access to schemes and entitlements. For example, going for home delivery of new born instead of institutional delivery limits a family to get institutional benefits for the pregnant women, new born child and the mother. Young girls cannot easily go out of homes and look for entitlement information and benefits as they are generally asked not out to venture out of homes.

- **Vulnerability, Ignorance and Apathy**

The results show that, issues of health conditions, remoteness of garden and residence, high level of ignorance of developments around including government programmes and provisions, situation of information poverty and flow, apathy in indifference to schemes and benefits and overall social and community environment in which the tea tribe community resides have restricted access to schemes in real time and contexts. The high level of alcoholism amongst the garden workers (the male folks) with local brew and supply have also affected families and increased vulnerability. A higher level of illiteracy, high level of school dropouts, garden work terms and conditions and prime working hours from morning till evening on daily wage basis are other vulnerability indices especially for the women who constitute the prime labourwork force.

The following quotes describe the vulnerability of the poor during discussions in male and female focus groups:

"My man doesn't work. He does nothing. I work in garden and have to go daily to work from morning 7 am to evening 4 pm. Where do I get time to look for schemes information and benefits? Whatever I hear from others or fellow workers, I try to access." (IDI – Singri Tea Estate)

"We stay in a remote location. Whatever scheme comes or not, we don't know even. And no body informs us also." (FGD-Jorhat).

"The parents go to work in garden in the morning. The children have a choice to go or not to go to school that opens in later hours and there are no one at home to ensure that they goes to school. Out of 10, 5 children do not go to school on regular basis. In that case, how the children or the family can get benefit from any scheme." (IDI, Panchayat President, Dibrugarh district).

- **Language and Dialect**

Assamese is the major lingua franca of Assam. It is the primary language in official communication as well along with English language mode of information and communication for programmes and activities. The tea garden community speaks, understands and communicates in 'Sadri' a garden specific local dialect in an intra and inter mode of information and communication within and amongst the tea gardens, though Assamese is used intermittently. Almost all correspondences and communications in print and documents are in English and Assamese language, wherever it seemed feasible based on layers of services being designed, executed and delivered. The higher level of illiteracy and lack of even functional literacy for many has acted as a barrier in understanding any communication or documents, review those and process the same for their own benefits. There have been instances when applications sought along with set guidelines are not well understood and in the process, applications filled incorrectly along with irrelevant documents are submitted to avail any particular scheme and eventually applications getting rejected. This is how a district level Sub-divisional beneficiary selection committee Chairman observed the situation:

"The level of ignorance among the normal and average garden resident worker is high. Recently, we have asked for applications for Swahid Dayal Das Self Employment Scheme under Tea Tribe Welfare Directorate of Assam. While we were scrutinizing the documents required along with the application forms, we realized that many applicants have submitted wrong documents along with incorrect and incomplete application forms. Either they have not gone through the scheme details or did not understand the scheme provisions. In that case, the applications are bound to be rejected and the uptake for the scheme will be low." (IDI, Chairman, Selection Committee, Jorhat Sub Division).

Socioeconomic factors hindering access

The vulnerability of the tea tribe community and their access to critical public schemes and social protection benefits has equally being limited by key socioeconomic factors. Despite having relevance and urge to get scheme benefits, there are these barriers that have slowed down the uptake and demand for schemes and benefits, both specific to the community as well as universal schemes and programmes. In order to streamline and strengthen access for the community and

mainstream their needs and solutions, it is important that sustainable measures and mechanisms are developed and followed to reduce and remove these barriers towards community development and empowerment. We have identified three socioeconomic factors in today's context that has restricted access and enrollment to schemes and benefits for the tea tribe community: 1) Illiteracy, 2) Information and Digital Illiteracy, and 3) Below Poverty Line Status and Affordability.

- **Illiteracy**

Illiteracy is quite as high as 70 percent in a tea garden or estate. Most of the workers are in middle age or towards older age and retirement age and the level of ignorance and written or functional literacy is poor for these segments. Adding further, there is direct proportionate link between women constituted the larger work force as well as high level of illiteracy in them. Add to this the large level of school drop outs before they reach the 5th or 6th standards have little room for real and functional literacy levels who can add value to their lives as well as others. In such a scenario, the basic need to access information, process the same for consumption and following few basic formal and institutional processes by themselves is a distant challenge that have added the access gaps to avail schemes benefits. This is another reason why still many workers are still ignorant about various garden management related entitlements and provisions as well as provisions under Plantation Labour Act, 1950. With this comes, the always and persistent incapacity and under confidence to approach, seek information and question things which may not be or felt unjust and improper. Two discussants have this to share:

"Our reading writing is very less. We find it difficult to read through and understand any document and details. Whatever our garden Sardars and leaders or ward members tell us we follow accordingly. We also pay some money to get few office things done. At times we find helpless." (FGD, Lakhimpur)

- **Poor level of information and digital literacy**

If illiteracy is a barrier towards empowerment and development, then the information and digital illiteracy should be considered as next level barrier towards empowerment in an information and digital society and economic environment driven by knowledge factor. As our society is moving towards digital based social and economic networking, transactions and activities, the governments and agencies are also driven towards Information Communication Technology based measures and mechanisms to further decentralize and democratize reach of public programmes and benefits with new measures in accountability, transparency and neutrality. Local authorities and service agencies are using technology to manage public information and content and facilitate linkages and access to welfare benefits digitally and online. This has required that even the common of the common man have basic awareness, knowledge and functional skills to access information and resources in and through digital means and platforms. The level of information

and digital literacy is a grey area in and within the tea garden communities. Except for few youngsters who have enrolled in some private professional short term courses, the wider majority is still out of the new information and digital revolution, related skills and knowledge and availing opportunities and benefits using this emerging networks and tools. An official has to share this observation related to this bottleneck:

"We run scholarships programme for the tea tribe youth. We have online application system wherein potential applicants have to apply for scholarship benefits online while uploading all relevant documents and testimonials. However, we are finding it difficult to have proper demand and uptake for our scholarships. The reasons we have identified are in poor and low connectivity in tea gardens and lack of provisions and skills and capacities to access our online facilities and apply for scholarships. This is a challenge we are constantly facing." (IDI, Official, Tea Board of India, Guwahati)

In this process, the much advocated and pushed Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and access to public benefits are impeded and not taking place. High level illiteracy, ignorance, apathy and absence of basic pre entitlement documents and identities have affected availing schemes benefit and eventual DBT transfers as sign of a empowered citizen with digital identity and source of strength.

This wide lack of usage of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and digital means and platforms both from demand side and supply to strengthen and improve the above processes and efforts are affecting overall demand, uptake and access of benefits. On demand side, it was understood that community members, especially the youth, are not using or visiting the Department or the District Administration website to get an update of schemes and provisions and approach officials accordingly. They are either not aware of such provisions or doesn't know how to access them. As two of the FGD participants shares their views as follows:

"We do not visit these and see what's there (websites) and we do not know to see them. Someone has to teach them how to see and get information and provisions about schemes," (FGD participant).

A young man who has passed his 12th exam and was asked about scholarships provisions and applying it online, he has to share this:

"I did not get any scholarship and I am not aware of what it is. We do not know how to make online about applying scholarships. Nobody knows," (FGD participant).

- **Below Poverty Line Status and Affordability**

The vulnerability in the tea tribe community majorly stems from several economic reasons and this explains why many from the community are not having timely access to public schemes information and benefits. The total tea garden population constitutes the vast Below Poverty Line (BPL) category and constitutes one of the centrally listed Other Backward Class (OBC) groups. It is accurate to describe the

tea garden population as very poor because they do not have the financial means even to open a bank account with minimum balance, with their earnings as low as INR 167 per day. Going by the definition, the poor cannot afford the very basic necessities of life and a natural consequence they are also excluded from availing any scheme benefits if it involves direct and indirect costs and that below their paying capacity. The distance to access and enquire schemes related information and benefits necessitates losing a day's wage and along with transportation costs involved to the nearest Panchayat or a bank office or health centre works as a big deterrent to venture out and look for scheme related information and opportunities in time. Few participants explain this predicament:

"Many of the workers still do not have bank accounts. Workers find it difficult to open an account with minimum deposits due to their financial constraints and living on daily wages, and therefore they are not eligible to get government benefits including Direct Benefit Transfer benefits. We are trying to work out a solution with the banks." (IDI, Chairman, Sub-divisional Beneficiary Selection Committee, Dibrugarh)

"We have to go to work daily or else we do not get our wages and other benefits like ration. We cannot go to office and get our work done in one day and we cannot go again and again or else we lose our wages and income for living. And who will give money for our travel?" (FGD, workers, Jorhat)

Institutional-System-Process factors impeding access

There exist a number of institutional-system-process wide gaps that find their root in the political, historic, and economic structure of communities and are reinforced by local institutions, administrative designs and layouts and local infrastructure that impact on access to schemes and benefits. Consequently, these factors also impact on the process of enrolling, uptake and demand for schemes and eventual end benefits. Our data analysis reveals four system oriented structural functional factors that have restricted access to schemes and benefits in real time and context: 1) Poor Access facilitation infrastructure and service points, 2) Weak information communication, content processes, mechanisms; 3) Weak processes in identification and selection of beneficiaries; and 4) Poor quality of response and care to deliver to increase access, uptake and demand for schemes.

- Poor access facilitation infrastructure and service points**

Poor information facilitation and support infrastructure and facilities at community and Panchayat level are noted to exclude many from having adequate access to schemes and benefits. As one former President of a Gram Panchayat stated:

"The long distance of gardens and villages, as well as a lack of information, facilitation and support system at Panchayat and community level are the primary reasons why

"many from the tea garden population and others are excluded from getting access to schemes and services" (Past GP President, Jorhat).

This is how one scheme manager at district level puts it:

"We are supposed to register beneficiaries with schemes and enable getting benefits after due diligence but if in the community there is no facility to access information, guidelines, documents, support to process those, and one need to scramble to get these basics, that is how the impediment to access schemes come in" (Dibrugarh).

Lack of access to information and support facilities in tea garden areas because of absence of community or Panchayat based systems and mechanisms in a largely population based that is out of mainstream, vulnerable, illiterate and ignorant subsequently discourage enrolment in the schemes and benefits. Lack of even the basic identity documents that are prerequisites for access also hinders enrolment and uptake. This is how a district level NGO head observed the situation:

"In tea garden areas there are no such facilities at public level that can handhold and facilitate the population for getting access to entitlements and address the very many issues they have in accessing them. Without such facilitation on a sustained basis, the community will continue to have difficulties in timely and smooth access of various government benefits (NGO head, Dibrugarh).

- **Weak information communication, content processes, mechanisms**

The study shows apparent weaknesses in the way information and communication are sent out, information and content processes and mechanisms being pursued, systematic problems, and absence of sustained mechanisms and platforms, all in order to reach out to the entitled communities with critical scheme information and benefits. In other words, the issues are observed in the larger context of governance framework followed or adopted towards entitlement services access and delivery, and more from demand versus supply side. While the public authorities at State department level including the Tea Tribe Welfare Directorate (TTWD) have been actively pursuing a pro-active approach in programmes announcement, new schemes formulation and budgetary provisions, yet the challenges are noticeable as to how and why the announcements and intentions are not actually reaching on the ground. This is in turn affecting budget allocation and provisions on annual basis in designing and implementing schemes for the community every year. There are two aspects to this.

In regard to the universal schemes involves the district administration and its departments, once the details are in from the State authorities. The district departments issues notifications and circulars that is further sent down to Block and Panchayat offices. The role of the block and Panchayat administration has been narrowed down over years related to managing and dealing with specific schemes and entitlements except for dealing with including MNREGA, PM

Awas Yojana, 14th Finance Commission related infrastructure works directly by Panchayats. The usual process understood is notices and circulars published in newspapers and in State and district administration websites, printed circulars sent to district level agencies and at block and Panchayat level, who are further supposed to work further on disseminating and enrolling beneficiaries for various schemes with given timeline and conditions.

Here, the challenges arise in the tea tribe community either not aware or informed about the circulars and notices by visiting websites or reading newspapers, due to their illiteracy and ignorance levels, or neither there exists concentrated and dedicated means and platforms at Panchayat level or even in garden level to make them aware and inform about various welfare schemes and help in facilitation. In this case, many land up in district offices, traveling distances, enquiring about any schemes announced for them.

A tea community unemployed youth puts the situation this way:

"We do not get information about schemes, forms or details at local level or Panchayat. So, we travel to district offices to enquire about any new arrival of schemes. We are not aware of any circulars or notices in internet and how we can afford to get hold of newspaper to know such announcements. If we are lucky, we get information from our peer group or community people," (Local Tea community youth).

Even at Panchayat level, for the tea workers, it is nearly difficult to visit the Panchayat offices to inquire about schemes and provisions with not so responsive and friendly office environment and office staff not 'timely' available in many instances.

"Even if we go to Panchayat, we do not get to know properly about schemes or benefits. They tell us to read few notices on the outside board, and we cannot read and understand them. The people in the Panchayat also do not talk to us properly or have time," (A tea garden worker).

Some members in the tea community felt that any arrangements within the garden area would be better than running around for information and other details. This is because they could get easily, have time to walk into the garden facilities and know about schemes and seek help. Otherwise, they would continue to face such problems. This is how an opinion leader and male participant in the FGD describe the situation:

"The government announces many schemes for us. But it is not reaching us. Until and unless we have community level facilities and support to get those benefits, how can we hop around places to get information and benefits? This we lose our interests to get and avail the benefits," (opinion leader).

"We do not know how and where to go and seek help and support for schemes. Earlier, we used to go once or twice to Panchayat office. Since we did not get proper

response, we cannot keep going regularly as we have to work daily in gardens. We still rely on our Sardars or ward members to share us with any information about benefits. But then again, we need this document, that document to submit applications. If we do not have, we do not apply and do not get anything. Local level support and facilitation will help us," (FGD, tea workers).

Many of the discussants from the tea tribe community are either unaware or ignorant about the existence and role of the Tea Tribe Welfare Directorate (TTWD) as well as the Sub-divisional beneficiary selection committee. The awareness level would perhaps depict a sense of ownership and responsibility on the part of the community as well as to how and why it needs to engage and participate with interest and solidarity with the efforts of these institutions for the overall welfare of the community. This could highlight one aspect that perhaps there is required further push to populate and augment the visibility and promotion and reach of these institutions in the needs and access for entitlement benefits of the tea tribe community at local level. As one male participant shares his view:

"We are not aware of the activities or role and functions of these institutions. If they come in the midst of us and visit us often, then only we will know and can cooperate in their works," (FGD, male participant).

Delays and rejections in getting applied scheme benefits also contribute in the low participation, interest, demand, enrolment and uptake rate. Some respondents explain that they had applied with PM Awas Yojana and ration card but had not received any thing till date. Regarding ration card, not having the card has acted as a barrier in getting other scheme benefits like free ration or opening a bank account. According to some, they have been explained that their applications had been sent to higher offices and this accounted for the delays. This was a source of concern to this group of men and women. Two FGD participants shared this concern in two separate FGDs:

"We registered for Awas Yojana but we have not yet got any update or house benefit. We enquired with Panchayat ward member and President but they have told us that the applications are being processed. Its now long time that we have applied; we may not get this time also," (FGD Participants).

"We do not have ration cards and what we do now. They are also saying that it is not being issued now. How we will get our free ration items and we cannot get other benefits as they ask for ration card proof. This is a problem for us," (FGD participant).

"I do not have a bank account and our people in garden was saying that bank account is necessary to avail benefits and get money in account from government. But how can we open one? They are saying we have to deposit Rupees 500 to open an account. How can we pay that amount? We are daily workers and earn and spend daily basis and no savings," (FGD, participant).

"We have done with our applications for ration cards but still have not received our cards anytime we ask him [the agent] he says it is not ready so when you go you have to pay. That is a problem for us" (FGD, Registered but yet to received Ration card. Dhekiajuli, Sonitpur).

"I have opened bank account and got passbook. Don't know they are saying that it is closed now and it is not working. I am told that it is closed as I was not running the account and I do not have money to run it. I have to apply again. , what can I do about it? I just give up" (FGD, opened account but not functional).

- Weak processes in identification and selection of beneficiaries

Related to this information communication and system lag observed is specific to the tea tribe welfare directorate and related bodies and activities is wider gaps in identification, selection, enrollment of beneficiaries in real time and space.. In order to achieve socio-economic development of tea tribes, there are Sub-divisional Tea and Ex-Tea Tribe Beneficiary Selection committees to implement the welfare schemes as envisaged by the Directorate for Welfare of Tea and Ex-Tea Garden Tribes, Government of Assam. The Directorate share and disseminate about various scheme provisions through its department site and through regular notices and circulars to district level Sub-divisional welfare office and officer (usually a State administrative service official) and sub-divisional level Beneficiary Selection Committees and its Chairman and members. It is the Sub-divisional office and the Committee that is and supposes to play an instrumental role in sharing and disseminating schemes information, provisions, identification and enrollment and selection of beneficiaries for schemes in a year. While a small percentage visits the sub-divisional office to inquire about schemes and provisions, it is the Committee and its members who tries hard to further disseminate about schemes through various garden level workers, Sardars, Panchayat ward members and party workers (as Committees have political affiliations). But even these doesn't seem to work to the best to enroll and select beneficiaries and increase uptake. This is how a Sub-divisional Level Chairman of Beneficiary Selection Committee observed the situation:

"We receive information and communication with documents in paper and pen from Directorate office. We discuss the same at Sub-divisional level with members and officer concerned. We make action plan to implement the schemes and we take responsibility including our members to reach out to community with information and provisions at Garden or Panchayat level. Despite our best of our efforts, we cannot reach to the maximum target population with information and details and in time. On many occasions, we receive application beyond the dead line as well. Also there are many wrong submissions of documents, wrongly filled application forms which get rejected. This means either we have not been successfully able to reach out and make people aware and understand properly or there are incapacities in the community to read and understand various scheme provisions and apply correctly.

We certainly need to fill these gaps but I don't know how to go about," (Chairman of a Beneficiary Selection Committee, Jorhat).

Alternatively, potential beneficiaries get hold of junior or middle level office staff and keeps in regular touch over telephonic conversations to continue the enquiry process who becomes in a way of intermediaries to 'facilitate' at office level.

A tea tribe welfare manager of a tea association office at district level states it this way:

"I try to help people in my own way. They come to me on regular basis and inquire about new schemes and forms. Alternatively, they are also in regular touch over the phone to know if any new scheme has arrived", (tea tribe association staff)

In this process, the involvement of the tea garden management or welfare officers or the front line garden Sardars (lead workers) in becoming a reliable, trusted and friendly link to facilitate public schemes entitlements is not strongly visible. Consequently, all these have its impact on low and poorly informed beneficiaries, time lapses, and low enrollment and eventually excluded from entitlements.

A tea estate manager puts narrates this way: *"There are no doubts that government has made a lot of schemes, but the real thing is how many have actually benefitted. Whatever scheme is available has to reach the people. There are more schemes benefits like PM Awas Yojana required in my garden, but not available. I suggest to Government that whatever government scheme is being implemented in tea gardens, proper and detailed guidelines and instructions should also be given to garden authority. Only then will we understand and we can guide and convince the workers of the garden properly." (Tea garden manager, Jorhat)*

- **Poor and Weak Response Mechanism and quality of care**

It has been observed and also heard that there has been weak response mechanism and attitudinal issues that restricts and have resisted positive and upward mobility of the tea tribe community members to approach and seek for rightful entitlements, information, benefits and grievance redress. While structures and institutional setups intimidates a normal person in approaching rightful place of service delivery, the attitude and response presented therein adds up as the twin threat to encourage and motivate citizens to approach service agencies and get dues. And this is perhaps a bigger challenge for the vulnerable tea workers community and working class with a distinct socio-lingual and cultural identity in Assam, in a subjugated and under confident and dependent living environment.

Due to attitudinal and systemic factors, there is a general perception among the tea tribe community members that because of their distinct socio-economic status and background from a working class background, they do not get good responses or quality of care in their access, demand and benefits from public schemes or welfare programmes. This perception discourages members of the community

from approaching and enrolling with schemes and programmes. According to a community leader, more than majority from their community are introvert, under confident and subdued mindsets and they give up once they think that they are done with going to offices or inquiring about schemes and benefits with no result. This is how the community leader describes the situation:

"There are complaints of people from the community going to Panchayat office or sub-divisional office and banks and not being properly responded to or attended, or waiting for so long before being summoned or attended to,"(community leader).

"Some of the complaints that when they are referred and go to the district or regional hospitals for government provisioned free treatment they are treated badly and are not duly attended and because of that, they are not well treated and sent home anyhow and they continue to have health problems, " (community leader).

But from the perspective of the local authorities and service providers, the situation is somewhat different. They face constraints in manpower and office facilities which undermine their capacity and quality to respond and serve the citizens with time and attention. Time and strict deadlines to implement schemes and enroll beneficiaries, lack of proper guidelines and details about schemes, incomplete and wrong filled applications, delay in file movements, applications, processes, approvals and long gestation period also affects their credibility and trust factor in the eyes of the local community, being at the forefront of services delivery and entitlements. A district level front line staff explains some of the shortcomings in regard to specific delivery of tea tribe welfare schemes, which account for this:

"We are short of manpower and I am only one dealing at sub divisional level and looking after 3 sub divisions in this district. I am doing all sorts of job like attending beneficiaries, enrollment, application collection, coordination, verification, documentation, data entry, and submissions in state office. We do not have sufficient consumables and are out of stock in no time. Above that, there are applications coming in bundles to us through sub-divisional welfare office committee members, that are mostly wrongly filled and inaccurate and then we have the pressure from above to complete application process in given deadlines. It is a very difficult situation for us to manage things. I have raised these issues many times with our committee chairman and sub-divisional welfare officer," (IDI, Sub-divisional welfare office staff).

6. Conclusion

The paper finds that the access to public schemes information and entitlement benefits is determined by key socio-cultural factors, socio-economic factors, and institutional factors.

Because of their very nature of closed social behavior and norms due to closed, restricted and controlled garden based living ecosystem in all their overall social, economic reasons largely 'managed' by tea garden management and authorities,

it is very necessary that critical and life empowering schemes and benefits are provisioned for access and delivery within the gardens in regular basis or near the garden vicinities to increase demand, uptake and grievance redress by the service agencies, authorities in a serious, organised and concentrated manner with quality and care. Regular workers entitlement camps in gardens with local service agencies and authorities addressing their needs, especially for the women garden workers who are otherwise 'absorbed' in their work based on strict daily wages and cannot afford to venture out and seek entitlements will help to overcome vulnerability and ignorance and reduce community apathy towards government programmes and actions. Being a highly illiterate population with local dialect conversations and not majorly into formal written and communication in either Assamese or English language, as is the current practice in all official correspondence and announcements, and to overcome this, there is all the more reason that community specific solutions and mechanisms are created and ensured to link the community with public schemes, benefits and grievance redress. Role of local tea tribe dedicated community facilitators, identified, trained and engaged by local authorities, will be critical in bridging the gaps.

An approach with care, respect and last mile inclusive support for the tea tribe community, workers and families working in gardens can serve as effective pathways to the inclusion of all segments of the community into public scheme and welfare benefits inclusion programmes of the government. Although the findings show a low level of information and awareness of schemes and benefits, the absence of community level institutional support and facilitation support serve as a major barrier to exclusion from various public scheme benefits in real time, space and context.

Special measures related to enhancing functional literacy skills through special camps, information and digital literacy activities and programmes will overall build community capacities to explore, source and process public scheme and entitlement related information and opportunities with focus on women and youth. In our view, issues of vulnerability raise the dialogue on the economic dimension where the lack of material resources further alienates the tea tribe community from fully participating, demanding and increasing uptake of various public scheme benefits. Wider time gaps, multiple follow ups, multiple visits, taking off from garden work and loosing wages for public scheme access, transportation time and costs are a major deterrent to access which explain why tea tribe communities are widely ignorant and not having public schemes benefits in a streamlined and institutionalized manner. We find that time and costs associated with travel to offices of Panchayat and service agencies and local offices are highly restrictive for workers and family members in tea gardens. Also, the fact that members of the community are asked to pay indirect and cut money to avail benefits is an issue of concern.

Consistent with this framework, our data shows the inadequate and meager distribution and provisions for infrastructure resources along with the underlying issues raised by vulnerability and difficulties. Inadequate and absence of basic infrastructure facilitation provision is not only a key issue in access to schemes and entitlements, but the tea garden communities largely out of mainstream social and economic development and processes, and underserved worsens the exclusion and constraints faced by community members in accessing welfare benefits. Further, the inherent weaknesses in the schemes delivery design and distribution roll out and implementation at community level and its effect on uptake of demand and uptake cannot be overlooked. The schemes delivery and governance has wider scope to work on its gap areas including in its key message delivery to community members, whereby the vulnerable tea garden community have forgotten that the schemes are built on solidarity and therefore perceive the whole delivery system as one which looks out for individual benefit rather than a collective benefit.

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Quality of Higher Education in the North Eastern States and the Exodus of the North East Youth for Quality Education: An Analysis

Debosmita Paul* & Kingaule Newme**

The population of youth (10-35 years) in the North-East Region is 59-60% (NYRS, 2009). Out of this, a considerable percentage of this population migrates to the urban metros in search of better educational opportunities. University of Delhi has allocated 7% quota under the ST category which largely caters to the students of the North East states. Some of the eminent Delhi University colleges have a sizeable number of students from the North East. Miranda House College had admitted 65 NE students in the year 2018-19. In the year 2019-20, more than 500 students from the NER took admission in various colleges of DU itself. The picture remains the same in other universities and institutes in ROI. The region boasts of having its first higher educational institution as early as in 1901 (Cotton College, Assam) and its first technical institute in 1927 (Prince of Wales Institute of Engineering and Technology, Assam). Some of the well-known institutes of the urban metros were established around the same time. Therefore, it becomes essential to interrogate the cause/ causes of such large scale exodus for want of better education. The present paper attempts to analyse the quality of higher education in the various institutions in the North East region to determine these cause/cause(s). Interviews and surveys of several scholars, faculty members residing and working in the North East and in the urban metros are used in this paper to help determine the causes of out migration of the youth from the NER.

Keywords: Migration, North East Region, Out-Migration, Reverse-Migration, Quality of Education, Youth

1. Introduction

Migration of the youth from the North East Region (NER) to the urban areas in Rest of India (ROI) has been a continual and ever-increasing phenomenon since independence. Reimeingam Marchang (2017) in his analysis states that migration from NER to ROI between 1991 and 2001 has increased two-fold. In 1991, the number was of 3.8 lakh persons, while it increased to 7.5 lakh persons in 2001. (p.46) The Census of 2011 recorded about a million migrations from the NER to ROI.

While discussing the causes of such large scale migration, Marchang notes that:

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NE people migration is caused by rapid educational development, unemployment, underdeveloped economy and industrialization, ailing educational system and infrastructure, socio-political unrest among other reasons. (p.43)

Marchang further notes that only two percent of the higher educational institutes of India were located in the NER in 2012-13. (p. 46) However, the North East Region in pre-independence India did get a fair share, if not equal, in terms of educational infrastructure. The North East Region of India boasts of having its first higher educational institution as early as in 1901, with the establishment of the Cotton College in Assam. The Higher Education Institutes in the more advanced Eastern part of India were established not too long ago. The Calcutta University was established in 1857, Patna College was functioning since 1867 and the Dhaka College was established in 1873. The first technical institute in NER, Prince of Wales Institute of Engineering and Technology, Assam, was established in 1927. Hence, low number of higher educational institute in post-independence India is a matter of concern for policymakers and educationists. It can be one of the major causes of migration of the youth from NER to other parts of India.

Therefore, keeping the above cited observations in mind, the present paper attempts to analyse the quality of higher education in the various institutions in the North East Region to determine the cause/ cause(s) of out-migration of the North East youth to the other parts of India. It further tries to figure out chance of reverse migration and the changes in the quality of education being imparted in the NER institutes. Interviews and surveys of several scholars, faculty members residing and working in the North East and in the urban metros are used in this paper.

2. Understanding Out-migration and Reverse Migration

To understand the phenomenon of migration and especially that concerning the North Eastern states in India, it is imminent to first arrive at a proper definition of the term and the causes. R. Paul Shaw (1975; p.1) defines migration as "a relatively permanent movement of persons over a significant distance." Pieter Kok (1999; p. 19) further adds to the definition by stating that migration nowadays is defined in terms of change in place of abode and the concept of 'permanent movement' (p.19) is removed. Furthermore, "the criterion that the distance of the move should be 'significant' has generally been replaced by the requirement that the boundary of a 'migration-defining area' must have been crossed before a move can be classified as migration." (p.19) In India, migration is determined in terms of spatiality as migration by birth place and migration by place of last residence. (Census of India 2011; n.pag.)

Since, permanent movement is not the sole criterion to determine migration; it gives one the chance to accommodate the possibility of out-migration and reverse migration. Out-Migration refers to the movement from the homeland to other areas. Reverse Migration can be described as a 'retracing' of the journey (Manuela

Constantino and Susanna Egan; 2003; p.96) back to the place “which was once their home” (Chacko; 2007; p.132). Migration can also be understood in terms of internal and international migration. Internal Migration refers to the population movement within the country (Kok; p.20) while International Migration is the movement to other countries (Kok; p.20). Hence, migration from the North East region to the Rest of India falls under the category of internal migration. Scholars of migration studies further categorised internal migration as rural to semi urban/ urban and semi urban to urban migrations (V. Usha Kiran and Priyamvada J; p.72) or as rural-rural, rural-urban, urban-rural and urban-urban migration (Chakraborty and Kuri; 2008; p.47). According to a study by Kamal Ramprit Dikshit and Jutta K. Dikshit (2004) it is stated that “over 80% of the population in the North East India lives in 40,000 villages” (p.503). Hence, the movement of the people from North East India is mainly to the urban areas in the Rest of India.

The causes of internal migration, specifically rural-urban migration, can be several. Debasis Chakraborty and Parvat Kumar Kuri list out a number of causes of urban mobility. While income gap between urban and rural areas is a major factor that leads to migration from rural to urban areas, other determinants are urbanization, better amenities in urban places, easy accessibility to jobs and ethnic factors (Chakraborty and Kuri; p. 47-48). They further elaborate that in the states like Assam out-migration is due to “non-availability of adequate infrastructural facilities especially in the fields of health, education, transportation etc” (Chakraborty and Kuri; p. 53). The causes of inter-state Reverse Migration are also several. Chakraborty and Kuri state that family ties are an important factor behind migration:

Studies have shown that people choose to stay in their respective places rather than moving to a place away from their friends and relatives. In these cases family ties play a pivotal role in explaining the extent of migration.... (p.47)

The word ‘extent’ can go on to infer the distance and the time of the migration. Strong familial bonds, therefore, also lead to reverse migration.

However, reverse migration also occurs due to hardship the migrant faces in their destination places. In “A Study on Urban Migration: Problems and Prospects of Rural Students”, V. Usha Kiran and J. Priyamvada discuss problems faced by young migrants in terms of poor accommodation facilities, language barrier, adjustment to new technologies and social interaction. Such problems often lead to psychological problems: “Migrants are prone to a higher risk of depression and feelings of abandonment.” (Kiran and Priyamvada, 2010; p.76) Whether voluntary or forced, Reverse Migration of the skilled migrants bring with them “knowledge, expertise, access to global networks and capital” (Chacko, 2007; p.132). This, hence, becomes a case of brain gain for these places of origin.

The above discussion, therefore, brings into the light the fact that migration of the people from North East India to the Rest of India is a process of internal migration

triggered owing to the vast economic and infrastructural gap between the primarily rural North East India and the urbanised sectors in the Rest of India. Want of better educational facilities is also a factor triggering migration of the youth from the North East, thereby leading one to analyse the quality of higher education in the North East.

3. Quality of Education: Definition and the Barriers

According to the UNICEF, Quality of Education is defined by three key dimensions: "what learners bring, environments, content, processes and outcome". The definition is further elaborated as follows:

This definition of quality education starts with a focus on an adequate number of schools, books, pencils, trained teachers and the number of children who finish school. It moves beyond this to consider what goes on inside and outside the school. It compasses education for human security, for community development and for national progress. (p. 5)

In the case of higher education too, quality would include having adequate number of universities and college with trained teachers and proper equipments and resources to provide education. Finally, the success of a higher education institution depends on the employability of its students and hence becomes a life-long process. Justice Jagdish Sharan Verma (2004) describes the process of imparting education in the following words:

It is acquiring of knowledge or learning together with the equipment, which provides the skill and the inclination for making profitable use of that knowledge. Since the acquiring of knowledge and improvement of the skill for its application are parts of a dynamic process, education is a life-long exercise. Higher education is therefore never complete in a continuously evolving dynamic personality. (p. 2)

However, the Indian higher education system has encountered several barriers in providing quality education. According to Payal Jayaraj Pandya (2016), although the quantitative growth has been good, but qualitative aspect has been missing (p. 52). She further lists out the barriers affecting improvement of quality of education:

- lack of employability of the UG and PG students
- lack of interdisciplinary knowledge
- stagnant curriculum
- lack of interest/ inadequate management team of the institutions
- lack of motivation of the teachers
- ill-organised class-rooms and lack of innovation and technology in the class room teaching

- commercialisation of the self-financed institutes which also fail to provide proper infrastructure
- interest and aptitude-based selection of the students is not done
- fixed pay of the teachers leads to lack of motivation among them
- heavy workload of the faculty leads to lack of research outcome from the faculty members
- poor reading habit in the teachers
- lack of autonomy for the teachers leads to lack of innovation in teaching (p.52)

Keeping these barriers in view, several advisory boards; namely the National Knowledge Commission and the Prof. Yashpal Commission; have been set up under the Government of India.

Both the commissions suggested an increase in number of universities, thereby, increasing the enrolment percentage among the students. Upgrading of the technology, ICT infrastructure in the class rooms and the upgrading of the curricula have also been suggested. Regulated monitoring of the institutions, teaching standards and research is another important step suggested by the Commissions.

Many of the suggestions have already been implemented, yet the vision of imparting good quality of education across India remains a distant dream. Anirban Sengupta (2020) points out that owing to the recommendation of the NKC, there has been a rise in the number of private universities. The number of deemed universities in India has increased from 33 in the 1990s to 116 in 2008 (n.pag), a majority of which were set up with private funding. Between 2006 and 2018 the number of state private universities swelled from 19 to 290, of which 223 were established after 2009. (n.pag) However, many of these institutions came under a scanner due to poor quality of education and management. Furthermore, the distribution of these new institutes/ universities was also not equitable. Out of this number, the NER got only 20 (approx.) new institutes for higher education. This includes Central Universities, Institutes of National Importance, Deemed Universities, State Universities, Private Universities and Medical Colleges. The quality of education imparted in these institutes need assessment to determine the causes of the migration of the youth from NER.

The following section is an analysis of the data collected by the researchers to analyse the causes of migration of the youth from the NER to ROI, the quality of education in the institutes in NER as well as the reasons for Reverse Migration.

4. An Analyses of the Interviews of the Migrant Students and the Teachers from NER

Interviews¹ of faculty members and administrative staff in several higher education institutes of the North East were conducted and survey questionnaire was circulated

¹ The interviews were conducted in July 2019.

among the students from the NER studying in Delhi in order to determine the cause(s) of migration of the youth to higher education institutes in the urban areas. The questions were to determine the quality of education being imparted in the institutes of the North East; the level of satisfaction in the students about the education being imparted in these institutes and other reasons for the same.

5. Responses: Teachers and Administrative Staff

Questions for Faculty Members and Administrative Staff

- For how long are you working in the institute?
- Did you teach/ work in other institutes in the NE before?
- If yes, how many years?
- If outside NE, where and when?
- What are your observations about the quality of education in NE?
- What is a better option, government or private institutes? Why?
- As a teacher/ staff member, what are challenges you face in NE institutes?
- Has quality of education improved over the years?

Interviews of teachers/administrative staff teaching/working in private universities/institutions as well as government universities/institutions were conducted. Their teaching experience in higher education institutes ranges from 2 years to 12 years. Many of the faculty members had the experience of working in both Private and Government institutions. Hence, they could compare the quality of education being imparted in the private and the government institutions.

The ensuing responses on being asked to compare the private and government institutes brought out the pros and the cons of the two sectors. On the one hand, many were of the view that the private institutes fared better than the government ones in terms of infrastructure and technical support to the students. On the other, many others exposed the fact that the private institutes were majorly profit-oriented, charging a huge amount of money as fees. Yet, due attention is not paid to the student. This is owing to the over-worked condition of the faculty members. Ms. Rupa Rani Sonowal, Assistant Professor at Royal Global University (Private Institution)² for three years added that private institutes are more “industrialized kind and only think of face value. They expect too many things from one single teacher”. A teacher finds it difficult to handle so many tasks simultaneously and this thereby affects the quality of their teaching.

Meanwhile, it was also opined that the government institutes, although provide education at lower cost than the private ones, they are marred by problems like red-tapism, delayed faculty recruitment process, lack of quality teachers and lack of infrastructure. Most staff members complained about the number of faculty and administrative positions lying vacant in the government institutes. Ms. Pooja,

² She is now working in Central University of Karnataka.

currently Assistant Professor in Sikkim University and previously associated with a private college in Bangalore compares the two sectors to highlight the delayed bureaucratic process involved in government institutes: "After working in private sector and government sector, I find that in government sector documentation process is too long, which delays many things." This flaw in the management of the institutes has led to a vast deficit in the number of teaching and administrative staff. The delaying and slow nature of the work culture in government sector affects the quality of education as the teaching-learning process becomes substandard. Ms. Hungngaule Hegeu, Administrative Staff in the Education Sector in Nagaland says that "Private institute is a better option due to the incompetence and irregularities of teachers in government schools and colleges." A similar view is provided by Mr. Ditalak Panme, MBA faculty at Nagaland University with teaching experience of more than 12 yrs:

In government sector, people take their job for granted due to the promised job security and lack of work culture. The mindset of majority of people working in government institutions are also different from private institutions. There's too much pride in them as if they are super-man compared to fellow man from private institutions.

However, the most common concern of most faculty members was the lack of infrastructure and modern teaching aids in the Government-run institutes. Mr. Deepak Upadhayay and Ms. Hungngaule Hegeu pose this problem very clearly to state how such gaps hamper in the attainment of practical knowledge in the students. Mr. Deepak Upadhayay states "Government classrooms are small as compared to private institutes and also have less number of facilities. For example, in courses like Mass Communication, requirement of equipment is more than any other Humanities courses like Political Science, English, History, etc. But the university provides the same blackboard and chalk tools for such courses too." In contrast to the government universities, the private institutions provide better infrastructure though at a higher fees. Ms. Pooja echoes this observation: "the private institutions do better but they are expensive and when a student pays more, they also try to get best of it."

Similarly, the courses offered in both the institutions are limited and based on old syllabus structure. Many continue to join available courses. However, lack of proper infrastructure and un-revised courses have a negative impact on the employability of the students graduating from these institutions.

As a result, many young people migrate to urban places on ROI to study their desired courses. In his interview, Mr. Panme states that; "some students go with a specific focus and reasons, especially to Delhi: to get coaching, expose themselves to the competitive environment targeting UPSC".

Another problem affecting the quality of education in the NE institutions is the remote location of the NER. Connected only with the Chickens Neck corridor

to the Rest of India, Region, on one hand, has been successful in maintaining its pristine nature as rapid urbanisation has not affected it. On the other, it has been deprived of several infrastructure and other basic amenities owing to its location. Ms Pooja aptly expresses the dichotomy that the N E people face owing to their location: "In North East we have healthy environment ... The weather also good but exposure is lacking which is more in urban areas".

According to Mr. Ditalak Panme; "Facilities not easily available like mainland. There are various reasons. Universities are inaccessible due to geographical conditions, internet problems. One finds difficulty in conducting workshops and seminars because of accessibility issues". Almost all faculty and administrative staff members agreed to the fact that the NER region lacked infrastructure and a congenial environment, which becomes a hindrance in the imparting of quality education. The region has had to bear the brunt of the long history of political unrest affecting its infrastructural development. It is owing to the insecure environment that 24X7 facilities are not available in many parts, which becomes a drawback for the region in comparison to the urban metros. Hence, students are forced to migrate to urban areas in want of quality education.

Based on these interviews, it can be therefore, concluded that the youth from the North East Region are forced to out-migrate due to lack of quality education. The staff members pointed out certain gaps in the higher education system in the region which ranges from lack of infrastructure and modern teaching aids, lack of quality teachers, red-tapism in the management of the educational institutions, gap in the fee structure and the facilities provided and lack of congenial environment.

However, establishment of new institutions and opening of other industrial / multinational job sectors has also led to a rise in reverse migration. The fact that faculty members who have been interviewed here, like Ms Pooja, have themselves returned from the metro cities to find a job in the NER is proof enough for this.

6. Responses: Students from NER residing in Delhi

To understand, the causes of out-migration amongst the young people, it was imminent to also consider the opinion of this bracket of the population. Hence, a number of students from the North East Region residing/ studying in Delhi were also contacted and their opinions recorded via *Google Form*.³

Following is the questionnaire that was circulated:

³ The survey was conducted in July 2019.

Name:	Institution :
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Which state do you belong? 2. Are you staying in Delhi or Noida, with your family or as PG? 3. Which course are you in? 4. Does the place from where you belong have a higher educational institute close by? 5. If yes, how far is it? 6. If question 4 is yes, then why didn't you take admission there? 7. Are you studying the course of your choice? 8. Do you feel that the quality of education imparted in Delhi is better than that provided in your state? 9. Will you continue to go back to your home town after your graduation? 10. If yes/no what will you do next? 	

The students who participated in the survey were mainly students in Delhi and NCR institutes like University of Delhi (Government) and Sharda University, Amity University (Private).

Many of the surveyed students stated that a higher education institute was available within the radius of 40-45 kms in their hometown. While this is an indication of the increase in the number of institutions in the NER, but it also forces one to inquire the reasons for the out-migration of the youth, when higher education is accessible to them in the hometown.

One of the foremost reasons for the migration of the students from the North East Region is due to the fact that the higher education institutions in the urban areas provide better quality education than that provided in the North Eastern institutes. Most agreed that although accessible from their homes, the universities in places like Delhi offer more courses, thereby enabling them to opt for courses they prefer. Such choices are not available in the institutes in the North East Region. Limitations in terms of courses offered by institutes in the North East Region; was a problem that was also noted by the faculty and staff members. The students were also in agreement that the institutes in the NER didn't provide them with quality education in terms of infrastructure, proper teaching aids, good teachers etc. Since the metro cities are better equipped with coaching facilities for various competitive exams like Public Service Commission, CAT etc.; the North East students prefer to migrate to these parts as such facilities equip them with better job opportunities.

Like the staff members of the higher education institutes in the NER, the migrant students too stated that the remote location, harsh geographical terrain and the political turbulence in the NER has made it difficult for them to acquire good quality education. Even the 40-45 km distance of the universities/ colleges/ institutes appears to be greater due to the tough terrain. Internet services, photocopy services etc. are not available to them throughout the day. Hence, the students residing

the NER miss out on many vital opportunities and make them uncompetitive in comparison to the students from ROI.

Yet, a section of the students, though small in number opined that the educational institutes in their home state were similar to those in ROI, in terms of quality. Several of the students had come to the metro cities like Delhi to get exposed to a more competitive environment. Some stated that they wanted to get exposed to the diverse cultures in India, which the secluded environment of the NER does not allow. Many others stated that they wanted to experience the urban lifestyle which is largely missing in the inherently rural NER. Such exposure to the multifarious aspects of the urban areas also increased the chances of their employability as do their achievement in academics.

When asked if they want to return to their home-states, most of the students did declare in the affirmative. The reasons for such a decision were multifarious. One of the foremost reasons is adaptability. The rural environment of the NER region is a direct contrast to the urbanised environments of ROI. Most of the young students find it difficult to settle down in their new homes initially. However, for some, this issue of adaptation becomes a permanent problem, forcing them to return to their homes at the earliest.

Many students also find it difficult to settle down due to language barrier. Since Hindi is not a frequently used language in the North East Region, students find it difficult to communicate when they land up in the metro cities in mainland India where Hindi is like the lingua franca. Similarly, owing to the poor standard of English Language Teaching at school level, students from the North East have inadequate knowledge of English, thus finding it difficult to also communicate in English. This causes a huge communication gap between the NER students and the locals, making the former susceptible to racial discrimination and hostility. Their inadequate knowledge of English also makes it difficult for them to cope up with their studies as most higher education institutes use English as the medium of instruction. This further complicates the life of the young migrant students, forcing them to return to their hometowns soon after acquiring their degrees or sometimes even dropping out of their courses.

Another important factor leading to reverse migration of the students is the high cost of living in the destination cities. Parents find it difficult to sponsor their wards studying in these cities. Hence, the students are forced to return to their homes as soon as they complete their education. A student from Assam stated that "Yes, I'm leaving Delhi due to financial reasons. My parents won't finance me for my post-graduation. Therefore, I would be seeking jobs to prepare for some competitive exams."

However, the cause of their return is not altogether negative. There are positives too that emerge out of the desire of these students to return to their home-states

on completion of education. A number of surveyed students said that they wished to return to their home-states and set up small businesses / start-ups. Kimneilam Kipgen from Manipur, enrolled in Sharda University, stated that she would want to go back to her home-town, set up her start-up business. Another student from Assam states that she wants to "serve the people back home", hence would like to return on completing her education.

Many of the causes of reverse migration may be negative, yet what is observed is that those who return to their home-states after completion of their degrees initiate a process of 'brain gain'. The NER is benefitting significantly due to reverse migration as the skilled reverse migrants are contributing significantly to the economy and infrastructure facilities in the region.

7. Conclusion

The discussion of the phenomena of migration, quality of education in the North East Region and the interviews and surveys of the teachers and migrant students highlights the problems that mark the education sector in the North East Region, thereby compelling migration of the youth to the cities in ROI. On analysing the phenomenon of internal migration in India, it becomes clear that the economic disparity, urban-rural divide, inequitable distribution of infrastructural facilities (Chakraborty and Kuri) have been the main triggers. On focussing on the causes for migration of the youth from one state to other, it was seen that it occurs mainly due to the urban-rural divide as many students migrate from the rural to the urban areas for better education facilities and good job opportunities (Kiran and Priyamvada). The reasons for Reverse migration might be varied; extending from forced or voluntary (Chacko) is observed as a phenomenon which brings back skilled labourers (Chacko).

The observations made by the scholars seem to mirror the pattern of migration of the youth from the North East Region to the cosmopolitan areas in ROI. This is proven through the data acquired from the interviews and surveys of the faculty, staff members and the students. It is revealed that the root cause of migration of the youth from the North East Region to the urban areas is due to the lack of good quality education in the NER. The causes affecting the quality of higher education, as observed by Pandya, seem to be true for the institutions situated in the NER.

According to those interviewed, the problems in quality education in the NER, leading to out-migration of the youth, have been summarised as follows:

- Inaccessibility of higher education institutes from homes due to rough geographical terrain and also low number of institutes
- Students don't get courses of their choice in institutes in NER
- Lack of proper teaching aids and efficient teaching faculty

- Cost of education does not match the expectation: Private institutes over-charge but provide poor quality while government institutes are marred by red tape and poor infrastructure
- Uncongenial political environment leading to lack of basic amenities

In comparison to the institutes in the NER, those in the cities in the mainland due to:

- Better facilities in urban metros: the students get coaching facilities to prepare for competitive exams for jobs and higher education, courses of their choice and proper infrastructure
- Better employability in urban metros

However, Reverse Migration of the youth is also a strong possibility. The reasons are varied:

- Financial problem: Parents find it difficult to support wards in urban areas.
- Feeling of rootedness and being indebted to their homeland. Hence, they want to set up business or work in their homeland.
- Problems in adapting to the destination cities
- To find jobs or set up businesses in the home-state

However, there is a Ray of Hope in terms of the fact that:

- New institutes are opening up. Rather, there is a "mushrooming" of institutes, both government and private in the NER
- The youth intend to return to their homelands after getting quality education outside. This has enabled a trend of "brain gain". Thereby reversing the phenomenon of "brain drain" in the NER

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Factors Determining Youth Migration from North-Eastern Regions of India (NERs) To National Capital

Sharon Songamla*

The phenomenon of youth migration from rural to urban areas has been at an increasing trend. Since the early 2000s, migration of youths especially amongst North-Eastern Regions (NERs) to national capital has been escalating and is noticeably increasing ever since. The present study was undertaken generally for the purpose of investigating the causes of youth migration from NERs of India to National Capital. The study involved a cross-sectional survey conducted with a total of about 30 respondents randomly selected from amongst the migrants, through questionnaire-based interviews, focus group discussions and observation. The results finds that, major factors triggering migration is associated with a mix of various factors including poor education, limited job availability at the place of origin, freedom, poverty, lack of social amenities among others. In addition, conflicts and socio-political unrests in their native place also contributes partly to major waves of migration. Migration brings both positive and negative implications to the livelihoods of the migrants. The study suggested that the concern government needs to find more innovative strategies by setting up adequate infrastructures and offering income generating activities to improve overall livelihood in the region.

Keywords: *North-East Youth, Livelihood, Income, Employment, Agriculture*

1. Introduction

Migration has become an unbroken upward trend, could it be the people who have been left their homelands voluntarily for socio-economic reasons or of those who have been forced to leave their homes or community as a refugee or displaced persons etc. The movement of youth from rural to urban metros is a common occurrence in NER India. It has been evident that, the outcome of migration flows and its processes brings more rapid change to the socio-economic and political spectrum of both the homeland of the migrants and the destinations. Migration may be deliberate decision or attempt by the migrant to reap the social or economic benefit associated with changing locations. The basic cause of voluntary migration is to achieve maximum individual satisfaction and meeting their particular demands and needs. On the other hand, such movements could be free or voluntary based on factors like retirement or the opportunity for educational advancement. However, some of the youths tend to move away to another cities due to need to escape violence, political instability, congestion, which is the case in the North-East India, in addition to the rising poverty, gross inadequacy of social infrastructure.

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Migration of the household population, especially youth, has significant influence to the economy and food production of the households. The family labour which the rural farmers depend solely upon was drastically reduced due to migration of the youth to the urban centers. This phenomenon has resulted to reduction in annual income and a fall in standard of living of the rural populace. Farm labour provided by the active and energetic youth is considered as an essential component of agricultural productivity in rural areas because of the fact that, the system of agriculture practiced in isolated areas of an open rangelands with low population density solely depends on family labour, which mostly is provided by the youth. Thus, despite the importance of youth migration to the urban centers, due to lack of social infrastructure in the rural settings and lack of rural job options during the dry season of the year, has resulted to low yield and high cost of farm labor. And thus, its net result has been drastically affected as having negative impact on the local development and production system. Study elsewhere, on rural-urban migration revealed negative effects of the migration on both the rural and the urban settings in the country. When the energetic and the productive members of the rural populace migrated to the cities, the original place of residence would incur loss of crop production, and high cost of labour while on the other hand, the new location may be experiencing with high population resulting in unemployment, increase number of crime, increase in number of diseases and the like.

In recent times, in the face of climate-related environmental change, and other natural hazards, the residents are forced to migrate to towns and cities in search of work, thus, migration can be a response to such threat. In addition, factors such as, job transfer, taking a new job or attending a new school, getting closer to relatives or a desire to acquire climate preference and other quality-of-life amenities exists are attributing to such movement. Lately, it is being observed that, improved information flows and public transportation often inspire people to move directly from distant rural areas to the metro cities. It is seen that, modernization especially due to formal education and urbanization are underlying factors attributes to rapid social change that resulted to the exodus of rural people into the cities. Also, the seasonality of the primary job or the agriculture activities which the rural populace engaged to, results in seasonal unemployment in the region. In some cases, bad conditions of roads, poor electricity supply and water facilities, weak social protection programs were some of the factors driving the youths away from their communities.

2. Factors Triggering Youth Migration from Rural to Urban Metros

Migration has become a common livelihood strategy for households among the North Eastern Region of India. Migration from North Eastern Region to the rest of India especially in national capital has been increasing considerably in recent times. Most of the migrants migrated in such cities for various pursuits. In general, youth migrants move to work to the cities in response to the households' expectation

of higher returns in future and to fulfill personal aspirations. New employment opportunities in some urban cities in selective sectors attracted migrants especially the youths. Migrants if employed, obtained benefit remittances and provides to the economies of home regions of the immigrants and provide necessary capital. It benefitted not only to the families at home but also secured valuable information about their social life, work and educational prospects. Having employed in formal labour markets in selected sectors, young migrants do remit money and their remittances make a difference in their source family in a small but significant way. As per the study, females do not migrate for education, employment and business as much as the male counterparts. Majority of the migrants moved to the cities that provides better social amenities and infrastructure unlike in their place of origin, and to improve present welfare. Lesser number of migrants are migrated to learn trade and to experience new environment, transport and communication and others are to look for money through wage labour. Some of the migrants travel to cities due to low agriculture production and crop failure at home and to join family members in the city. As a result, young people seek occupation elsewhere to diversify their income. They often move to cities to engage in various temporary jobs for certain period of time.

However, many of the youth responded that they leave their villages and their respective hometowns, because of lacking social amenities at home, and decided to move to cities to engage in some form of business or enterprises or the other that provides them income which otherwise if present in their own towns would deter them from traveling to the cities. Urban metros such as Delhi having the higher percentages of migrants are attributed to presence of social infrastructure, high rate of job opportunities, better educational facilities as well as the hub for trading businesses. As per the study, some of the migrants returned home on the onset of the rainy season did so to assist their parents in farming activities and so, this type of migrants are practicing temporary migration. Others did mostly returned home only during the festive seasons of the year. Few responded that they migrated from the village to the cities and stay in the cities for permanent migration, while some often go home frequently to pay visit to their hometown.

It has been noticed that, larger households are more likely to resort to migration, as the increase in family size, the per capita income decreases which makes the family members tend to migrate and work elsewhere. Households with numerous dependents has a greater probability to migrate as a response to improve livelihood prospects. "An increase of the unit in family size produces an increase of 8.7 percent in the probability of migrating" (Thorat et al. 2011). Taylor 1999 pointed out that when the number of children in a family is high, families tend to encourage younger members to migrate, as they have higher earning potential and they are more likely to remit money. Again it is also seen that, rural youth have a high tendency to migrate as they need someone to replace them in their labour work or household responsibilities.

Based on the study, it was found that, some of the migrants were of the opinion that despite not engaged in any other activities, migration to the cities is better than remaining idle at home. They argued that being in city is better and happier than end up in petty businesses and unskilled vocation jobs in the rural areas that attracts not so much income. Part of the income generated or gained is used for self-keeping and the remaining is remitted at home. Some migrants reported that, they seek short-term seasonal employment to supplements their income in periods of the year especially when the farming activities are unavailable. In some cases, they wish to move to urban metros for a longer period, attracted by the higher expected returns and incomes. In rural areas, some young women and men do not have sufficient access to quality education and decent livelihood opportunities. As such the expanding urban informal sector becomes attractive to a large number of rural youth. In some cases, migrants employed in menial and seasonal work often do not settle in one place for lengthy periods, due to prone to effect their social cohesion.

Family and community networks plays a crucial role in determining migration especially when it comes to minimizing risk and costs. They assists in providing information about the scope, motives and lucrative opportunities in various destinations as well as arranging platform for jobs and for schooling. In addition, ownership of productive assets such as land, machinery, equipment etc determines whether a households needs to engage in livelihood diversification strategy through migration. The larger the household's assets base, the lower is propensity of the family members to migrate. In the case of North-Eastern India, the propensity to migrate is highest among rural youths. The rural youths who are more educated tend to be more mobile, they seek work elsewhere that matches their skills, capabilities and expectations. In urban areas, they believe they will access decent employment, improves standard of living and stabilizes their income, and have a stronger voice and greater engagement in society. For some reason, households face labour and financial market constraints and thus, migration is a strategy to diversify income sources and cope with risks. And therefore they move out to more advanced urban areas offering better chances of employment and higher wages. For some reason, the quest for jobs and the desire to enjoy modern facilities such as good schooling, electricity, proper sanitation and water facilities etc. have been cited as possible reason responsible for the phenomena. Some respondents argued that, the upsurge of unemployment, parental neglect and the gradual breakdown of social support networks in the region, have led to the large numbers of rural youth migrating into the cities and towns. Apart from that, the region particularly, lacks private enterprises, and industries to absorb young entrance, hence the so called agricultural activities has become the main source of employment for rural youth in the region. Agriculture, however subsistence in nature could not accrue much returns to the farmers, and prolonged off-season period resulted to remain farmers largely idle. Thus, the condition make it impossible for the active population of the people, engaging in agricultural sector to support themselves all

year round. Thus, these migrants elope from their own community and hinterland, certainly find room and anonymity in the havens of the city. The young migrants are of the view that cities are perceived as places of limitless opportunities for learning vocations, doing business or earning money and for better fortune. Most of them contributes highly to their native places by transferring financial and social remittances, encouraging trade linkages and in investments.

It is not surprise that, being aware of the deplorable state of poverty at their home, many of the young youths took migration to cities as the main strategy for them to break and to change their destiny. They responded that their families and households perceived that the only viable livelihood option for moving out of poverty is to migrate. This types of distress, is usually associated with lack of livelihood options, given the limited economic and employment opportunities as well as natural disaster, crop failure and food insecurity. For most of them, migration is not an informed and voluntary choice but the only available option for improving livelihood prospects and meeting their particulars aspirations and needs. UNDP pointed out that seasonal migration is the most affordable, especially for the landless; it allows households to supplement their income, smooth consumption and protect their asset base during the lean season. Acquiring sufficient earning to live, and achieve their aspirations and needs and to pay for apprenticeship has been a strong determinant for the young youth. While, other migrants responded that, they migrate to metro cities and towns in order to experience modern life styles and to enjoy the relatively better conditions of the cities and towns such as affordable transport, potable water, modern sanitation, paved streets and modern styled housing. They argued that they wanted to attend night clubs, eat out by the road side and wear fancy clothes with fashion on. Cities are always been the destinations for most of the world's migrants due to their degree of economic activity, cultural and intellectual expression. It offers more opportunities, wide client base for the migrants and the entrepreneurs to market their products and services and in some cases provides an alternative for cheap labor. The aspirations of rural youth are dominated by formal sector employment and modern urban lifestyles. Therefore, this places largely in urban metros that provide with modern facilities or infrastructure such as entertainment outlets, electricity, roads, good infrastructure facilities and health care services, easy access to social amenities, high paying jobs and make them largely attractive to this young people.

The exodus of large numbers of youth from the NERs to the cities especially to national capital is also sparked off by different socio-cultural reasons. In the case of some households, the individuals came to the cities because of poverty and inability of parents to keep up with their children or children left behind when parents were deceased. The situation brings grave implications to the family since, children hardly receive the necessary emotional and economic support. It affects them due to their vulnerability and are less experienced and might have different social roles and have limited access to social networks. For some reason, rural

youths might not be competitive in urban job markets and thus, they end up in informal and low-paid work without job security and unsafe working conditions. Although, civil unrest, ethnic conflicts and some kind of violations of human rights are certainly among the causes of migration, in some cases the situation is also compounded by increasing population pressure and a deteriorating environment. Rural youth are also held back by poor infrastructure, lack of processing and storage facilities and limited access to necessary services. Some of the households in rural areas face labour and skill constraints and migration becomes a strategy to diversify income sources and cope with risks. Therefore, the decision to migrate is subject to a set of determinants that vary according to the structural transformation as well as household typology and individual preferences of the migrants. "Migration stabilizes household income in a context of weak or absent financial and insurance markets; this is especially so in cases of temporary migration strategies" (Schrieder and Knerr, 2000).

Not surprisingly, it is noticed that some of the rural youth particularly, lacks necessary skills and resources to be competitive in formal labour markets, especially in the place of destination, and have insufficient economic base, savings and human capital and therefore, they usually end up living in the informal settlements and are sometimes at risk of being trapped in low-income or informal employment, or in hazardous work and underemployment. It is also reported that some of the young migrants who are under-aged and traveling alone are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, social exclusion and abuse. Rural youth are also held back by poor infrastructure, lack of processing and storage facilities and limited access to necessary services.

3. Impact of Youth Migration from Rural to Urban on Rural Livelihoods

Migration has significant impact on the lives of the migrants and has becoming essential phenomena particularly for minimizing risks and diversifying households income. It involves costs, as certain types of migration may not be feasible for certain households owing to their limited resources or the necessary skills, networks etc. Migration is shaping the traditional social and economic structure of rural areas mainly which are agriculture dependent in nature. Despite the NERs agrarian image, the rural population has been diminishing significantly in size due to out migration. Study elsewhere shows that, mass movement of the people from rural to urban brings about rural depopulation. It is obvious that there is high out migration of rural youths to national capital from the NERs and this has major implications for the region. Migrants are important source of labour for agriculture production in their own homeland as well as for poverty reduction. The mode of migration of rural youth to the cities has resulted in the loss of an important share of the most vital and dynamic part of the workforce. The young and energetic ones who have a potential to contribute in overall development and act as a major player in the agricultural activity have left for the city leaving the elderly behind. Especially,

agriculture sector, has been severely devastated due to the absence of efficient labor and since the elderly do not have the ability to produce significantly to the food production resulting to the decline in crop production. The gradual decline of youth populations in rural areas, therefore presents considerable challenges to many North Eastern rural communities. Due to the short-term impact owing to reduced workforce, declining youth population in the region also negatively affects the supply of entry-level workers in long run. It also affects the supply of effective labour and the related skills mix losing the younger, most vital and dynamic share of their workforce. Migrants have a skills spectrum ranging from unskilled labor to highly skilled workers and have become a key driver for matching the skill demand and supply ratios all round. The vital and vibrant youth force is one of the most important assets for economic growth. It is therefore imperative that these youngsters should be provided with adequate educational facilities as well as income generating opportunities back in their homeland. Moreover, along with formal education, different aspects of society and life and expansion of their imaginary power are also equally important to improve all round development of youth. Since, the region lacks diverse opportunities to engage to and few attractive jobs and the scant socio-economic infrastructure, limits the youths from pursuing with necessary training to improve their entrepreneurial, administrative, technical skills and social skills and expertise.

Labour migration from a low productive rural job to a higher productive industrial-based urban jobs has been continuously taking place. In India it is evident that, rural to urban migration is the important flow to literate youth migrants. While, racial prejudice and discrimination are common to them. In general, youth migrants from NERs are particularly vulnerable to violence, abuse and discrimination. Study by Chandra 2011 examine that in Delhi, a racial discrimination against NE people has increased and social profiling is the root causes of racial discrimination. Migrants from NE also face a risk of being trapped in low-income or informal employment, and hazardous work. Nevertheless, migration involves complexities—it can pose a risk of social cohesion, cultures and traditions and in some cases to the safety and security of the residents. It can also leads to social tension, discrimination and violent behavior arising from differences in race, religion, language and culture in neighborhoods, workplaces or in schools.

Meanwhile, youth that do not possess land find it difficult to obtain land on their community owned land, flee to the cities in urban areas seeking for some form of job-related activities and other occupations to enhance their income prospects. Increased fragmentation of family land has also resulted to economically unviable setbacks, given the persistently low agricultural production and the poor method of production. Moreover, migration reduces the person-land dependency and those remaining in the house can benefit from the increased availability of resources. With the increased in out-migration, the agricultural plots of land may be subdivided among fewer children which reduces the risk of fragmentation and

insecurity. Besides, it is evident, that the individuals that remains, have a tendency to gain greater control over productive resources and services, potentially helping to close the gender gaps in agriculture.

Livelihoods are more vulnerable in the rural regions. Much of the economic activities in the NERs is related to farming and trading foodstuffs and other petty businesses. Existing agro-enterprises and entrepreneurs are mostly small, informal and family-based. Although, agriculture being the main occupation of the people in the region, majority of the people are small-scale/subsistence farmers in nature and thus, a very insignificant percentage could be described as commercial farmers. Apart from crop production, individual households also rear livestock such as cattle, goats, pigs and poultry, to supplement family income during the lean season. Thus, livestock is also another form of economic diversification in response to economic slowdown and climate risks and also gives with greater flexibility and is essential to ensure food security in the rural villages. As such, rural people cope with poverty in various ways, finding individual solutions to the problem. Some of the rural menfolk took on off-farm employment while women involves in small-scale trading and other businesses. The stage of agriculture and rural development in the place of origin has a strong impact on the rural mobility. For example, the scope of employment opportunities in the rural areas are among the principle drivers for the youths to migrate. And therefore, they tend to move in the case where there is more advanced centers offering with better scope, good fortunes and higher returns. Clearly, the pattern of migration of this young youths to the metro cities might have received considerable attention in both the social and academic arenas, there is also need for in-depth exploration focussing on the experiences of their migration.

Meanwhile, this young return migrants might not only produce new values and ideas, they become more enthusiastic, opens to new knowledge and ideas and become more innovative and helps in nurturing their community. Siar (2011) purported that knowledge transfer will only succeed if the areas of origin are receptive to learning and knowledge exchange. Migrants are also a source of ideas and innovation who can contribute to businesses and in other entities. Moreover, return migrants and its organizations can also help in enriching its local communities through capital investments, skills and technology transfers, know-how and other social networks. Hence, it can be said that migration helps in reshaping the traditional, social and economic structure of areas of origin.

4. Conclusion

Migration decisions are driven by a number of causes including poverty, poor income-generating opportunities and increased scarce land and natural resources. Therefore, the government can play a considerable role by uplifting economic development—employment and investment platforms in rural areas and maximizing its developmental benefits in the place of origin. Besides, investing in

agriculture and rural development in rural areas by creating productive employment opportunities and upgrading the quality of the existing firms particularly to attract youths, has become one of the most effective means of reducing migration to the urban cities. In collaboration with the government institutions, civil society organizations, researchers and other international organizations, needs to ensure policies and programs that involves upgrading existing labour market conditions that includes part-time and seasonal occupations, and technology transfers. Systematically address the linkages between youth employment promotion and mainstreaming on rural development and agriculture. Adopting territorial planning for job creation and other services that offers specific needs and aspirations for youths to enhance their contribution to development.

Given its wide migration experience, the leaders and the governments would need to be in a position to bring together different stakeholders and ensuring that migration and youth-related priorities are aligned with the region's overall development visions and objectives. To achieve large-scale impact, it is necessary to incentivize and support demonstration policies and pilot projects depending on the current situations. Promoting innovative partnerships for scaling up of agro start-ups especially for youths, and fostering investments in sustainable agriculture and green jobs that promote safe, remunerative and regulated seasonal labour migration schemes are also imperative. Scaling up agribusiness is encouraging since it generates value addition to the commodity and fetch more incomes thus, improves profit margin. Unless the government provides this basic infrastructure services to the rural areas and provides this productive youths with employment opportunities people will continuously drift in to the urban areas in search for better life.

State governments are also encourage to provide basic social amenities that matches to the urban services to keep the youths to stay. Special incentives also to be provided to bring conducive environment at work in their areas. This may in turn motivate the youth to remain in their hometown and communities thereby, contributing their quota in agriculture and rural development. In addition, youth would need more business advice, services and representation as well as specific initiative geared towards improving their livelihood prospects. Supporting rural families especially smallholders by creating an alternatives and sustainable livelihood options in their native place with special focus on rural youth is fundamental to addressing the root causes of rural migration. Besides, diversification of off-farm activities, effective rural services and investments in value chains should be linked to potential agriculture. In addition, rural education and vocational training should match labour market needs. FAO pointed out that building on national capacities and developing specialized expertise on agriculture and rural development is necessary to address the root causes of migration.

Governments and NGOs and civil societies needs to pay more attention to agriculture sector, especially, more budget needs to be devoted to agricultural

research and extension services and considered as an important engine for achieving growth and economic development. The targeted goals should include tapping on irrigation for agriculture, using modern techniques, improve transportation and infrastructure facilities, storage capacities, providing incentives to smallholders. New technologies must meet local needs and should be affordable by local farmers. One should also realize that, the adoption of technology is cost-efficient. The rural farmers who have little education should also access to agricultural extension services effectively to sharpen their skills. This will allow young people well equipped in basic knowledge and numeracy skills and possess potential to use digital technology to access and interpret information. Since, agro-food business represents enormous opportunity for youth employment as well as for rural development in developing countries. "They can be effective contributors to the local economy, the diversification of which will open new opportunity spaces for youth with more diversified and attractive jobs" (ILO, 2016). Different actors along the entire value chain needs to be improved to increase efficiency and encourage competitiveness to meet consumer requirements in regard to price, quality and the standards of the products.

Special incentives need to be offered to the firms, business outfits and private companies operating in rural areas of the state to boost employment opportunities so as to reduce rural migration to a minimum level. Efforts must be geared towards a more productive and sustainable agriculture sector and improved food systems in general. It needs to enable diversification into manufacturing and services and also promoting decent work in agribusiness. There is also a need to determine methods of identifying cost-effective ways in accessing modern farm inputs to guarantee food security. Strong education systems are key drivers of economic growth not just for the North-Eastern region of India but for the rest of states as well.

Another important issue for NERs is to continue unlocking involvement of private and public sectors at the same time rehabilitating transport and other infrastructure along the development corridors. As it is well known that the region already face with many social, economic, health, diplomatic, defense, security and political challenges. Some of these challenges cannot be tackled effectively at ground level. Although it is noticed that government in many cases formulates policies, but has not successfully been implemented. It calls to formulate and create a framework policies that are designed to address these challenges as well as building up adequate infrastructure, industry that are job-oriented and proper educational system will allow the young migrants to remain in their homeland and also ensures economic prosperity in the region. Nonetheless, migration from NE regions of India to the rest of the metro cities is to be encouraged to promote the national integrity.

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Outsiders in Their Own Land: North East Indians in Metropolis

Nabanita Deka*

The Northeast region of India is a land of vibrant culture and tradition with the presence of over 200 ethnic groups. However, over the years the region has seen exponential exodus of Northeast youths to the metropolitan cities of India. Majority of them have East Asian features because of which they have had to face racial discrimination in the metropolis. As per the mainstream so-called definition of an 'Indian face', people from Northeast do not qualify as 'Indian' and are labelled instead as Chinese or Nepali. This 'Insider vs Outsider' debate hence has been a cause of concern amongst North-eastern people especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when they have been called as Corona in the metropolitan cities. This paper intends to firstly examine the geo-political and economic reasons leading to large scale exodus of Northeast youths to metros. It will then investigate the discrimination and its resultant alienation effect faced by the Northeast youths in metropolis by analysing R.G. Lyngdoh's poems "The Migrant Labourer" and "Equal Citizens" and Nandita Haksar's ground-breaking book The Exodus is not Over. To further elucidate the 'Insider vs Outsider' debate, the paper will conclude by focusing on real-life incidents when NE people were called Corona.

Keywords: North East, North East youths, Migration, Racial discrimination, Corona, Covid-19

1. Introduction

North East region of India is popularly known as the Land of Seven Sisters – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and one brother- Sikkim. The region boasts of rich diversity as there are over 200 ethnic groups each with their distinct languages and colourful cultures. In spite of being rich in history, languages and cultures, Northeast youth migrate to metropolitan cities of the country in search of better education facilities and jobs. Unfortunately, many a times these youths find themselves being discriminated by locals of the cities they have migrated to and even by their employers. The people of North-eastern region have had to face discrimination on the grounds of facial appearance, different culture and their inability to speak fluent Hindi. They are often labelled as Chinese or Nepali and not Indian enough. This 'Insider vs Outsider' debate hence has been a cause of concern amongst North-eastern people especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when people of Northeast are being called Corona in metropolitan cities. This paper intends to firstly examine the geo-political and economic reasons leading to large scale exodus of Northeast youths to metros. It will then investigate the discrimination and its resultant alienation

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effect faced by the Northeast youths in metropolis by analysing R.G. Lyngdoh's poems "The Migrant Labourer" and "Equal Citizens" and Nandita Haksar's ground-breaking book *The Exodus is not Over*. To further elucidate the 'Insider vs Outsider' debate, the paper will conclude by focusing on real-life incidents when NE people were called Corona.

2. Gateway to the East

Northeast region of India is connected to mainland India via the Siliguri corridor. Popularly known as the Chicken's Neck, it is a narrow stretch of 22 kilometres. The geographical distance from mainland India is primarily one of the reasons why people from mainland India consider the Northeast region as an 'alien land'. The region's geographical aloofness is also one of the reasons why Northeast is still lagging behind in infrastructural developments. The longest bridge in India- the Dhola-Sadiya Bridge, connecting Assam and strategically important Arunachal Pradesh and the longest rail-road bridge in India called the Bogibeel Bridge connecting Dibrugarh in Assam and Dhemaji district bordering Arunachal Pradesh have increased connectivity in the region but it still has a long way to go. The mountainous terrain of the region also makes it difficult at times to carry out developmental works in the region. Insurgency and the deadly ethnic clashes are another reasons affecting the growth and development of the region. The culture of bandhs in the region is another phenomenon affecting the education system and economic development of Northeast. A single bandh costs the state exchequer crores of rupees. Assam, Manipur and Nagaland are the worst hit by the tyranny of bandh culture.

Assam, the gateway to Northeast is strategically very important. However, a single bandh in Assam can disrupt the entire supply of goods and services to the other Northeast states as well. It thereby has the potential to affect the entire economy of the region. Calling the 'bandh culture' a "scourge" that is retarding development and affecting the ordinary citizens, Denhang Bosai, the Deputy Director of IPR said, "...the bandh culture is akin to insurgency problem. They both only bring pains and sufferings for the society at large. A place hit by uncalled for frequent bandhs can never develop and prosper so also a place faced with insurgency problem can never make any headway in any sphere." (Bosai, para. 6)

The fear of extortion demands also looms large because of which not many people want to invest in the region. This has affected not only the economic and employment opportunities but also the educational opportunities in the region. All these reasons coupled with natural calamities like drought and floods have driven thousands of Northeast men and women especially the youths to seek a better life in the metropolitan cities. Every year floods and landslides kill hundreds of people in Northeast leaving thousands homeless. The 2020 Assam floods amid the COVID-19 pandemic was the worst with around 30,000 people left homeless and

destruction of crops in five districts¹ Rescue and relief operations were the worst hit due to COVID-19 protocols. Although the Central government has constituted North Eastern Water Management Authority (NEWMA)² to develop water and river based projects in the region for a permanent solution of flood, the fact cannot be ignored that floods drive away potential investment opportunities in the region thereby forcing the NE youths to look for opportunities in the metropolitan promised land.

3. The Metropolitan Promised Land

According to the 2011 census data on migration, India is on the move. India's rate of migration has risen from 30.1% in 2001 to 37.64% in 2011. The rate of increase in migration between 2001 and 2011 has also increased to 45%, as compared to 35% during the previous decade 1991- 2001.³ According to a report brought out by the Northeast Support Centre and Helpline in 2011, it is estimated that 4,14,850 people from Northeast region migrated to various cities such as Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Goa, Mumbai and Delhi during the period 2005-2010.⁴ The report also predicted that around 50 lakh people from Northeast would migrate to Delhi from 2011-2015. That number has significantly increased today.

Migration to mainland India has brought plenitude of opportunities to northeast youths especially the opportunity to showcase the rich and vibrant culture of Northeast India. This has however come at a cost for, the Northeast migrants have often found themselves targets of racism, sexual harassment and class exploitation. Take for example, the case of Nido Tania, a 19-year old student from Arunachal Pradesh. Nido was lynched to death in February 2014 in broad daylight by some shopkeepers of Delhi's Lajpat Nagar after he objected to their comments

¹ "Assam flood situation worsens, over 30,000 in 5 districts affected." *Hindustan Times*. 25 May 2020. Accessed 20 February 2021. <<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/assam-flood-situation-worsens-over-30-000-in-5-districts-affected/story-b44R19xqhsgMJY1JRMVvtM.html>>

² "PM Modi constitutes North East Water Management Authority as a solution for flood and erosion: Assam CM." *Economic Times*. 1 June 2020. Accessed 20 February 2021. <<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/pm-modi-constitutes-north-east-water-management-authority-as-a-solution-for-flood-and-erosion-assam-cm/articleshow/76141796.cms>>

³ "Statisticians Kundu and Mohanan question 2011 Census data on migration." *Business Standard*. 13 August 2019. Accessed 15 February 2021. [https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/statisticians-kundu-and-mohanan-question-2011-census-data-on-migration-119080900550_1.html#:~:text=India%20rose%20from%2030.1%20per,35%20per%20cent%20during%20the%20preceding%20decade%20\(1991-2001\)](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/statisticians-kundu-and-mohanan-question-2011-census-data-on-migration-119080900550_1.html#:~:text=India%20rose%20from%2030.1%20per,35%20per%20cent%20during%20the%20preceding%20decade%20(1991-2001))

⁴ "Migration From Northeast India Increased 12 Times During 2005-10." *Sinlung*. 10 March 2011. Accessed 15 February 2021. <<http://www.sinlung.com/2011/03/migration-from-northeast-india.html>>

on his hairstyle.⁵ The tragic event immediately prompted the Ministry of Home Affairs to constitute a committee under the Chairmanship of retired IAS officer M.P. Bezbaruah to look into the various concerns of Northeast people living in different parts of India. The committee submitted its report on July 11, 2014 and pointed out various concerns of Northeast people living in other parts of India.⁶ Foremost among them is the sense of insecurity and vulnerability in urban metros, misconception of local people about the culture and lifestyle of Northeast people, harassment at work, discrimination in daily life, mistaken as foreigners at tourist places, verbal and racial slurs such as 'chinki', and 'momo' to name a few.

4. The Insider-Outsider Debate

Northeast youths residing in metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore have had to face discrimination on the grounds of their facial appearance, dressing style and their inability to speak fluent Hindi. Their East Asian looks are not considered Indian enough by mainland India. "Are you a Chinese?", "Are you Nepali?" - are some of the questions that have become quite the regular phenomenon for a Northeast Indian from their mainland brethren. Sadly, it is this racism that defines a Northeast migrant's experience in metropolitan cities. Racism can be defined as discriminatory behaviour on the grounds of inherited physical features. Northeast Indians in this context have not found acceptance by the mainland Indians in their common imaginary of an 'Indian face'. This then leads to the questioning of their identity and citizenship. They are viewed as outsiders in their own land. This racial profiling leads to immense psychological distress and identity crisis as well. Writer Jahnavi Barua narrates one such horrendous experience in her essay "Home". Talking about her idea of home which ripples varied emotions like "love, longing and joy to sorrow, grief, anger and even bereavement", Barua has beautifully highlighted the fact that countless wars have been fought and are still being fought over the idea of home (Barua, 81). Many of these wars are one's personal battles as well as the idea of home brings with it its own convoy of issues like "belonging and unbelonging, homelessness, margins, centres, mainstream and other such uncomfortable constructs" (*ibid*). Interesting though is the fact that in search of and in the construction of an ideal 'home', one has to endure a volley of uncomfortable ideas and questions that at times blurs one's idea of oneself.

"In the late '70s in Delhi, I was a novelty, an exotic specimen from the other side of the world," Barua writes in her essay (96). Frustrated and sad, she had to issue numerous clarifications that she was not Chinese and Assam was indeed an integral part of India. What is more upsetting is the fact that the 'mainland' Delhiite's idea

⁵ "Daylight attack with iron rods killed college student Nido Tania." NDTV. 10 February 2014. Accessed 20 February 2021. <<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/daylight-attack-with-iron-rods-killed-college-student-nido-tania-550373>>

⁶ "Bezbaruah Committee submitted its report to Ministry of Home Affairs." Press Information Bureau. 11 July 2014. Accessed 20 February 2021. <<https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=106513>>

of Assam was of an alien and bizarre land probably without schools and roads; a land where people only eat meat: "I sought to clarify that I wasn't Chinese, that Assam was indeed, a part of India, and yes, we had schools and roads there. We did not only eat meat, yes, we ate paneer too" (*ibid*). This view of Assam as an alien land, as the 'Other' ultimately leads to the questioning of Assamese identity and most importantly raises question on the very issue of their citizenship as an Indian: "I had to convince a lot of people and at the end of that battle, I had to convince myself, too, that I was Indian" (*ibid*). If one has to convince others about one's citizenship necessitating because of one's physical features maybe then, we need to re-look and re-investigate the very idea of India as a land of 'Unity in Diversity'. In this overboard drive of convincing others, if one starts doubting his or her own citizenship because of the racial discrimination faced by him/her maybe then, it is high time to start 'real' integration of India and bridge the physical and psychological gap amongst the citizens of the country.

There have been many instances like Barua's when Northeast people had to face humiliation and prove their citizenship to mainland Indians. A BBC report investigating these claims made by Northeast people on their racial discrimination presents a very bleak and depressing picture of India. Take for instance, the case of Ale Metha. As per her testimonials, people are appalled when she tells them that she is from Nagaland. "You eat pigs. You eat dogs and snakes"- are some of the statements that she has to hear from mainland people. Narrating her ordeal, she says, "Yes, I am a Naga but that doesn't mean I am not an Indian or any less of an Indian than Indians who live elsewhere in the country. I hate to say this but yes, people from the north-east do face discrimination in other parts of India. We are also discriminated in the workplace. I worked in a company in the capital, Delhi, and I felt that those who were less qualified than me and those who didn't perform as well as I did were promoted over me." (BBC, n. pag.)

Many a times racial discrimination and stereotyping might also arise due to a lack of cultural understanding. In this context then, adequate steps need to be taken to raise awareness among the people of mainland India about the culturally rich and vibrant Northeast. Ato Richa, a 30-year old Naga male perfectly sums up the picture: "The discrimination we face in other parts of India is often because of a lack of understanding...Many people know nothing about Nagaland or its culture. School textbooks have never taught them anything about this part of the country" (*ibid*). However, as migration from Northeast India has increased over the years, so has the racial discrimination.

5. The Dual Pain of a Migrant

A migrant's pain is two-fold- he/she has to leave his native place for better opportunities and survive in a new land where he/she is nothing but a guest. The pain of uprooting oneself and the struggle to forge a better life in this new land becomes all the more painful when one has to suffer racial discrimination.

But why do the migrants especially people of Northeast continue their exodus to metropolitan cities in spite of knowing about the possible racial profiling and discrimination that they will have to face? Is the risk worth it? The answer to this probably lies in the fact that back home they have already seen and experienced so much of poverty, bloodshed and violence that their exodus to metropolitan cities provides them an escape route and a possible last shot at improving their living conditions. It is only when the “homeland is inhospitable and for the sake of survival alone, people are forced to migrate to another land, they become guests in this world” (Sen 103). Cautiously treading in this new metropolitan promised land, these migrants become a new “breed of people doomed to be guests who overstay. The echoes of this recalibration of natural entitlement passes on, one generation to another. They are insiders on the outside and outsiders on the inside” (*ibid*). The pain, suffering and resilience of a migrant labourer is brilliantly articulated by R.G. Lyngdoh in his poem “The Migrant Labourer”. The poem not only evokes sympathy but also notions of hardship one has to endure for the sake of survival. Hardship has indeed been their companion as Lyngdoh writes in the poem:

The crease of wrinkles,
Encircling your eyes,
Spiral around the misty depths.
Hardship has been your companion,
And you have seen so much of it
That now pain only bemuses you.
Is it just a defence mechanism?
Or is it a manic streak developed
And honed by too many battered times? (149)

Lyngdoh’s poignant lines then brilliantly encapsulates the untold pain and sufferings of migrant labourers. The meaning of pain for them has undergone many ramifications so much so that they are now mystified by the very idea of pain. Humans are psychologically very uniquely wired. In face of constant hardship and misery, humans build in around them a protective shield that acts as their immunity insurance cover thereby helping them to endure their pain and suffering and survive in the concrete lanes of metropolis. Their wrinkles and leathery face then narrates “a tale of endless dark days and sleepless nights” (*ibid*). Their determination and resilience then to fight the inhospitable conditions due to racial profiling and discrimination is nothing but a commendable feat:

You have touched rock bottom so many times,
But still no blow has knocked you out, and
You always rise up stronger from each painful fall.
Fate may have dealt you a cruel hand, yet

You never fail to hope and your faith never dies,
 Humbled, I can only stand to salute your resilience. (*ibid*)

In today's new India which has been plagued by polarisation of views, ideas of nationalism and questions like 'Who is an Indian?' has become a hotly debated topic. Amidst all these, the migrants' resilience, fight for survival and especially the fact that people of Northeast are speaking openly about the discrimination, speaks volumes about their fight for equality and fundamental rights. The youths of Northeast India are no longer willing to bear the humiliation. They want to educate and shatter to pieces the mainland's prejudice of Northeast India. Sanjoy Hazarika in his essay "Insiders, Outsiders and those in Between: After all, there's much in a Name", brilliantly captures this idea:

What is important now is that instead of quietly accepting the humiliation and nastiness heaped on them, younger people are courageously fighting back, forcing governments, employers, institutions and other civil society groups to take cognizance and lend their support. The most vulnerable are women, who face molestation, harassment and verbal abuse. But they are battling on. Why do they come? They are moving away from insecurity both political and economic, from lack of opportunities, from poor education facilities. India's metros and centres beckon to them. And despite discrimination, taunts and occasional violence, they are asserting their rights to access the equality and opportunities before all Indians." (184)

The roots of racism go deep. It is largely ideological; one that stems from elements like superior-inferior and in this case, the North-easterners are viewed as the inferior ones and are thereby Othered, Objectified and Snubbed. It is only by fighting and asserting their rights by speaking up, can the prejudices be obliterated. Highlighting the importance of such protests, Lyngdoh's poem "Equal Citizens" narrates one such scene where we find these 'Othered' people demanding their fundamental right of equality and opportunity:

The Delhi street was packed
 As they converged from all over.
 They even held hands in solidarity
 As they shouted out in protest.
 'We are citizens of the same family,
 Deserving equal treatment and opportunity.' (151)

Such protests in the capital are not new. When Nido Tania died, same kind of protest and demonstration was organised that saw thousands of participants from Northeast youths. Few people from hill states like Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, who are labelled as 'Paharis' in Delhi, too joined the protests to express their anguish. The protest saw slogans like- "We are Indians"; "Khooni ko saja

do" and "Racial discrimination down down" being raised.⁷ Another such protest was organised in Guwahati on February 9, 2014 in the aftermath of Nido's death and the brutal rape of a 14-year old Manipuri girl in New Delhi. Organised by Bulls of Assam Motorcycle Club, the bikers' protest was to raise their voice against racism faced by North-easterners in mainland India and to urge the government to include lessons on Northeast in school curricula to raise cultural awareness and understanding.⁸ The moot question however is- Has these protests been helpful? Has the discrimination stopped or after making few clamours, people forgot all about it and the issue eventually got evaporated in thin air? It is this aspect that Lyngdoh highlights in the later part of his poem "Equal Citizens":

...they [the protesters] dispersed to crawl back
Into their own little ponds again,
Their bonds were untied and forgotten,
The hands began to point in accusation,
And equal treatment and opportunity
Were shelved to become mere phrases once more. (151)

Article 15 of the Indian constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Article 51 A(e) of our constitution tells people to promote harmony and brotherhood in spite of religious, linguistic or regional diversities and relinquish practices that hurt the dignity of women. But are these even observed and followed by people in India? Equal treatment and equal opportunity then is nothing but a utopian dream. Each time cases of discrimination come to light, protests happen and with time, the issue fizzles out. Every year thousands of youths from Northeast migrate to metropolitan cities in search of a better life. In this context then it is important to provide them an environment of safety and security as "[t]housands of people, a majority of them young, from the North-East, many of them from the largest state of Assam, move every year outside the region in search of jobs, better lives, opportunities and education. They hold a range of jobs, from the basic to the high-level positions, seeking education, conducting research, and leading the way in sporting events such as boxing, participating in high-skill group activities such as soccer or leading the way with music performances- if you take any major football team in India and counted the number of players from the North-East, there would be more than a handful, at least one-third to half the team!" (Hazarika 183-84).

People from Northeast can be found working in various sectors especially in hospitality and BPO sectors. It would not be wrong to say that they are in high

⁷ "Northeastern students protest at police station." *Times of India*. 2 February 2014. Accessed 21 February 2021. < <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/Northeastern-students-protest-at-police-station/articleshow/29735479.cms>>

⁸ "Bikers protest Delhi racism." *The Telegraph*. 10 February 2014. Accessed 12 February 2021. <<https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/bikers-protest-delhi-racism/cid/215007>>

demand in the BPO sector because of their fluent English speaking skills thereby offering them an excellent opportunity to improve their living standards:

For many Northeast migrants the call centre industry offers livelihood opportunities that can't be found at home. Finding work is relatively easy, and migrants who come to Delhi for other reasons often find themselves working in call centres when their initial plans don't work out." (McDue-Ra 77)

Nandita Haksar's ground-breaking book *The Exodus Is Not Over* brilliantly reflects this aspect. The book tells us real-life accounts of first generation migrant workers from Northeast India especially from Manipur who move to metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata and abroad in search of better life and livelihood. The book narrates not just experiences of these migrant workers in metropolis but also examines the impoverished condition of people in Northeast for whom seeking refuge in metropolitan cities then is the only option left to ensure their survival. The situation turns all the more dystopic when these migrated youths from Northeast India have to face racial discrimination from mainlanders. One of the central characters of the book, Atim moved from Manipur to Delhi in 2005 to support her family: "She had no idea what kind of work, just as long as she could earn and send money back home" (31). Atim's only dream was to build a house for her family with a vegetable garden in Manipur. Her fight for survival and fulfilling her dream then is well reflected in her daily struggles as a hostess at Q'BA:

Atim had worked hard and could indeed be proud of herself. On an average month ten to twelve thousand people came to the restaurant. It was not an easy job, and Atim was beginning to feel permanently tired. The standing for long hours made her legs stiff and often she would get cramps in the night. On those nights, she would tie a scarf tightly around her legs. (77)

Atim however, was constantly harassed in the city and even at her workplace because she was from Northeast. Her first job at a handicrafts shop in the Metropolitan Hotel in Connaught Place turned out to be an absolute torture for her. Atim thwarted her manager's sexual advances because of which she was not allowed to "sit and made her work in such a way that she found she was standing for twelve hours every day without a break" (62). They were not even given a cup of tea. This however was not going to be her first and last sexual harassment at workplace. When she was working as a hostess at Q'BA, her co-workers never missed any opportunity to pass sexist comments at her: "Atim discovered that the chefs were people she had to be wary of. The head chef in the restaurant never missed an opportunity to make sexist remarks. He would tell Atim she was looking sexy..." (75). This kind of sexual harassment directed towards Northeast Indian girls is not just restricted within the cityspace of Delhi but elsewhere as well. Take for instance one such incident that happened with Ramtawon and her sister when they were out with Livingstone at a market in Bangalore. Men passed

lewd comments at the two girls but the saddest part was their admittance that they have now grown used to it: "He [Livingstone] turned to see who they were, but the women warned him to keep quiet and not respond. They said they had got used to such things and had learnt to ignore them" (114).

Northeast Indian men and women become easy targets of racial taunts and abuse especially the women from the region who are viewed as 'easily available' and women with 'questionable morals'. A 20 year-old Manipuri girl, working at a spa centre was raped in Dwarka on January 18, 2012. In spite of finding the accused's debit card on the crime scene, thus revealing his identity, there was hardly any breakthrough in the case as no arrest was made even after 48 hours.⁹ Another woman from the region, a 19-year-old woman from Nagaland was raped in Dwarka's Kakrola area. The accused took her to a flat in Kakrola Housing Complex where she was raped.¹⁰ These are not isolated cases and have become a regular phenomenon. It has in fact "led to systemic racism and institutionalized validation of such practices which is firmly rooted in a larger structure, a structure which makes abuse a daily affair for North-eastern women and treats patterns of structural violence as isolated incidents" (Mohanty 3).

6. Northeast Indians and Covid-19 Pandemic

One would assume that the Covid-19 Pandemic which wreaked havoc in India would bring its citizens closer and value and appreciate the meaning of life. Sadly, during the Covid-19 pandemic, discrimination against Northeast Indians reached its zenith. Apart from the regular racial profiling, Northeast Indian men and women have now been labelled as the 'face of Corona'. There have been instances throughout the country when people from the Northeast region were named and shamed as 'Corona'. One such incident happened in Mysuru when two students from Nagaland were denied entry into a grocery store for being 'foreign customers'. "A video showing discrimination against Naga migrants in a More outlet was noticed in Mysuru and immediately FIR has been lodged in Krishnaraja police station and the manager and staff of the outlet have been taken to custody," said Chandragupta, commissioner of police of Mysuru, about 125 km from Bengaluru.¹¹ In the widely circulated video, the Naga youth is seen pleading with the staff and can be heard saying, "Why are you discriminating us? We are Indians." In another shocking incident, a 25 year-old Manipuri woman

⁹ "Manipur girl raped in Delhi: 48 hours on, no breakthrough; North East community angry." NDTV. 20 January 2012. Accessed 12 February 2021. <<https://www.ndtv.com/delhi-news/manipur-girl-raped-in-delhi-48-hours-on-no-breakthrough-north-east-community-angry-568322>>

¹⁰ "Nagaland Woman Allegedly Raped In Delhi's Dwarka, 2 Arrested." NDTV. 20 July 2018. Accessed 12 February 2021. <<https://www.ndtv.com/delhi-news/nagaland-woman-allegedly-raped-in-delhis-dwarka-2-arrested-1887058>>

¹¹ "COVID-19: Mysuru Supermarket Denies Entry to Nagaland Students." *The Quint*. 29 March 2020. Accessed 12 February 2021. <<https://www.thequint.com/news/india/covid-19-mysuru-supermarket-denies-nagaland-students-entry#read-more>>

was spat at and called 'Corona' by a man. The incident occurred in Vijay Nagar, Delhi when the woman stepped out to buy groceries with her friend. The man who was riding a scooter spat paan all over her face, hair and T-shirt.¹² Sharing a similar experience, ace badminton player Jwala Gutta in her article "Growing up in India with a Chinese mother hasn't been easy, Covid makes it worse", Gutta talks about her mixed heritage and narrates her ordeal of being called "China ka maal", "half Chinese" and "chinki" and more recently "half Corona". "...it's not been easy growing up as the child of a Chinese mother. Now, with COVID-19, the trolls have a new word to fling at me, and others from the Northeast," she writes (Gutta, n.pag.). Stressing the importance of respecting people, she urges everyone to value humanity and approach the judiciary in the event of any harassment.

With the spread of Covid-19, the menace of racism has only intensified and sadly people from Northeast region are its worst victims. The Minister for State for Minority Affairs, Mr Kiren Rijiju took to Twitter to express his disappointment at the blatant racism faced by Northeast men and women in the wake of Covid-19.¹³ Soon after this, Ministry of Home Affairs directed all states to take strict action against those harassing people from Northeast India. In its strongly worded notice, the Ministry wrote, "This is racially discriminatory, inconvenient and painful to them. It is requested that all law enforcing agencies in your State/UT may be sensitised to take appropriate action in cases of harassment when these are reported."¹⁴ Even the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, tweeted urging people to maintain unity. True to what he tweeted, Covid-19 indeed does not "see race, religion, colour, caste, creed, language or borders before striking."¹⁵

7. The Way Forward

It is high time then for India to have a strong anti-racism law. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 was enacted to prevent atrocities against people belonging to SC/ST communities and punish the offenders but racism still prevails. Under Section 509 of Indian Penal Code, people passing any derogatory comments, gestures or act intending to insult the modesty of women are jailed for a term which may extend to one year, or fined or with

¹² "Eyes were burning from the paan, says Manipuri girl called 'corona' by Delhi man who spat on her." *The Print*. 23 March 2020. Accessed 13 February 2021. <<https://theprint.in/india/delhi-man-spits-on-manipuri-womans-face-calls-her-corona/386357/>>

¹³ "Kiren Rijiju Calls Out Increasing Racist Abuse Against Northeast Indians in Wake of Coronavirus." *News18*. 18 March 2020. Accessed 15 February 2021. <<https://www.news18.com/news/buzz/kiren-rijiju-calls-out-increasing-racist-abuse-against-northeast-indians-in-wake-of-coronavirus-2541309.html>>

¹⁴ "Take Action Against Those Harassing People From Northeast: MHA." *The Quint*. 23 Mar 2020. Accessed 15 February 2021. <<https://www.thequint.com/news/india/coronavirus-ministry-of-home-affairs-asks-states-to-take-action-against-those-harassing-people-from-northeast#read-more#read-more>>

¹⁵ "Covid-19 Does Not See Race, Religion or Caste Before Striking, Says PM Modi." *MSN*. 19 April 2020. Accessed 15 February 2021. <<https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/newsindia/covid-19-does-not-see-race-religion-or-caste-before-striking-says-pm-modi/ar-BB12SexI>>

both. However, the main question is- which section to impose when a Northeast man faces racial harassment. Most importantly, not all East Asian looking Indians such as Rajbongshis, Ahoms, or Meiteis are listed under ST category. In light of this then, it is very important to have strict laws/acts dealing specifically with racism. Although India is a signatory to the International Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, in the absence of a strict anti-racism law, people from Northeast region continue to face racial discrimination in the metropolitan ‘promised land’.

What is also important is to bridge the ideological and cultural divide. One of the primary reasons of racial profiling and stereotyping of Northeast men and women is lack of understanding and regard for Northeast culture and vibrancy. An attempt should thereby be made to acquaint the ‘mainlanders’ with the history and culture of Northeast India. A Northeast man and a woman is as much Indian as any other man or a woman from ‘mainland’ parts of India. To put an end to the ‘Insider vs Outsider’ debate and with a hope that prejudices related to people from Northeast India will be annihilated, let me sum up my paper by leaving you with Cherrie L. Chhangte’s stimulating lines from her poem “What does an Indian Look Like”:

You look at me, and you see
My eyes, my skin, my language, my faith.
You dissect my past, analyse my present
Predict my future and build my profile.
I am a curiosity, an ‘ethnic’ specimen.
Politics, history, anthropology, your impressive learning,
All unable to answer the fundamental question—
‘What does an Indian look like?’
—An Indian looks like me, an Indian is Me. (76)

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Reflecting on the Migrant Kitchen: Gender and Food in the City

Pooja Kalita*

Migration of people from the 'North-east' of India to Delhi is not an unusual phenomenon in contemporary times. I also belong to this migrant population for more than a decade now. There are many people like me from Assam and the eight 'North-eastern' Indian states who migrate to this city and make it their 'home'. One of the fascinating and intriguing aspects of my journey has to do with food and various kitchens that I have come across. Hence, I attempt to manoeuvre around questions such as – What does the migrant kitchen look like? What are the gendered practices in such kitchens? Who and what constitutes it? What definitions of masculinity and femininity we can derive from them? This chapter draws its narrative from the domain of reflections, memories and some ethnographic ramblings.

Keywords: Kitchen, Food, Gender, Migration, North East.

1. Sketching Out the Kitchen and Its Practices

One might wonder, why am I referring to the kitchens of migrants as the 'migrant' kitchen and not the 'migrant's' kitchen. In other words, can a kitchen migrate or can a kitchen assume the life and identity of a migrant; just the way humans do? My assertion is a yes. Spaces, including the kitchen space assume a dynamic life of its own with fluidities and fluxes.

In terms of spaces, Rodman (1988) while addressing the issue of studying various spaces and places tries to find a solution in multivocal and multilocal approach to the study of space. It is not just the geography of a place but the history of the culture and society, its people who have given rise to various narratives of a place. Thus, it has not been about just looking into the surface of a place or space but the reasons that gave rise to various narratives and practices - the way they interact, contradict and influence. Space is a medium through which ideologies can be maintained and political power and control exercised (Lefebvre 1991). Low (2014), while evoking Lefebvre argues that, "space and its arrangement and allocation are assumed to be transparent, but as Henri Lefebvre (1991) asserts, they never are. Instead, when critically examined, space and spatial relations yield insights into unacknowledged biases, prejudices and inequalities that frequently go unexamined" (Low 2014: 34). Perera (2016) writes in reference to war-zone tourism in Sri Lanka, that spaces "become meaningful through the interactions of people who live in these places, who visit them as well as those who might have been expelled from them and would see them only from a distance" (Perera 2016: 214). Massey (1994) argues that gender should form a crucial element of theorizing space and place (1994).

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It is important to navigate the undulating terrain of the kitchen space as I later go on to discuss gendered narratives in it and through it. Kitchens as everyday lived spaces are mostly neglected as political sites, but on a closer examination reveals their importance as a medium of building belongingness and rights. In these often-overlooked spaces we can recognize processes of negotiation, challenge, or appropriation that mediates everyday spatial practices and where gender relations are discursively created (Beebejaun 2017: 330-331). We need to realize that,

...experiences of being gendered vary across places, contexts, and political regimes. Gender is continuously being remade at different scales, through national legislation, and changing life circumstances, thereby presenting different layers of complexity for coherent analysis. The city is gendered through multiple actions and experiences of its inhabitants" (Beebejaun 2016: 323).

Migration is one of the important factors which further needs to be taken into account when understanding the gendered experiences in urban spaces and the manifestations of masculinities and femininities. Hu (2016) in relation to migration of people from rural to urban China views that, "Migration is likely to give rural migrants the bargaining power to break away from traditional values, due to their participation in education and particularly work, which generates remittances for their rural families" (Hu 2016: 270).

Following from this, in this broader context of this discussion, it is crucial that I turn the lens towards myself; and attempt to understand the researcher along with the researched.¹ As I reflect on my research, it has definitely been intertwined with complex emotions – of me as well as of my research participants. I am quite aware that emotions have most often gained a notorious position in research methods; the assumption of a neutral researcher on the field. However, not to acknowledge my emotional basis of this present article would not only be dishonest but methodologically inappropriate. "Emotionally engaged research opens up space for new questions, ideas, and interpretations. It challenges foundational concepts such as claims to truth, subjectivity, objectivity, and experience, allowing new approaches to method, theory, and knowledge to be explored...Guided by an ethic of care, emotionally engaged research helps foster intellectual clarity and a deeper understanding of our research and research participants. This ethic of care must also, however, be extended to us as researchers" (Blakely 2007: 67). In one of his works, Perera (2020) provides an apt justification for his narrative style which is closely linked to his own subjective self - "...if the 'personal is political', as once famously argued by American feminist Carol Hanisch in 1970, then the personal, in the sense in which I have used my recollections in this collection of essays, is quite clearly sociological" (Perera 2020: 28).

¹ This facet of research is an extension of both the 'Writing Culture' (1986) and more so about the 'Women writing culture' (1995) debate; of reflecting on one's ethnographic methods inclusive of reflecting on the ethnographer herself.

Now, the entry point to the topic of this article has been 'I'. In other words, I have started off by taking myself as a 'field' of my study. This was an organic consideration as the interest that I have in studying food and gendered manifestations in relation to it has not been just an outcome of my academic pursuit in sociology, although it has given the necessary impetus to develop it into an academic research. But first and foremost, it has been my experiences, memories and reflections of seeing people, particularly in the kitchen; the omnipresent presence of women in the kitchen and a few sights of men in it as I was growing up.

In the year 2007 after my 12th board exams, I came to Delhi to study further, to continue with my life here and to see something new or may be to search for something already familiar. However, one of the major concerns and the central aspect of my survival in this city was my quest for some good food to provide a respite from my messy life in this chaotic city. Through all these years of my life in Delhi, I have tasted various kinds of food which I never had while I was in Guwahati and also had the pleasure of relishing some 'home-like' food that filled me with nostalgia at the same time. Various 'eating-out' spots from road-side stalls to cafes and restaurants, whatever suited my small student budget were explored. Conversations centred around which pastry is best at which bakery to where one can find the best but cheapest momos. Such conversations became a regular feature in my circle of friends. But such conversations have never been only about food, but also have been about diverse experiences related to food; both good and bad. Good experiences were mostly about the best quality of one's favourite food at a reasonable rate or the pleasure of dating without any known face watching over. Bad experiences often centred around not only the quality of food at a certain place but how my female friends found it unsafe to go out. Many faced harassments when they eat at a certain place at a certain time, being commented upon as 'chinkis' or stared at for eating 'more' or simply made uncomfortable because of their gender identity. I myself have not been immune to such experiences. The kitchen too becomes part of nostalgia as well as a lived reality.

I would also like to add here that when I refer to 'North-east' or people from this region; it is not to be understood as a homogenous category. It is diverse and complex as a spatial category and at the same time material culture and gender enactments are much discursive. However, one of the disturbing trends that still perpetuates in cities such as Delhi is that when one refers to the 'North-east' of India and people from this place, we are perceived to be the 'others'. This form of 'othering' results into racial discrimination, animosity and various kinds of conflicts. However, the lives of migrants are much more than that. There is ample cultural diversity along with layered inequalities of class, religion, castes and so on. In addition to that, studies on this region have mostly focused on conflicts of various kinds – militancy, state violence, ethnic clashes. Although these are significant issues to be looked into, one must also not reduce a diverse region and its people to only certain homogenous categories. Food and kitchens are one such

space which throws light into these un-homogenous aspects. Cooking and eating, both in the public and private realm by migrants of this region points towards the fact that we cannot be clubbed into any kind of rigid boxes.

2. The Migrant Kitchen in the Private spaces

In reference to India, Singh, Keshri and Bhagat (2016) argues that various restriction on women becomes a hurdle for them to break away from traditional feminine norms even when they migrate from rural to urban areas. They argue that, "Migrant men's participation in work remained stable while women's participation has decreased after migration and entering in urban India. It reflects the phenomena of defeminization of female work force in recent times" (Singh, Keshri and Bhagat 2016: 12). Yet, it still cannot be concluded that only migrant women do the traditional role of cooking in the migrant households as has been observed by me. For instance, in Delhi where a lot of women who migrate from North-eastern states including Assam, assume the role of managers and care takers of authentic or ethnic restaurants and supervise the male workers; including the cooks. The question that needs to be asked then is - What are the meanings of performative masculinity and femininity we can understand from this? Srivastava (2012) states that gender performance involves an entire task of building and rebuilding, consolidation, representation and enforcement; in other words, we must think of gender identities as works in progress (Srivastava 2012: 15).

McDuiie-Ra (2012) is of the opinion that "Cooking also matters for identity... common for both men and women..." (McDuiie-Ra 2012: 156). But, is identity preservation or the performances of gender same in relation to food? Also, when we talk about migration, we need to keep in mind certain other things. Campbell and Mayerfeld Bell (2000) argue that rather than simply assuming dichotomies such as masculinity and femininity, rural and urban as given, "No objective thing that could be called "rural masculinity" can be separated analytically from a parallel object called "urban masculinity." Rather, we are interested here in the intersection of the rural and the masculine on a symbolic level" (Campbell and Mayerfeld Bell 2000: 539).

Most people particularly students coming to the city of Delhi for higher education, jobs etc do find them in a space distant and away from 'home'; physically, mentally, emotionally. The thought of home food would in turn evoke nostalgia and longing. Although many would ascribe to the idea of 'Mom-made' food, there is also no dearth of people who would praise their father's cooking. For that matter, both women and men who migrate to this city have their tryst with the kitchen often. I have met ample number of people who indulge in cooking on a daily basis irrespective of being male or female. In that sense, the strict boundaries of gendered spaces are challenged to some extent. The kitchen is not simply a domain of the women nor is it only the men who venture out in the public space. For a lot of middle-class households, both men and women venture out for jobs in

the public domain. However, in spite of this fluidity in the relationship of men and women to the kitchen, cooking by men is still not always perceived as something mundane and usual. It is still seen as an exception. Thus, when it comes to men and cooking,

Unlike the care work performed by mothers, fathers and grandfathers entered these narratives as public food professionals...Rarely my research participants spoke of their father as the primary cook within the home. In all other cases, men entered into foodie memories with traditionally masculine performances as cooking professionals, explorers, or culinary artists (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 201).

However, it cannot be denied that it is the aspiration of a middle-class lifestyle or an aspiration of a better lifestyle that couples seem to alter traditional gender roles. For instance, in the domestic kitchens of young Assamese couples, both men and women can cook and do other domestic chores. They both can make traditional Assamese cuisine, especially during festivities. Sharing household responsibilities makes it a good economic option. Nonetheless, for most of them, they still romanticize the idea of cooking done by mothers and grandmothers, especially when it comes to traditional food and dishes such as *Khar* and *Tenga*.

For most people, one of the fondest memories of being a migrant student in Delhi has been about getting some food from one's home. Whether it is the pickles, sweets, snacks or any item that makes its way to our migrant spaces is welcomed with a lot of enthusiasm. One such item that never fails to evoke nostalgia and excitement is the *Pitha* for the Assamese folks. *Pithas* are broadly steamed/fried rice cakes or roasted rice flour rolls. They fall within the category of both a sweet dish as well as a snack. Mostly *Pithas* are sweet in taste and can be prepared with a variety of rice along with other ingredients such as sesame, jaggery etc. Even though they are regarded as a special preparation prepared during special occasions such as the festival of *Bihu* in Assam, with the advent of technology and the expansion of the market, *Pithas* are prepared and eaten throughout the year in Assam. There are varieties of *Pithas* found mostly in the states of Eastern India such as Odisha and West Bengal, however, here, I am referring only to the *Pitha* made in Assam.

A lot of my friends from Assam who have stayed in hostels or shared apartments, would get *Pithas* from their home in Assam. Quite a few times they would be couriered by their families back home. This would happen mostly during the Assamese cultural festival of *Bihu*. Many a times we ourselves would stuff our luggage with some *Pithas* to sustain us for some time in a different city, Delhi in this case. But once it reaches its destination, in my case, my hostel, it would be eaten up in just a few hours. It was always a delight to share it with friends hailing from different parts of India.

Back in my home state of Assam, on one hand I have come across mostly women who would prefer to make *Pithas* themselves during festivities but on the other hand, there is no dearth of the ones relying on packaged ready-to-eat and ready-to-make traditional food items. There are many such ventures now who sell such products and their client base is quite long. One of them is the business enterprise of *Khadyo* in Assam. The business enterprise of *Khadyo* (name changed) which is again based on the vision of preserving Assamese culture does not shy away from innovations. It sells *Pithas* made in a factory setting with the help of technology. During my growing up years, I vividly remember that *Khadyo* was the 'it' thing. Today, it outsources its products to not only different parts of Assam but also to various cities in India. It is their innovative techniques that have got them popularity. They even have chocolate flavoured ready-to-eat 'Assamese' breakfast cereals along with many other varieties. Srinivas's (2006) work on two major cosmopolitan urban set ups; Bangalore and Boston are interesting in this aspect and quite applicable. The women rather than taking the hassle to prepare 'authentic' food, take recourse to packaged 'authentic' food. They do so as they still want to meet the societal expectations of her gender identity, wherein cooking forms an important part of the identity. This also applies to most women who have been loyal customers of *Khadyo* products. Such products are a common feature in many migrant spaces in Delhi, including households, hostels, paying guest accommodation and so on.

The discussion on gender and the household kitchen would be incomplete if I do not point out the significant role played by domestic helps. One of the households I have known in Delhi, used to have a female help from a remote village in Assam. After working in that household for more than a decade and after the mistress of the house died, she was sent back to her village. She was an important part of that household but once her employer's children too left Delhi for higher education and jobs, her service was no longer required and she was sent back to her village. Certainly, her service was never compensated for and she was left with only uncertainty by her employers. There are many such people, especially young girls who are taken to Delhi to work as domestic helps. Young boys are also employed in such positions but are still rare. One of the primary reasons why female helps from native villages are preferred is because they seem to know to cook traditional cuisines that are cooked back at home. In addition to that, they are preferred more than local domestic workers because negotiation of salaries with them is easier. There are hardly unions for them to demand their rights. However, a lot of couples also share their work and it is cheaper for them to employ a local help for a few hours every day or for two-three days a week. Many of them cook the regular meals and some of their employers provide them with some training lessons in some traditional dishes. In such a case, it does not matter if that help is from the same place like the employees or if they are from Delhi or migrants in Delhi from other Indian states.

3. The Migrant Kitchen in the Public Space

There is no dearth of restaurants in Delhi. It seems to cater to all taste buds. There are quite a few restaurants serving cuisines from the different states of the 'North-eastern' region. I went to one of the restaurants in a popular location claiming to serve cuisine from the state of Assam. One of the most striking aspects of that restaurant is that, from the cook to the helpers and waiters, most of them were not from Assam or Assamese speaking; barring a couple of them. They were mostly Nepali men. The kitchen was rather small. When I asked a non-Assamese worker, that how come they landed up in this job related to Assamese food, they said that they came to Delhi with the help of their male acquaintances. Some of them do not know cooking. Some of them work as workers and some of them learn to cook eventually and can work as cooks if required. Their ethnic identity has never mattered to their employers because as they viewed – 'Assamese cuisine is not that difficult to learn to cook'. Most of these men are either unmarried or have left their wives and families back home.

This scenario of food being cooked and served by men in an 'Assamese' restaurant in Delhi presents before us two extremely crucial points. Firstly, that equating women with cooking might not manifest in reality, even though it does in the realm of ideas in our patriarchal society. Such ideas might not represent our realities (which are used to demarcate strict norms about femininity and masculinity). Cooking by women is over-normalized and women who do not cook are often shamed for not being 'good' women. Further, the fact that ethnic identity of the employees in such restaurants is often not similar to the food they claim to prepare and serve indicates that the concept of authenticity related to any cuisine is fuzzy. In such restaurants, that often harps on selling 'authentic' cuisine, the food matters and not the ethnic origin of the cooks and other workers. It did not seem to matter to the employers and neither had it affected the customer base in a negative manner. The customers hardly seem to inquire about the gender or ethnic identity of the cooks and helpers. Hence, the commonly assumed relation between materials and homogenous manifestation of ethnicity is too restrictive. It points out that sharing of culture is possible and happens quite often.

However, men in Assamese restaurants in Delhi cook because cooking in restaurants is a 'masculine' job. Women as when viewed from a patriarchal perceptive cannot handle the pressure. Men in that sense are viewed as inherently having the traits of being strong enough to handle any pressure, particularly related to the pressure at work spaces in the public space and women not being strong enough for that. Moreover, for most people, the world of work is something that lies outside the home. But in fact, for many, both women and men, domestic spaces are their worlds of work. Domestic work remains doubly invisible by the fact that it is treated as a peripheral, feminized sector and is under documented. Male migrant domestic workers, even though are rare, are even less represented.

But the question is - Why do men themselves choose to do this otherwise 'feminised' work of cooking? In the city of Delhi male migrant cooks I met stated that they were "bound" to do this work because they needed to support their families. Thus, as Chopra (2003) views, even when gender divisions of labour exist, men cross the divide "for the sake of the family". They do so in self-conscious recognition that this will mean a "loss" of their maleness. Bondi (1998) argues that "...the public domain is valued more highly than the private domain precisely because of its implicitly masculine connotations" (Bondi 1998: 164). It is precisely these notions on space that men prefer to cook in the public space of restaurants even when they view cooking as a womanly activity. My research participants viewed that the public space of the Assamese restaurants is suitable for men and not women. The 'safety' requirements for women are higher. Men can work late at night and still be safe in the city space of Delhi. But for women, especially migrant women it is not at all safe. There might be cases of implicit and explicit harassment against women inside the restaurant kitchen, in addition to the regular gender and racial harassment in the public space. They might find it uncomfortable physically, socially and emotionally. It is perceived that for women to cook for those long hours in the restaurant kitchen makes it difficult for them to fulfil other domestic duties of being mothers and wives. But for men working in the public kitchen is not assumed to be a big deal because there is always a positive correlation between patriarchal masculinity and public space. According to Chowdhry (2014) "By focusing on the "danger" of these spaces for women they not only reserve this privileged space for themselves but also emphasize women's space at home" (Chowdhry, 2014: 43). It makes me think of how so many men are never taught that it should be normalized not to speak anything that makes anyone uncomfortable; be it to men or women.

As previously noted, it still cannot be concluded that only migrant women do the traditional role of cooking in the migrant households. For instance, in Delhi where a lot of people migrate from the 'North-eastern', women do assume the role of managers and care takers of authentic restaurants and supervise the male workers, including the cooks. Furthermore, many migrant households take recourse to packaged 'authentic' food. Women do so as they still want to meet the societal expectations of her gender identity, wherein cooking forms an important part of the identity. Therefore, we can see that the relation between urban spaces, gender performance is not unilinear and cannot be conceptualized in a monolithic way.

Nonetheless, the migrant men who cook regularly in the private space of the household are still popularly elevated to a higher level of. And on the other hand, the idea that men are meant to be working in the public sphere is still a stark reality. Men who work in public kitchens such as chefs are seen as able men who earn for their family. The idea that men can choose to be full time cooks at home, just like so many women is looked down upon. Such ideas and expectations can only add to the burden of masculinity that patriarchy imposes on men. It is today a no secret

how men face issues of anxieties, depression and even depression because of this very burden of patriarchy.

Another aspect of the migrant food culture in the city is - it is true that food from our home state is deeply missed and fills us up with nostalgia but that does not deter us from appreciating the food cultures of other places, outside the region of 'North-east' India. Cooking and eating are a common human activity. What we need to establish is a culture of acceptance and appreciation which should go beyond simply exoticization of food from this region. Many people from the 'mainland' would regard our food habits as exotic or even 'dirty' along with regarding it as a deviation from 'real' 'Indian' food. Such attitudes cannot be taken for granted as it only perpetuates the distorted notion of the 'North-east' as a 'distant' land; away from the 'mainland' of India.

For the last few years, there has been a festival every year celebrating the cultures of this region. Delhi has been a host to such a festival. The food section has been of special interests to everyone who visits the festival; the visitors belonging to different parts of India. However, we need better arenas for dialogues and exchanges with an equal footing along with such festivals. No culture and its manifestation are homogenous even within the same community of people. There should be appreciation beyond exoticization. Public display of cultures would prove to be positive only when it debunks popular myths that homogenises and harasses us. While we can appreciate our different cultural manifestation in food to clothes, we should reiterate time and again that dissimilarity should not result in inequality.

4. Concluding a Beginning

The film – '*Axone*', directed by Nicholas Kharkongor, created quite a bit of stir. *Axone* (pronounced as Aaxuni) is an ingredient especially used in Naga pork preparations. However, in spite of it being a popular dish from the 'North-east' of India, is repulsed by many in the 'mainland' of India. The film rightly depicts the manner in which racial discrimination is faced by the people hailing from this region along with our food. We all are perceived to be belonging from a homogenous land – which is 'disturbed', with 'peculiar' food taste and as having 'chinki' eyes. This is integral to the popular visual regime that dominates the 'mainland' of India. As Kikon (2021) points out that there exists a visual regime that

...is racialized as a project to discipline and create desirable citizens, while reinforcing a politics of superiority founded on caste and race even in the dietary culture. By this logic, to bring the tribal communities from Northeast India within the caste Hindu fold would mean, first and foremost, transforming their food choices and eliminating beef, pork, and other unclean tribal food choices (Kikon 2021: 4).

Irrespective of whether one belongs from Assam or Nagaland or Sikkim, these assumptions do not take into consideration any of the diversity within the eight

states constituting the 'North-east' region of India. It is utterly painful that even after 74 years after the independence of India, we are still not regarded as Indian enough; from the clothes we wear to the food we eat.

In addition to that, the migrant kitchen of people that I have known and visited have witnessed a culture of sharing food from not only with people belonging to the same community but with other 'mainlanders' too. However, again, it is agonizing when people are humiliated because of their food culture and taste. Such experiences range from verbal slurs to physical and sexual violence. In spite of all the unpleasant experiences, it is not to be denied that this city still is an attractive option to migrate and people do make a 'home' here. And whenever, I witness, both men and women sharing kitchen responsibilities, without sticking to rigid gendered norms of work in the public and the private sphere, it surely does provide us with an interesting format to re-think gender in the migrant kitchen.

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Migration Experiences of Sylhetis

Namra Sultan*

*This paper, through the narrative of Babu in Siddharta Deb's *The Point of Return*, studies a North-eastern migrant in an urban city. Babu, however, carries the baggage of migration long before he becomes a migrant to a metro city himself. His baggage comes from an older history of migration which begins with Partition. Babu belongs to a family that migrated to the slums of Thikarbasti in Assam from Sylhet which went to East Pakistan after Partition and is already a second-generation immigrant in the place of his birth. Mainstream Partition history overlooks the smaller, but no less significant, narratives from the North-east. Babu, being doubly marginalised — on account of being an ethnic outsider in his home in the North-east as well as in the metro city, becomes a representative figure of the multifacetedness of migration and the plurality of the migration experience. Being designated an outsider even in his place of birth, what is home for Babu? Is it a physical space he can travel to or does it reside in memory, especially in the memory of the everyday? In an age of heightened mobility and increased rates of migration, this paper establishes migration as a pluralistic experience and problematises the idea of home to be place-bound. It also reinstates the lesser-known Partition narratives from the North-east by demonstrating their continued impact.*

Keywords: Migration, Outsider vs. natives, Home, Partition, North East India

1. Introduction

For a large part of the Global South, migration evokes the memory of the 1947 Partition of India. Partition became the starting point of one of the most colossal migrations history has witnessed — the ripple effects of which continue to be witnessed even today. The 1947 Partition which had religion as one of its root causes saw people migrate from the land of their birth/settlement to the country that proclaimed a common religious identity. Religion was to become the binding link between these people who were otherwise divided by caste, class, and/or ethnic identities. The realities that we witness, however, are a far cry from the promise of these aspirations. Not only has religion been unsuccessful in its role as a binding force for all people of a nation — migrants and natives — but newer fault lines have erupted where none were expected, creating fissures among people, regardless of religion. My paper presents migration as a phenomenon that can potentially uproot the foundation of an individual, a family, and by extension, a nation. I attribute this “foundation” to the house which is left behind as one migrates and which is thereafter in a perpetual attempt of being reconstructed.

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I use the novel *The Point of Return* by Sidhartha Deb to address the migration of Sylhetis in the North-east, their search for a home, their attempts at setting up a foundation—building a house—and their encounters with the feeling of homelessness, especially in the context of second- and third-generation migrants who eventually move to the urban metros of Calcutta and Delhi. By tracing the narratives of Dr Dam, a first-generation migrant of Partition, and his son Babu, a second-generation migrant who subsequently migrates onward to metro cities, the narrative exposes the multifacetedness, as well as the continuity, of migration that was initiated as a response to Partition and brings to light the ruptures it has caused along the way. “You cannot be in exile in your country” believes Babu, and my paper examines how his own narrative defies this claim.

The events of 1947 defy temporal bounds as their consequences continue to shape the contours of modern history. The present is often understood in terms of the past that shaped it. But even today there remain facets of the history of Partition that lie in wait for historians and analysts to address. Where on the one hand the migration across the North-West and Eastern borders of India, which was primarily in response to large-scale communal violence, is heavily documented and archived, there remain glaring gaps in Partition history when it comes to North-east India. The North-eastern region too witnessed massive displacements of people across borders; however, their migration was initiated more by the fear of violence rather than acts of violence. Anindita Dasgupta¹ emphasizes the experience of migration as being a pluralistic phenomenon and urges us to turn the lens further east and north of Bengal, to look into one of the areas within this third site of partition — the district of Sylhet in the erstwhile colonial province of Assam.

2. The Sylhetis: A Background

Sylhet was a Bengali-speaking district and part of East Bengal when it was joined with its neighbour Assam in 1874 by the British. Anindita Dasgupta notes that “For several years afterwards, the Hindus of Sylhet demanded for a return to the more ‘advanced’ Bengal, whereas the Muslims of Sylhet by and large preferred to remain in Assam where its leaders, along with the Assamese Muslims, found a more powerful political voice than they would have had if they returned to a Muslim-majority East Bengal.” The indigenous Assamese supported the separation of Sylhet from Assam as the Sylhetis — with their earlier access to English education — were seen as competitors for jobs, and as exercising cultural hegemony. It is ironical then that at the time of Partition these demands were reversed and the Hindu population very obviously voted for being part of Assam which continued to be

¹ Anindita Dasgupta in her essay “Denial and Resistance: Sylheti Partition ‘Refugees’ in Assam” emphasises on the experience of migration and the circumstance of refugeehood as being pluralistic phenomena. Deb’s novel may be read as an example of pluralistic experiences of Partition in the context of north-eastern states as the characters represent the experience of the “Sylheti Bhodrolok” which, claims Dasgupta, has so far been marginalised in Partition historiography.

part of India while the majority Muslim population, who won the vote, voted for Sylhet to get seceded from India and ceded to Pakistan. Dasgupta notes that "Over the next few years, large numbers of Sylheti Hindus from the ceded parts of Sylhet district began to relocate to the Indian North-east, particularly to southern Assam and over time there emerged a de-territorialized Sylheti identity in Assam/India, as Sylhetis formed pockets of minority groups despite considerable indigenous opposition to refugee settlement. The partition of Sylhet drastically reduced the number of Bengali-speaking Sylhetis in Assam compared to the colonial times when there were more Bengalis in Assam than Assamese".

3. The Point of Return

Sidhartha Deb's novel *The Point of Return* takes the recourse of fiction to represent the experience of one family, out of the numerous Sylheti Hindu migrants, who migrated to Assam to move to the "right" side of the Radcliffe line after Partition. The loss of the house and, by extension, the home, as a result of this "voluntary" displacement becomes one of the most poignant consequences of migration and an overarching theme of the text. This loss manifests itself differently for each individual, even within the same family and thereafter for the subsequent generations. Dr Dam, a first-generation migrant, experiences this loss in a manner vastly different from his son Babu. The narrative probes these differences by delving into the relationship between the father and son. Dr Dam is a migrant who moved from Sylhet to Assam, and the narrative documents the perpetual journey that his life becomes thereafter. Once he moves out of the security of his home and his homeland in Sylhet, Dr Dam's life takes the form of an eternal journey where he subsequently moves from Silchar to Calcutta, for his education to become a vet, and thereafter to various parts of the North-east for his job. Babu is Dr Dam's son who is born in Shillong and grows up to migrate to Calcutta and thereafter to Delhi. The novel can be read as a personal archive of his memories, an archive that gives us glimpses into his past to which he returns inevitably, night by night in dreams as well as in wakefulness, in his endless search for a home. Babu, who is a second-generation migrant and for whom Shillong is home on account of his birth, is made to feel like an outsider due to his Sylheti identity. The narrative shows how he is attacked for being an "outsider" when he unknowingly wanders into a hostile neighbourhood (170). He is shamed by being called a "Dhkar" [foreigner] and "Bengali". The placelessness that is caused by migration trickles into the life of Babu who learns that, like his father, he cannot belong anywhere and is an "outsider" everywhere. Like Dr Dam, a first-generation Partition migrant, Babu is never able to fully assimilate into the place he calls home. Being a second-generation migrant himself, Babu is spared the experience of being physically uprooted from his homeland but homelessness becomes the legacy he receives from his family. Once uprooted from Sylhet, Dr Dam is not able to assimilate into the North-east his entire life. Despite finding a job, he struggles to build a house. Despite building a house, he is never able to find a home. Babu does not experience

first-hand the trauma of being uprooted from his home but he continues to bear its burden by being perpetually out of place in the land of his family's arrival, which is also his own birthplace. He carries this sense of placelessness with him when he migrates to Delhi. Without the rootedness of a place he can unquestionably call home, Babu's life, much like his father's, becomes a perpetual journey.

An "inept archaeologist of memories" (186) which Babu claims himself to be, is how one may read Siddhartha Deb's *The Point of Return* — as an archive of memories giving voice to the dispossessed and also credence to the idea of plurality of migration experiences. Babu visits the "Local Archive" in Shillong, when he returns to his birthplace from Delhi, hoping to find memories of his home along its dusty corridors. But all he sees are foreign-looking relics—invoking, in turn, the uncomfortable realisation of his own foreignness. The text can be read as Babu's personal archive in which he records snippets of what he remembers of his life, of what reminds him of his home, in an effort to construct a home for himself with words and memories. The novel is undertaken as an act of memorialising and therefore, the intersections of time, place and event become significant. Babu keeps close track of time in his chapters — documenting events with the years of their occurrence — but plays with chronology. Unlike a young Babu's insistence on listening to a "proper" story — with "a beginning, middle and end" — where he didn't allow the storyteller, his father, to "leave anything out" (100), Babu's own narrative unfolds like a journey down memory lane. It travels backwards, going back in time year by year and chapter by chapter, tracing the history of his life to arrive at the point of departure of the story, where Babu and his family leave Babu's birthplace to settle in Silchar, Assam. This departure is not going to be a final one for Babu. Like his father's departure from his home in Sylhet, Babu's departure from his 'home' — the two triangular rooms on Zigzag road in his hometown—is going to be only the first of many migrations. As their taxi approaches the new family house in Silchar, Dr Dam points towards a road which leads to Aizawl from where, he says, Babu can "go beyond, to other places" (150). And "go beyond" he does, as he migrates onwards from Calcutta to Delhi, from one room to the next. But as Babu's life thereafter crosses these boundaries of places, he inevitably returns night by night in dreams as well as in wakefulness to the place of his arrival in the world, the place he first learned to call home.

The novel thus highlights the migration of Sylhetis in the North-east and also the politics of homelessness which continue to play out for second and third-generation migrants, especially those who subsequently migrate to the urban metros of Calcutta and Delhi. Babu's archive, although personal, encapsulates the narrative of a people who fail to assimilate within a place after migrating from their homelands, and are homeless, despite having houses.

When Karlsson interrogates the idea of development, he identifies a hierarchy that exists between the developed and the under-developed categories, a hierarchy that is mirrored in India in the relationship between the centre and the North-Eastern

states. Babu's personal archive becomes political in that it puts the migration experience of the Sylheti *bhodrolok*, a people from the north-east region, on the map of migration narratives from India. The text documents the story of Babu and also the story of the North-east — a place that, for people who live in metro cities of the country it is in, incites nothing beyond "a dim comprehension of remote beauty and even more remote violence" (160). The foreignness that Babu feels at the "Local Archive" in Shillong, he also feels when in Delhi.

This divide between the centre and the periphery that is played out between the mainland and the north-eastern states in India is highlighted through Babu's narrative who is treated as an outsider from the North-east when in Delhi. The text itself, by foregrounding the experience of Sylhetis, dismantles this hierarchy that is prominent in the historiography of Partition.

"History, dragged so far from the metropolitan centres...will tell you nothing" (157). Babu asserts that "history lies defeated" (157) in the case of the North-east as he notes how Aizawl, Agartala and other names he hears from his father do not appear in the Geography textbooks he studies in school, or events that are so central to his life only belatedly make it to news columns of national dailies or fail to be treated with the same urgency that he feels towards them. Borders affect Babu, and his father, not once but perpetually. Dr Dam loses his family home in Sylhet due to the drawing of a border but that isn't the last time he loses a house for this reason. He builds another house for his family but has to abandon it on account of the reorganization of the states of Assam and Meghalaya when, in 1972, Meghalaya was carved out of Assam as a separate state, and Shillong was designated as the capital. From the intangible borders that separate centre from the periphery and result in the marginalisation of the North-east, to the borders between people separating the tribals from the non-tribals, and even the rift between Babu and his father, borders function through political maps but also make their way beyond them — infiltrating the lived experiences of people. Borders become the drawing tool of Babu's life and, one way or the other, he finds himself in spaces that lie on the outside of these boundaries.

4. Migration as an ongoing journey

Babu's archiving imparts the semblance of a journey, one with disdain for boundaries of both territory and chronology, and begins with an "Arrival" — the first section of the novel. Tuan claims that "place is a pause in movement" but Babu, having been denied the permanence of a place like home, pauses at the chapter titled "Terminal" to contemplate: "People think that those who have gone away have relinquished their rights to the place left behind, are gone forever" (153), and his entire novel serves to negate this misconception. Being invested in the relationship of people with their home(s), the novel brings out the permanence of association which coexists with the transience of one's presence in/ the existence of the physical space of the home and thereafter, the eternal journey of the self

to either return to or recreate this place/ feeling that is reminiscent of home. The narrative wonderfully illustrates how home entails different ideas for different people. "The generations that grow up in the stability of a family home know nothing of the uncertain process that went into the creating of that home" (28). But the generations that grow up without the stability of a family home are faced with this uncertainty throughout their lives and inevitably pass it on to subsequent generations. The novel represents the experience of one family out of the numerous Sylheti Hindu migrants who travelled to Assam to move to the "right" side of the Radcliffe line. The loss of home as a result of this "voluntary" displacement manifests itself differently even within the same family, as is evident with Dr Dam and his siblings, and then definitely so for subsequent generations, which we witness through Dr Damand Babu.

Babu carries the resultant sense of placelessness with him to Delhi and wherever he goes. The text, which is a narrative of Babu's life, mimics the form of a journey that his own life is a metaphor for. The text divides the narrative into chapters which are titled like the steps of a journey — "Arrival", "Departure", "Terminal", ending with "Travelogue". Babu is perpetually on the move, from Calcutta to Delhi, "a room here, a room there" (186) and the idea of home becomes fluid. Living away from his hometown, Babu realises that it is the uncanny everyday rather than a concrete structure that becomes evocative of the home he had left behind — "an unseasonal rain...a fragile spring" (165). He also realises that habitation is not a prerequisite for belonging and the places he has inhabited, all inhabit him in turn as he himself "truly becomes theplace" and thereby becomes his "own hometown" (154). Through the narrative of Babu, the novel explores the migration experience in retrospect. Being twice removed from Partition, Babu understands migration as a "reductive evolutionary principle" (165) and accordingly the rootedness of the sprawling family in Sylhet has given way to this "crusty, seasoned traveller" who has collected separate countries in his own inner space (162).

5. Home

Where Dr Dam aspires to recreate the permanence of a physical space where he can lay his roots — a foundation — and from where his bier departs, for Babu home exists in memory. For Dr Dam home is a prospect, an aspiration, an unrealised future. Home, for Babu, lies in the landscape of the past to which he "return(s) everyday" (153). The novel becomes a means for Babu to establish this home as he peels off the past layer by layer — and chapter by chapter — to uncover the true nature of the legacy of home that has been passed on to him. Despite this legacy, however, home is intensely personal, confined within the borders of the self. Home is a fixity in memory that may be reached at will but is also tantalisingly out of reach — an "intimate place" (Tuan) — as Babu is unable to wholly share it with the people he encounters in other places along his journey of life. He must continue, through words traced on a page, memories and maps, to continuously build and

rebuild it for himself and for other people — “playing resident and guide as well as curious tourist” (154).

“You cannot be an exile in your own country,” (155) claims Babu at the “Terminal” but Dr Dam’s entire life unfolds as a negation to this claim. Dr Dam’s entire life is spent in migration — moving from one house to the next: the inevitable first as a Partition refugee from Sylhet, which now became East Pakistan, to the slums of Thikarbasti in Silchar, Assam; then as a student to Calcutta; and thereafter in different places in Assam as part of his job. Amidst all the moving Dr Dam is always trying to build one or the other house — first for his parents and siblings who were living in a slum in Silchar while he studied in Calcutta, then for himself after he got married and later, resignedly, a shelter for himself and his wife and son, along with the family house in Silchar after his dream house gets demolished due to him being labelled an outsider in the newly reorganised states of Assam and Meghalaya. It seems as though the border that severs Dr Dam from his home in Sylhet invades his life in such a way that it replaces home. While home is always out of reach, borders are a tangible reality of Dr Dam’s life — demarcating new states to separate him from the house he built in Gauhati, marking off neighbourhoods so that he is attacked when he unknowingly evades a border and wanders into one (170) and finally also entering the space within his home, making Dr Dam a stranger in his own family. His belated arrivals both in India and later in the post-Partition family home in Silchar espouse a sense of his being a guest, both times an unwelcome one. Not only is he an outsider (a non-tribal) in the hills, Dr Dam is also a stranger in his own house.

The seven members of Dr Dam’s joint family may have collectively journeyed out of Sylhet to migrate to Silchar, but Babu observes how when they reunite during a wedding “everyone does their own thing” (85). Having dispersed into separate houses already, even when the family does come together for the holidays, one senses an uneasiness in their co-habitation. There is a struggle where they “must well live together”². The desire to “live together well” has diminished as we see from Biren’s — one of Dr Dam’s brothers’ — reluctance and hostility towards the Dams when he finds out that they intend to move back into the Post-Partition family home in Silchar. And eventually, all brothers move out of this family home indicating an unwillingness to live together at all. When living together does not remain a prerogative, Dr Dam tries to live well. His efforts throughout the narrative are directed at being proper, not, perhaps, wanting to be a moral outcast in a society where he is inevitably an ethnic outcast. Dr Dam possibly never finds a home even in the people in his life. Work, then, is perhaps his only solace, the possibility of which ends with his retirement and he succumbs to this loss by falling into sickness.

² Priya Kumar in her essay elucidates Derrida’s idea of “how to live together” which may impart a sense of compulsion where one “must well live together” on the one hand, or a desire/agreement to “live together well” on the other.

6. Borders

Where borders on the one hand seem divisive, a different perspective shows them as a uniting force. As rigidly as they may divide people, borders are porous if not ultimately fickle. We hear Dr Chatterjee claim solidarity with the tribals of the Hills by virtue of belonging to the same side of the state borders as them, when they meet in a foreign state like Calcutta, only to revert to animosity upon their return to the state — being divided by ethnic boundaries within the state. The conventions of foreignness and belonging thus become ambiguous and subjective. One may say then that identity becomes — like the borders we set up — subjective and situational. Such identifiers as outsider/ stranger and foreigner also become arbitrary.

Karlsson's assessment of homogenisation in the context of north-eastern states brings out the subjectivities that operate in any understanding of social reality. He elucidates how in the creation of Meghalaya state only three tribes — the Garos, Khasis and Jaintyas — were considered native. As a result of this arbitrary grouping, Karlsson claims how tensions between these local tribes are often overlooked. What is also overlooked is smaller groups or tribes which do not identify with the main groups identified by the government. The Sylhetis living in Meghalaya did not consider themselves refugees, and therefore their status as outsiders in the eyes of the state and the tribals was at odds with their perception of themselves.

Foreignness is not something Babu associates with himself despite being called a "Dhkar" by Hitler (169), and a "Bengali" during an exchange with a man at the Pension Office (15). It is only when he returns to Shillong after having lived in Delhi that he finds things so foreign — the new buildings, the people, the surprising lack of non-tribal faces. But it is his absence, rather than any inherent sense of being an outsider, that makes Babu feel out of place. Having been brought up in this dialectic where the self and society are at opposite ends, each the "Other" for the other, Babu has long made peace with the fact that hostility — and an ensuing fear — will dwell perpetually in the place he calls home.

After Dr Dam loses this home to Partition he is doomed to be a perpetual outsider due to his failure to own a house and thereby establish roots for himself. As a Partition refugee, Dr Dam realises the difficulty to reconstruct this home and accordingly advises his son with his parting words in the novel — to move on. And such is the form that Babu's life and his story eventually take — from "Arrival" to "Departure", "Terminal" and "Travelogue", Babu is on the move "a room here, a room there" (186) always carrying home within himself.

Through the family of Babu, the novel explores the migration experience in retrospect. Being thrice removed from Partition, Babu understands migration as a "reductive evolutionary principle" (165) and the home that was taken from the family at Partition has been reinstated within this perpetual traveller who has collected separate countries in his own inner space (162).

7. Conclusion

The novel concludes with a possibility for the concept home in the context of migrants. The sense of belonging that is denied to Babu, in Shillong as well as in the metro cities due to the hostility of the “natives”, is found for him within the narrative — an archive of both his memories as well as those of other Sylheti immigrants. The text maps Babu’s mobile existence and also puts the experience of the Sylheti migrants of Partition on the larger map of migration narratives, thereby salvaging them from oblivion.

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Pangal Students Migration to Delhi

Md. Chingiz Khan*

Manipur is one of the North-Eastern Regions of India where different indigenous (yelhoumee) communities namely Meiteis/Meeteis, Pangals, Nagas and some sections of Kukis have settled since very long time. Some youths of the Pangal community have started migrating and studying in Delhi to seek research-oriented work and preparation for competitive examinations. It has been continuing for the last four decades. Some of the pertinent questions are given as: How and why did the students of the Pangal community primarily migrate to the 'only' city of Delhi rather than other cities such as Meerut, Aligarh, Chandigarh, etc.? Who are their role models who inspired migrating to Delhi for seeking higher studies and preparation for competitive exams such as the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) conducted Civil Service Exam (CSE), State Public Service Commission (SPSC) Exam, Staff Selection Commission (SSC) Exam, etc.? What are the socio-economic problems encountered by them in the state with a special focus on higher studies and competitive exams? This paper tries to examine the historical journey of the migration of youths of the Pangal community towards the city of Delhi for higher studies.

Keywords: Manipur, Pangals, Migration, Delhi, Aligarh

1. Introduction

The meaning of the term 'migration' is quite broad and the simple meaning of it is a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. No restraint has been implanted upon the distance of the move or the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act. In addition, no disparity between external and internal migration has been worked out. Hence, a move across the hall from one apartment to another is

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counted just as much an act of migration as a move from North-Eastern Regions of India to the capital city of Delhi though, of course, the initiation and consequences of such moves are vastly different. However, not all kinds of spatial mobility are included in this definition.¹

The term ‘immigration’ is the process of people moving from one country to another with the motive of staying there permanently. The two terms ‘in-migration’ and ‘out-migration’ mean the process of people moving from one area to another within their own country. Both the terms have the same process but different directions. In a true sense, ‘in-migration’ is the process of people moving into a new area in their country to live there permanently. Out-migration is the process of people moving out of an area in their country to move to another area in their country permanently. Why people are opting for this process of migration is because of the point that most people want a better life in a new area for a better job, whether it is for cost-of-living or other reasonable reasons.

2. Theoretical Models of Migration

Many renowned scholars and geographers have given different theoretical models about the process and procedures, reasons and motives of migration in the world. To begin with, it is a complex process and therefore, it is unfeasible that one theory can explore and examine all the events involved in it. The study related to causal factors of migration can be traced back to classical economic development theory and according to E. G. Ravenstein who worked voluminously on migration, “it is considered to be a mechanism that establishes regional spatial-economic equilibrium”.² Those persons who are willing to study the process and procedures of migration have to identify the factors involved in it. There are different models theorized by some well-known scholars to explain the factors involved in migration. In 1885, E.G. Ravenstein in his study of “laws of migration” attempted firstly to theorize migration. Based on the data of birthplace, Ravenstein identified what he called “laws of migration” concerning inter-county migration. Through these laws, Ravenstein elucidated the key areas on which the future of migration research would largely be based. He opined emphatically on major factors that influenced migration and highlighted the importance of the distance of the place of origin and destination, and the direction of migration is being seen largely from a primarily agricultural region to a region of relatively flourishing commerce and industry.³

His laws of migration are furnished in the following points:

1. Most migration is over short distances.

¹ Everett S. Lee. 1966. “A Theory of Migration”, in *Demography*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 47-57.

² E. G. Ravenstein. 1889. “The Laws of Migration”, in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. 52, no. 2 (June), pp. 241-305; E. G. Ravenstein. 1885. “The Laws of Migration”, in *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, vol. 48, no. 2. (June), pp. 167-235.

³ *Ibid.*

2. Migration occurs in steps.
3. Long-range migrants usually move to urban areas.
4. Each migration produces a movement in the opposite direction.
5. Rural dwellers are more migratory than urban dwellers.
6. Within their own country, females are more migratory than males, but males are more migratory over long distances.
7. Most migrants are adults.
8. Large towns grow more by migration than by natural increase.
9. Migration increases with economic development.
10. Migration is mostly due to economic causes.

Everett Lee⁴ remolded Ravenstein's theory emphasizing internal (or push) factors. He focused on the impeding effects of distance, physical and political barriers and the presence of dependents on migration. He was the first scholar to point out the impact of age, gender and social class on the responsiveness to push-pull factors. Since then, several theories have been developed which treat international patterns of migration on their own terms, but these too are variants of the push-pull theory.

The other theories relating to migration are given as: The neo-classical economic theory of migration has its historical roots in models of development.⁵ This theory describes rural-urban migration to be caused by geographic differences in the supply and demand for labour, wage differentials between rural and urban areas and an army of 'under-employed' rural labour in agriculture. In the Lewis model, the under-developed economy consists of two sectors: a traditional, overpopulated, rural subsistence sector characterized by zero marginal labour productivity- a situation that permits Lewis to classify the surplus labour in the sense that it can be withdrawn from the traditional agricultural sector without any loss of output and a high-productivity, modern, urban industrial sector into which labour from the subsistence sector is gradually transferred. The primary focus of the model is on both the process of labour transfer and the growth of output and employment in the modern sector. Both labour transfer and modern sector employment growth are brought about by output expansion in that sector.⁶ Some of the other theories of migration are given as the Harris-Todaro model (1970),⁷ Stark and Bloom model (1985),⁸ etc. Though there are many models to explain the process of migration, it needs to be pondered and explored how far these models are applicable in the context of migration of Pangal youths to metropolitan cities like Delhi.

⁴ Lee, "A Theory of Migration", in *Demography*, pp. 47-57.

⁵ Lewis W. Arthur. 1954. "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labor", in *Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies*, vol. 22, pp. 139-91.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ John R. Harris and Michael P. Todaro. 1970. "Migration, Unemployment and Development: A Two-Sector Analysis", in *The American Economic Review*, vol. 60, issue 1, pp. 126-42.

⁸ Oded Stark and David E. Bloom. 1985. "The New Economics of Labor Migration", in *The American Economic Review*, vol. 75, issue 2, pp. 173-78.

3. Methodology

The methodology adopted in this paper is based on both primary and secondary sources. It is based on interviews and documentary analysis. Some Manipuri Muslim-based organizations have been selected and the details of the data have been collected from their representatives. It would involve the closer study of different personal interviews of several scholars, administrators and bureaucrats who came to metropolitan cities like Delhi and studied there. As there is a lacuna of literature for this study, some selected personal interviews of persons who studied at Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), University of Delhi (DU), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), etc., are taken. Apart from the above-mentioned documents, some secondary sources of information like published research papers in various journals, articles published in newspapers, books, edited books, etc., are used. Moreover, the information related to the migration of Pangal youths to metropolitan cities like Delhi available on the websites is also used. The details of the data are given in graph no 1.

4. Migration of Pangal Youths to the city of Delhi

There are several “push” and “pull” factors for the migration of Pangal youths to the city of Delhi like the other counterpart communities of Manipur such as Meiteis/Meeteis, Nagas and some sections of Kukis for centuries. Why they were migrating to the city of Delhi and its neighbouring areas needs to be explored at great length. Some of the important reasons are given below:

- a) Delhi becomes a more informative place with regard to higher education.
- b) It becomes an affordable place for the study of higher education.
- c) It becomes an easy place for accessing the materials required for facing competitive exams such as CSE, SPSC Exam, SSC exam, etc.
- d) Those students who got less marks in the 12th standard tried to search for some other medium colleges affiliated with Manipur University (MU) and those who secured good marks used to go to outside universities preferably Delhi based institutes like DU, JMI and JNU rather than other universities like AMU amidst 2000s. Before the midst of 2000s, or in the late 1990s, the Pangal youths or students used to prefer JMI for higher study but in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and till the late 1990s, they preferred AMU and other neighbouring institutes for higher study such as Chaudhury Charan Singh University (formerly known as Meerut University), Agra University, etc. In case of not being able to get admission to JMI, they turned to other neighbouring areas for admission including Meerut, Agra, Aligarh, etc. Meanwhile, after the mid-1990s, some of the Pangal youths started shifting to Delhi based institutes like JMI for higher study rather than AMU. It is not quite surprising to the point that after having knowledge of the importance of Delhi based academic institutions such as DU and JNU for competitive exams and research oriented

works, they progressively moved to these institutions, especially JNU for academic cum CSE intents though they took admission in DU for graduation. This is because of the fact that there is no scope of graduation except language based courses at JNU.

- e) Another substantial but somehow compelling reason for the migration of Pangal students is to access quality-based higher education in different universities of Delhi. But only a few of them could get admission in Delhi based universities in graduation and post-graduation courses. In the context of research works, their number is quite limited and can be counted at finger points. Their drop-out rates are very high as their financial conditions are not sound. For example, only a few of the Pangals have continued their research works. In the early period of the 1970s-1980s, some Pangals such as Shahabuddin from Lilong Hangamthabi, Jalaluddin from Kshetrigao, etc. studied at Lucknow and Meerut areas respectively. At the beginning of 1990s, some Pangals such as Abdul Matlib from Santhel (Physics, JMI), Md. Afzal Ali from Yairipok (Geography, JMI) and Abdul Khalique from Yairipok (Bio-Chemistry, AMU) would not be able to continue their research work on account of their poverty-stricken family backgrounds. They would have to seek jobs for family problems rather than their continuance of research work. However, it has been arguable that the journey of the Pangal community in the field of higher education especially the Ph.D research work in different disciplines has begun from the late 1990s and early 2000s onwards. Many Manipuri Muslims like Dr. Qutub Ali from Hatta (Biotechnology- AMU), Dr. Shehratun Nesha from Hatta (Education- JMI), Dr. M. Naziruddin Khan from Lilong (Physics- JMI), Dr. Syed Ahmad from Heibong Makhong (History- JNU), Dr. Hamidur Rahman from Thoubal Moijing (Bio-Science- JMI), Dr. Md. Baharuddin Shah from Phoudel (Geography-AMU), Manjur from Hatta (Biology- AMU), etc. have been awarded Ph.D degrees in their respective fields. In the succeeding years, many more Manipuri Muslims belonging to different universities have been awarded Ph.D degrees in different subjects. Many of them are about to submit their M.Phil /Ph.D research work and many of them are continuing their M.Phil/Ph.D research work in different subjects of different universities.
- f) There was no facility of reservation in the state of Manipur for Pangals in the 1980s and 1990s that could facilitate them in various institutes of Manipur rather than shifting/migrating them to the other cities of India, especially Delhi and its neighbouring areas. The facility of reservation of Pangals was implemented on 27th December 2006 through an Official order that was passed during the Congress-led government under the chief-ministership of O. Ibobi Singh. However, it has not yet been revised after implementation. It needs to be revised based on the current population of the Pangal community.
- g) One of the crucial reasons is that some scholars considered the year 2002-3, a major striking year in the historical juncture and scenario of the Pangal com-

munity of Manipur for understanding and explaining their educational status through many competitive exams. Prior to this, it was very slow and extremely deplorable or it can be said 'negligible'. It was mainly the urban based educated people who are financially and economically sound. It means that the educational status from the pre-independence to the post-independence Manipuri Muslim society till 2000 was at the mushrooming stage and cornered around elite groups. But, Mr. Noor Rahman Sheikh from Kshetri Top Khongnang Makhong (Imphal East), cracked the CSE Exam in 2002-3 and in the second attempt, he got IFS. He was the first and foremost IFS officer among the Manipuris except Tribals to enter it by standing 187th rank all over India. How much influence and implication he carries is undoubtedly and clearly indicated in such a way that the tradition of taking Political Science as the compulsory subject by many Pangal students who are willingly planning to do graduation in different colleges of DU, JMI, MU and master in JNU, etc., is towering immensely. It is being largely maintained and continued by many Pangal students till today. Moreover, the wave of yearning felt among the student's parents and guardians to send their children to Delhi based colleges and universities rather than other adjoining universities that include AMU is a direct immaculate example of him. This gradual change in the selection and choice of academic institutions for competitive examinations through motivation and effective suggestion is largely loomed and shaped concretely by him.⁹ He is now posted as Joint Secretary (Economic Diplomacy) in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), New Delhi. Till now only five Pangals including Noor Rahman Sheikh (IFS), Altaf Hussain (IRS), Yumkhaibam Sabir (IFS), S. Asker Ali (IAS) and Akram Nongjai (IAS) have cracked the UPSC conducted CSE so far since 2002-03 and their details are briefly discussed below.

- h) Scholars tend to view the fact that the law and order situation in the state was not good at that time as there was the existence of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) 1958 in Manipur for tackling the insurgency problems. It is noteworthy that Manipur has been considered as one of the ethnically sensitive and militant-prone areas in the North-Eastern Regions of India. Such draconian law has been enforced in the whole state for more than two decades till now though the seven Constituent Assemblies within the Imphal Municipality areas have been barred during the congress-led government in Manipur.¹⁰ Though this draconian law has affected the Manipuri people immensely including the indigenous Pangal community of Manipur in the form of torture, brutality, killings, and cold-blooded murder without any warrant by the security forces, some scholars strongly claimed that it gave, to a certain extent, a 'yardstick' for the minorities of the state from the onslaught of the armed militants. Thus, such an unavoidable cause proved to be the propelling

⁹ Md. Chingiz Khan. 2020. "Revisiting social role of first civil servant from Manipuri Pangals", in *Tehelka*, March 30, pp. 56-57.

¹⁰ AFSPA extended in Manipur for a year. 2013. <<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/afspa-extended-for-a-year-in-manipur/article5408094.ece>> (Accessed: 10th February 2022)

force that created a way for the massive migration of Manipuri youths to the various universities of the metropolitan city of Delhi for the purpose of learning general and professional courses along with other research works.

5. Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI)

In the city of Delhi, there are three important universities namely JNU, DU and JMI. Among these universities, most of the Pangal students used to prefer JMI account for the following reasons since the mid-1990s.

- 1) Though JMI has not had a facility of reservation for the minorities in India, particularly Muslims before 2011, it might have had a deep 'sense of priority' for the Muslim minority community as thought by Pangals from Manipur. It is quite clear that JMI became a minority institution through 50% reservation for Muslims in India in 2011.¹¹ The rationale of why the Pangal community preferred JMI over other Delhi based universities is somehow different and they might have some better-known reasons as most of the Pangals have several viewpoints on this matter.
- 2) The perception of Pangal parents is that in this institution, there was a feeling of belonging to the Pangal youths as their culture was more or less similar to them.
- 3) One significant factor is that the Pangal youths could not qualify for the entrance exam of this institute through the unreserved category.

6. Evolution of Pangal students and their organization in Delhi

To trace the evolution of Delhi Association of Manipur Muslim Students (DAMMS), it is much necessary to explore and examine the number of Pangal students enrolled in the Delhi based universities. We could not get any substantial information on Pangal youths/students in DU and JNU before the 1970s. It is noted that during the years, 1980-85, there were only a few Pangal students in Delhi, especially in the Jamia side. However, unfortunately, there were not many records of Pangal students in DU and JNU and even in the schools of Delhi except the JMI in the 1980s. It is pertinent to reveal the point that in 1986-1990, there were only 9 Pangal students in Jamia Campus based on the information obtained from some seniors. This is quite clear from some of the interviews taken while writing this research paper. In 1990-91, their numbers increased tremendously in the city of Delhi, particularly in the JMI, to pursue higher study especially in the graduate and postgraduate courses.¹² Dr. M. Naziruddin Khan, the first Pangal Ph.D degree holder in Physics expressed his opinion that

¹¹ Jamia Millia Islamia University gets Minority Status. 2011. <<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/north/story/jamia-granted-a-minority-institution-status-by-ncmei-129181-2011-02-23>> (Accessed: 10th February 2021)

¹² It is based on the interview of Dr. M. Naziruddin Khan, who is currently a Faculty of Physics, Department of Physics, Faculty of Science, Islamic University of Madinah Al Manawarah, Saudi Arabia on 20th January, 2021.

"As I remembered in 1991, there were 17 students in Delhi. 16 of them were in Jamia. One was in the 11th class at the Kiran Memorial Public High School, Faridabad in the list of members 1991-92. In November 1991, 14 members of Pangal students on the campus of JMI founded an association called The All Manipur Students' Islamic Association, Delhi (AMSIAD). The meeting was held at the launch of the University itself near the Auditorium gate. Such an association was established with the objectives of helping and providing guidance to the Pangal students at the time of admission and hostel allotment. They are also providing counseling to promote the careers of the new Pangal students in Delhi and other momentous issues. In those days, it was very difficult to get admission, hostel or lodging, etc. in the university campus. Those seniors who had already got admission and stayed in the hostels of the University played a crucial role in the campus concerning the admission process and lodging facilities of the new Pangal students. Md. Abdus Samad was the first President of AMSIAD. Among the 14 founding members, 13 were from JMI and one was from Jamia Secondary School".¹³

From the name AMSIAD, it is apparent that those members were not conscious of their cultural identity of being Pangal. Also, it seems the motive behind the association extended beyond academic/career counseling and it entrenched partly into setting the moral compass of the students, particularly, policing in matters of relationship with opposite sex.

In the late 1992 and early 1993¹⁴, the association's name AMSIAD was changed to All Manipur Muslim Students Association, Delhi (AMMSAD) based on the advice of some professors as the word 'ISLAMIC' would mislead the association. It is quite evident that such a term seems to give the message of 'misunderstanding' unquestionably to other religious communities in and outside Manipur. Everything that includes the organizational structure and letter's head has been changed. The source of income for running the newly formed association was managed only through the students' wise collection at that time. The office bearers of the association have been compiled in Table 7.

Further, in the late 1993 and early 1994¹⁵, it is a certainty that for the first time in the history of this association, an election was conducted to appoint new office bearers, especially to appoint the presidential post. Two arch rival candidates- Farooque Ahmed and Md. Afzal Ali- contested each other for the post of president. Subsequently, Farooque Ahmed won the election but the year of winning the election is not abundantly clear because there are two camps that differ in their claims of the year of the election. Hence in Tables 7 and 8, this contestation has been reflected by including two names for the year 1992-93 and 1993-94. However, in a very undemocratic manner, the election itself was not appreciated by the members

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ It means the academic session of those years starting from July and ending in June.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

and other stakeholders arguing that it will lead to factionalism. In addition, some seniors did not like the power centre of the association to be shifted from their hands to younger lots (Farooque himself was studying in a pre-university programme). Moreover, the winning candidate during his tenure was claimed to be involved in certain activities which changed the foundational values and other characteristics of the precursor association. It could be because of his inexperience and some hands manipulating his actions from behind the scene. Mr. Farooque's opponents further claimed that he was not actively involved in the matters of the association and also they believed that he had no significant contributions made for the advancement of the body in particular and student activities in general. To add to the claims of Mr. Farooque's opponents during his tenure as the president, there was not much democratic practice in discharging his duties and also the record keeping during the period was fraught with secrecy, disregard of the records and manipulation, as a consequence of which there was the loss of valuable records and documents. During his tenure, the association did not progress well, rather it declined.

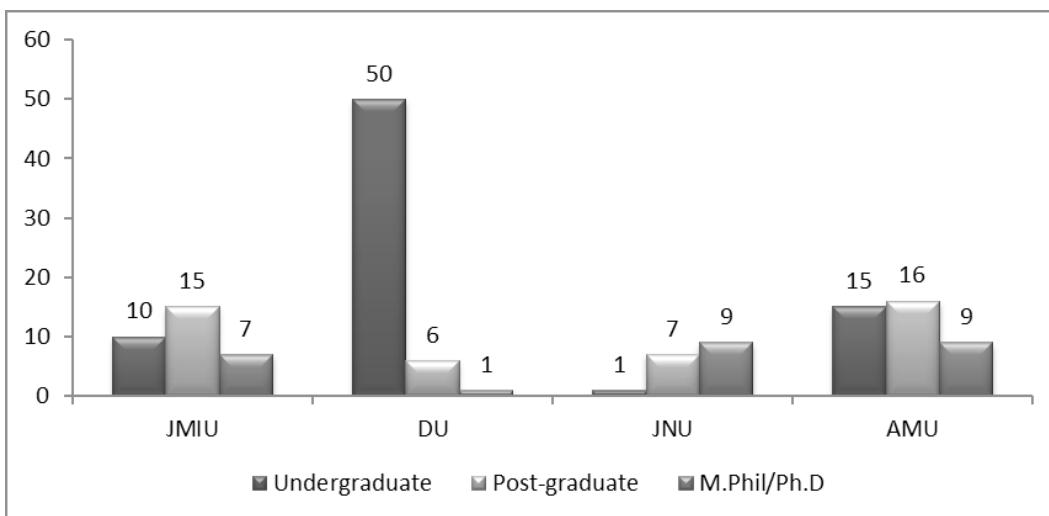
Within a year after Farooque's tenure, the organization (AMMSAD) was renamed unanimously as DAMMS without a logical reason for the change. But curiously the logic behind the change was to shorten the name to the liking of some seniors. Interestingly, there was no change in the activities compared to that of AMSIAD and AMMSAD. Even then the association has gone through three nomenclatures perhaps because of credit-hunting by some whose real interest was not to have a stable, active and vocal association. DAMMS took up and addressed students' problems such as admission, accommodation and lodging from time to time till today since its establishment. This association has been ceaselessly working for the welfare of the students, especially the problems of Pangal students in and outside the city of Delhi today.

A Table is given for clear-cut understanding related to the comparative study of the number of Pangal students who got enrolled in Delhi based universities and its adjoining universities such as AMU, etc.

Table 1
Approximate Number of Pangal Students Enrolled in Delhi based Universities and its Adjoining Universities

S1 No	Class	JMI	DU	JNU	AMU
1.	Undergraduate	10	50	1	15
2.	Postgraduate	15	6	7	16
3.	M.Phil/Ph.D	7	1	9	9*

Source: It is based on the interviews of some selected students such as Muzamil Korimayum, former president of DAMMS and Md. Umar Faruque, a Ph.D candidate in the Department of History, AMU, Aligarh, who belonged to two student organizations in Delhi and Aligarh. * indicates the number of Pangal Ph.D students including those who just enrolled in AMU in 2019-20.



The above-mentioned data shows that the number of students is only 32 students in JMI, 57 in DU, 17 in JNU and 40 in AMU. Despite having the higher number of students in DU, most of the students are confined to undergraduate courses; 50 out of 57 students in DU are enrolled at the undergraduate level while 7 students are studying postgraduate and 1 in M.Phil/ Ph.D research work. In JMI, 10 students are enrolled at the undergraduate class, 15 in postgraduate and 7 in M.Phil/Ph.D research work. Most of the students joined JNU to a great extent in postgraduate courses and research work leaving out language-based graduation courses. This may be due to the limited choices available in JNU at the undergraduate level. Out of 17 students, 9 are enrolled in M.Phil/Ph.D courses while 7 are studying at postgraduate level and 1 is at the undergraduate level. It is noteworthy to mention that the Pangal students are in relatively higher numbers in AMU than at JMI and JNU. The distribution by the level of education shows that they are almost equally represented at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Furthermore, the enrollment in M.Phil/Ph.D course is also at par with JNU and higher than JMI and DU. In terms of absolute number, 15 out of 40 students are enrolled at undergraduate level while the corresponding figures are 16 and 9 at postgraduate and M.Phil/Ph.D levels.

7. Wave of Modern Education among the Pangals

Education is one of the instrumental tools for substantial development of any society, individual and community. It channels and functions a higher priority basis from the lower platform among the members of any community. The trend and wave of competitive educational status felt among the Muslim community of Manipur is primarily a recent phenomenon. It is a story of one decade or more. Muslims' educational status, especially the general education, is exceedingly diabolical though there is, by and large, emphasis on the elementary knowledge of Islam knowingly or unknowingly since their settlement in Manipur at the beginning of

the seventeenth century onwards. Some sections of the Pangal community settling in different villages considered wholeheartedly the learning of English education as 'impure' which made them educationally backward and lagging behind the other religious communities of Manipur, particularly Meitei. Many questions are being asked: Why are they so backward in education? Is there an unavailability of strong political leaders who can function practically or there is a lack of interest among themselves? Such pertinent questions need to be addressed and pondered seriously to tackle the bottlenecks faced by the Pangals in Manipur. Scholars tended to view the year 2002-3, a major striking year in the historical juncture and scenario of the Muslim community of Manipur for understanding and explaining their educational status through many competitive exams like CSE, SPSC Exam, SSC Exam, and other lower grade exams.¹⁶

It has been said that Muslims have been staying in Manipur for the last four hundred years around 1606 CE, but educationally, their race of competition started getting shape from only 2002-3 because of the fact that the aspiration of becoming either a first- or second- or third- class officer or research scholars or any job through competitive exam was increasingly felt among the Muslim community of Manipur. Prior to this, it was very slow and extremely deplorable or it can be said 'negligible'. It was mainly the urban based educated people who are financially and economically sound. It means that the educational status from the pre-independence to the post-independence Manipuri Muslim society till 2000 was at the mushrooming stage and cornered around elite groups. Why it was so was due to the fact that nowadays, the Pangal society has many "token" intellectuals who are discernible apologists, predominantly flying monkeys, innumerable number of yes-men political workers and political capital deficit leaders and such leaders are nonentities at the ground level who are usually confined in the Pangal dominated areas. They have led the Pangal society for many years so much so that the Pangal society has been the most disadvantaged community in terms of polity, economy, education and socio-cultural tasks.¹⁷ The year 2002-3 marked a major venture significantly in creating an echo of competition among the members of the Pangal community.¹⁸

It is evident from the fact that the motility of competitive educational parameters with special reference to the Civil Service Exam (CSE), the topmost exam conducted by UPSC, and other competitive exams among the Muslim community of Manipur is functionally and practically said to have felt when Mr. Noor Rahman Sheikh (IFS) cracked the exam. Prior to him, nobody was there though there were

¹⁶ Khan. "Revisiting social role of first civil servant from Manipuri Pangals", in *Tehelka*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁷ Md. Chingiz Khan. "The inclusion of minorities in the changing dynamics of Education", in Dr. Pradeep Kumar Choudhury and Dr. Suresh Babu G. S. (eds). 2021. *Contextualizing Educational Studies in India: Location of Research, Policy and Practices*, London: Routledge Publication, pp. 91-110.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

some state civil servants and promoted persons namely Halim Choudhury from Babupara, Abdur Rahman from Kairang, Abdul Sattar from Hatta, and AR Khan from Kshetri Bengoon, etc. He brought some laurel changes in the educational status of this community through the agency of competitive exams and instilled in them a sense of vision in the semi-dark side of competitive exams. This wave should be, somehow and somewhere, both realized and recognized.¹⁹

Mohd. Altaf Hussain from Kshetri Bengoon, who is now the Additional Commissioner of Income Tax in Kolkata at the Government of India, cleared it after a gap of four years and got the Indian Revenue Service (IRS) by standing 313th rank all over India. He spearheaded a thunderous change in the Manipuri Muslim society through a wave of competition in 2007 when he cracked the CSE. This wave has outstandingly made our society establish a 'marker' change as compared to the other religious communities. Continuing in the same pattern and with a gap of five years, in 2012, Sabir Yumkhaibam from Oinam Swambung, Imphal West, has got IFS by securing 244th rank all over India in this coveted competitive exam and is now posted as Deputy Consul General of India and Consul (Haj), Consulate General of India, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Now, the assiduity to have the trend of competitive exams and other matters like research, which was triggered by Noor Rahman, has further been promoted utmost in the Manipuri Muslim society after the appearance of Sabir in 2012 and reservation-cum-quota system provided by the state in government jobs in 27th December 2006. The other two civil servants of the Pangal community are S. Asker Ali IAS (167th rank) from Lilong Haoreibi Mayai Leikai, Thoubal District in 2015-16 and Nongjaimayum Mohd Ali Akram Shah IAS (188th rank) from Khergao Nongjai Leikai, Imphal East in 2019-20. Till now, only 5 Manipuri Muslims cleared the CSE though a number of candidates toiled hard to achieve it at their best possible level. This wave of competition should be continued and promoted as much as possible to make it educationally strengthened for the state in general and the community in particular. Their influences have already been mentioned. It is at a continual phase ceaselessly in our Manipuri Muslim society till today.²⁰

8. Different Opinions on Pangal students' Migration in Delhi

There are different opinions of several Pangals administrators, scholars, bureaucrats and journalists while concerning the Pangals student's migration to the city of Delhi. There is not much substantial information regarding the Pangal students who studied in Delhi before the early period of the 1970s in the available literature but at the end of the 1970s, there was one Pangal student in DU namely S. Wahidur Rahman. This is corroborated by the statements given by Muhammad Hashim who was a retired stenographer.²¹

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ It is based on an interview of Muhammad Hashim from Mantripukhri, Imphal on 6th March 2021.

1. S. Wahidur Rahman who was a student of AMU from 1971-1977 for PUC to MA and then of DU from 1978-1980 for his another MA Course and now a retired Associate Professor in G. P. Women's College expresses his opinion regarding the migration of Pangal students to the city of Delhi and its adjoining areas for higher study that no one from the Pangal community came to the city of Delhi for the purpose of higher study during his time, perhaps, for the following reasons.

"First, most of the parents of the Pangal students did not like to send their children for higher study in Delhi as they were ignorant about the DU, JNU, JMI and felt that if their children studied in a fast developing large city like Delhi, they might get spoiled and would lose their career. Second, the psyche of most of the parents of Pangal students used to focus on AMU and prefer it to the Universities in Delhi for the higher education of their children as they could get substantial information about it from the Pangal Islamic Scholars who had studied Islamic courses in Aligarh and its adjoining areas and also felt that the culture of it was similar to their culture. Third, it was easier for their children to get admission to most of the courses in AMU as the benefit of Special Category for admission/ consideration for nomination used to be given to the students of Manipur under the Special Category of students of 'Belonging to Distant State/UTI not adjoining UP'. Besides, the eligibility criteria for admission to most of the courses in AMU was lower than that of DU, JNU, JMI and selection for admission to different courses was purely on the basis of the percentage/secured in the last qualifying examination. But selection for admission in the higher educational institutions to Delhi was made on the basis of the candidate's academic record and performance in the interview. The previous academic record should be of high quality. Those without a high first division had little chance of getting admission to an honours course in some colleges under DU such as Hindu College, Lady Sri Ram College, etc. Mr. Rahman claimed that no one from the Pangal community studied in DU, JNU, and JMI during his time except him though some Pangal students studied in Islamic Courses in the Madrasas in Delhi".²²

However, he did not give specific reasons why the Pangal students including him studied at Meerut University.

2. The information furnished herewith is based on the conversation the author had with Dr. Abdul Malik. Dr. Malik, soon after his Ph.D from MU, joined the All India Council for Technical Education, Govt of India, a regulatory body of the Indian Technical Education initially as an Assistant Director. Subsequently, he was promoted to the post of Deputy Director. In October, 2001, he joined JMI as Deputy Registrar. Later on, he worked as Joint Registrar and also as an Officiating Registrar for years at the University. Dr. Malik was instrumental in making JMI as one of the best Universities in India and abroad. Several

²² It is based on the interview cum personal conversation of S. Wahidur Rahman on 20th March 2021.

outstanding Centres of Studies and a number of Academic Departments had been established during his tenure in addition to huge fund mobilization and several academic collaborations with leading Universities across the globe. Currently, he is the Executive Director, Innovation in Global Corporate. He expressed his opinion regarding the migration of Pangal students to Delhi and its neighbouring cities.

"In the 1980s onwards, a huge number of students triggered to move out of the state mainly due to lack of quality education and a number of higher Institutions in the state of Manipur. Series of closing down of institutions due to various factors and atmosphere of restlessness in the state are also other reasons that forced the students to move out of Manipur for pursuing higher and better education in various cities in India. While concerning the Pangal students, their most preferred destination is AMU and JMI. Many students opted for AMU because of its being economically affordable as well as offering better chances, once they entered, for professional courses such as Medical, Engineering, Technical and other professional courses and several higher studies in multiple disciplines. Yet, in the recent past, several Pangal students opted for JMI, New Delhi because of quality education, the advantage of geographical location in Delhi for better opportunities and adequate exposure. Thus, huge Pangal students flock to JMI to seek admissions. To date, hundreds of students have passed out in different disciplines from JMI. Currently, another 25 students are pursuing various academic programs of the University".²³

3. Syeed Ahmed, who is a teacher by profession and an alumnus of AMU, gave his opinion regarding the migration of Pangal students in the city of Delhi and its neighbouring areas.

"He went to Aligarh for higher study in 1980-81 and did his coaching for CSE in Delhi also. Nobody from the Pangal community was there except Wahidur Rahman in DU. While asking the reasons for not getting admission in Delhi University by the Pangal students, he expresses that on account of getting less marks and higher cut-off marks in different colleges of DU, most of the Pangal students would not get admission in different colleges of Delhi University. They used to prefer AMU as they thought that AMU had a sense of belonging to their community. They even preferred AMU as compared to JMI though both the universities are minority institutions but located in different areas. Moreover, AMU is an economically affordable place for poor students. AMU is not only merely a destination centre for admission but also a centre of informative place for admission. Many of the Pangal pioneers were already there in AMU so that it gave an easier way for admission. But Delhi did not have such Pangal pioneers for admission at that time. The cost of living in Delhi was high. There was a communication gap in Delhi but no such gap was there in Aligarh. Some of the Maulanas played a crucial role for the Pangal students in Aligarh

²³ It is based on a personal conversation with Dr. Abdul Malik, Hatta, Imphal East on 6th March 2021.

while concerning the accommodation and lodging facilities though they have not done anything for the admission process in AMU".²⁴

4. An academician and former cross-media journalist, Dr. Nawaz Khan of the Department of Mass Communication, Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU), Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, who has been a keen observer of the Pangal educational corridor in the Hindi belt since his early days in Delhi during 1977-79, attributed the surge in migration of Pangal students to Delhi, Aligarh and other cities over the years to several 'pull' and 'push' factors including the development of information and communication technology.

"According to him, in those days there was a large number of Pangal students pursuing Islamic theological studies in Madrassas in Delhi as in other cities of Uttar Pradesh but few were in modern higher education due to lack of information about accessibility to educational institutions in the national capital coupled with lesser number of informative Pangals back home. However, the following decades saw an upward trickle in the migration of Pangal students. The push factors include a mismatch between the growing demand for higher education and limited availability of seats in the lone university in Manipur and other universities in the North-Eastern Regions. Besides, the rising income level of the parents, their awakening about the importance of quality education, and their belief that the standard of education offered in these cities outside the state was superior and was a gateway to higher posts, prestige, experience, etc. were other push factors, Dr. Nawaz Khan added. The pull factors regarding Aligarh Muslim University as a traditional educational destination for Pangals include its excellent educational environment with a Muslim cultural orientation, besides its being affordable and less expensive, he observed. Commenting on the recent trend of the shift in the shares of Pangal students from the traditional destination of Aligarh to Delhi, Dr. Nawaz Khan said that one of the key reasons for growing migration of Pangal students to Delhi was the fact that the national capital had become an education hub with private participation in the education sector in addition to its existing universities and colleges while Aligarh with the lone university was unable to absorb the rise in a trickle of Pangal students who came for higher study in Aligarh Muslim University. Meanwhile, Delhi became more an accessible alternative destination with affordable cost, increased career opportunities, and better air connectivity while the better accessibility to educational information since the advent of the internet had contributed to Pangal's educational 'exodus', Dr. Nawaz Khan added".²⁵

²⁴ It is based on a personal interview of Syeed Ahmed, Lilong Mayai Leikai, Thoubal District on 3rd March 2021.

²⁵ It is based on an interview of Dr. Nawaz Khan from Thoubal Moijing, Thoubal District on 30th January 2021.

5. Mohd. Mahboob Ali, who is presently teaching at Guwahati-based IIT JEE Classroom, studied B.Sc (Hons) and M.Sc Chemistry (Hons) at Hindu College, DU from 1997-2002, gave his opinion regarding the migration of Pangal students in the city of Delhi in such a manner that

“Only three Pangals, Mohd. Mahboob Ali from Irong Cheshaba, Chingish Khan from Thoubal Moijing and Noor Rahman from Kshetri Top Khongnang Makhong studied at Hindu College, DU from 1997-2000. Why they focused on DU rather than AMU is because of the fact that they wanted to prepare for CSE and SPSC Exams. Delhi is an informative place and educationally, it is considered an urban and advanced place for competitive exams as compared to other places such as Aligarh. Moreover, earlier, many Pangals could not get admission to DU and JMI in the 1990s as they got less marks in Higher Secondary Exam. Many colleges in DU have higher cut-off marks. As compared to cut-off marks of colleges of DU, AMU is an easy option as AMU is a minority institution and has reserved seats for the minority candidates belonging to distant states”.²⁶

6. Then, another scholar Dr. Asad Ali from Mayang Imphal Bengoon, Imphal West, Manipur who is presently working as a Lecturer in Wangoi Higher Secondary School, Wangoi, studied at AMU till M.Sc (Botany) though he did his research work from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), Pusa Campus, New Delhi. He expressed his opinion concerning the migration of Pangal students to the city of Delhi and its adjoining areas including Aligarh that

“He simply reveals that most of the Pangals came not only to the city of Delhi but also to other states such as Uttar Pradesh (UP), etc. in the early 1990s for seeking higher study as they had direct contact with some seniors and therefore, it could facilitate them in an easier way. In Manipur, there was not enough facility for teachers which, for students, resulted in the inability to access in higher study. In addition, the law and order situation of Manipur was not good due to insurgency and the consequential existence of AFSPA 1958 which had direct impacts on the migration of not only Pangal students but also students belonging to other communities of Manipur to other states for the purpose of higher study. The sole motive of going to Aligarh was to have par and better education under a learning environment”.²⁷

7. Mohd Akbar Khan from Yairipok Ningthounai, Imphal East District who studied in Jamia from schooling to MA Geography expressed his opinion regarding the Pangal student’s migration to the city of Delhi in a manner that

²⁶ It is based on an interview of Mohd. Mahboob Ali from Irong Cheshaba, Thoubal District on 29th January 2021.

²⁷ It is based on an interview of Dr. Asad Ali from Mayang Imphal Bengoon on 30th January 2021.

"While concerning the number of Pangal students in DU in the 1980s, there was only one Pangal student in his time in DU as they got less marks in Higher Secondary Examination and even, they could not qualify it as it was totally based on marks. The Council of Higher Secondary Education Manipur (COHSEM) used to give tough markings in the 12th class which affected the Manipuri students that they would not be able to get admission to different colleges of DU as their cut-off marks were usually higher. For JMI, the perception of Pangal students is that based on community perspective and sense of belonging, they have preferred JMI as the first priority rather than AMU. Moreover, the law and order situation of Manipur along with the factor of AFSPA 1958 compelled the Pangal students to migrate to a safe place like Jamia for higher study. While asking regarding the shifting to institutions like DU, JMI and JNU from AMU which most of the Pangals have been focusing on since the 1960s onwards, it is because of the fact that they perceived Delhi as an informative and opportunistic place for their futuristic careers. One of the reasons why the Pangal community preferred AMU is that it was an economically affordable place and based on mark basis selection. Most of the Pangal families had a sound economic situation in the 1980s so that they focused on cities like Delhi rather than Aligarh. Those students who could not get admission to DU, JNU and JMI due to scoring less marks used to go to Meerut, Agra and AMU. Almost 95% of the Pangal students who are aspirants for competitive exams like CSE and SPSC Exam used to stay at Patel Chest, Delhi but they could not qualify it on a massive scale on account of groupings and they remained untouched with other communities as their knowledge was limited within their own community".²⁸

8. Another bureaucrat Mohd Abdul Kalam who is working as a Deputy Director of Manipur State Archives studied Medieval History from JMI in 1983-85 expressed his opinion regarding the migration of Pangal students to metropolitan cities such as Delhi rather than AMU that

"There were three batch-mates of him-Md. Afzal Ali, Mv Abdul Rajaque, and Nurus Salam and these three batch-mates studied MA in different courses in JMI. Why they chose JMI is because of two factors such as priority and subject concerns and mark basis. On account of scoring less marks, they would not be able to get admission to Delhi based universities, particularly DU and JNU. Though he got distinction (49.9%) in graduation, he could not meet the criteria given by DU and JNU. Most of the Pangal students could not get higher marks as they didn't focus on education seriously. He went to Stephen College, DU to meet O. Nabakishore Singh, former Chief

²⁸ It is based on a personal interview of Mohd. Akbar Khan from Yairipok Ningthouanai, Imphal East District on 12th February 2021.

Secretary of Manipur, for admission guidance. He suggested me (Kalam) to take the forms of AMU as he scored less marks in graduation. At that time, he went to Delhi by train as the train was the only option for poor-stricken families on the ground that Air India Service was available but costly. He also mentioned the shifting of institutions from AMU to Delhi based universities in the early 2000s among the Pangal students by saying that the city of Delhi is an informative and advantageous place for competitive exams. Delhi has a good environment for study purposes while Aligarh lacks such a facility. In the 1980s and 1990s, most of the Pangals preferred medical and engineering courses. They were not interested in the higher study as they used to have a lack of well experienced and qualified Pangal leaders but were full of "token" intellectuals and "token" social activists. After the 2000s, they were much influenced by many pre-eminent civil service aspirants. There is always competition between those students who studied at AMU and Delhi based universities. The teaching method adopted in JNU, DU and JMI is far ahead from MU that made a triggered point upon the Pangal students to migrate into the city of Delhi".²⁹

9. Dr. Mohammad Asghar, the first Pangal Ph.D degree holder from DU in Anthropology and now an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology, RGU, Arunachal Pradesh expressed his opinion in such a manner that

"Somewhere from 2004-05, students from Manipur who came to Delhi for pursuing higher education, especially in DU increased exponentially. Also, Manipuri Muslim students, who considered AMU as their first resort for higher education earlier now slowly, change their preference towards higher educational institutes in Delhi. This could be because of three factors. 1. Change in marking system of classes X and XII conducted by Board of Secondary Education Manipur (BOSEM) and Council of Higher Secondary Education Manipur (COHSEM), Manipur. Now, they adopted a liberal marking system resulting in securing a higher percentage as compared to earlier. This gives them an extra edge to compete for admission in colleges under DU which give admission based on board exam marks. 2. The higher education system, especially UG and PG courses in Manipur was still not able to follow a strict academic calendar because of various socio-political factors resulting in taking extra years to complete these courses back then. 3. The whole process also creates a kind of continuous system of mentoring. For newcomers, seniors have become their mentors and the chain continues. This makes it easy for the newcomers to adjust and adapt to the new system and environment".³⁰

²⁹ It is based on an interview of Abdul Kalam, Deputy Director, Manipur State Archives, Imphal on 22nd February 2021.

³⁰ It is based on an interview of Dr. Mohammad Asghar on 9th December 2021.

10. Mr Khutheibam Farook Ali, who is presently posted at Mayang Imphal Police Station of Imphal West, Manipur as the Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), has graduated BA in Political Science (Hons.) from Ram Lal Anand College, DU in 2007. He also studied postgraduate in Political Science from Ramjas College, DU, New Delhi. Additionally, he did his M.Phil course at the Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament (CIPOD), School of International Studies (SIS), JNU, New Delhi. He expressed why he focused on Delhi based universities rather than other universities including MU and AMU in a manner that

“I went to Delhi in 2004 after the completion of class 12 from the COHSEM. The reason is that no good institution for higher studies that match the national level was available in Manipur. Moreover, no career prospects were there at that time. With this law and order problems were not conducive to higher education. In addition, there were the unavailability of good books, references, journals and libraries. Apart from the above-mentioned reasons, there was an absence of good teachers for higher education. One possible but striking reason is that Manipur’s education level at that time in 2004 was well below the national level. To compete with the national level in the UPSC conducted exams such as National Defence Academy (NDA), Central Defence Service (CDS), CSE, etc., it was crucial that made his move to Delhi for higher education rather than other adjoining universities such as AMU, Meerut University and Agra University”.³¹

9. Conclusion

It can be safely concluded that the mobility of Pangal youths/students to Delhi based universities and its adjoining areas particularly in Aligarh in the early 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s could be counted at finger points. They are less in number as their educational status is quite deplorable in the state. They are underdeveloped in all fields like polity, economy, education, society and administrative affairs of the state. It is clear that this community is the most disadvantaged community in Manipur. It can be visualized from the facts that most of the families of the Pangal community are poor and not highly educated and as per the census of 2011, their literacy rate is given as 80.33 % among males and 55.22% among females. On average, their literacy rate is 67.76%. They lack information about the importance of higher study in outside states like Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Punjab in the early period of the twentieth century as they don’t have well-qualified and experienced Pangal leaders but are full of “token” intellectuals, “token” social activists and discernible apologists, a large number of flying monkeys and yes-men political workers in the Pangal dominated areas. The Pangal community usually paid attention to AMU rather than Delhi based universities such as JNU,

31 It is based on the interview of Khutheibam Farook Ali on 14th February 2022.

DU and JMI in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s but shifted their institutions to the later ones from the mid-2000s as they got influenced from the first ever civil servant and research-oriented persons from the Pangal community. Their journey for higher study in Delhi based universities started in the last four decades only. By looking at the overall perspective, the migration of Pangal students to the city of Delhi and its neighbouring areas including Aligarh has been summed up in such a way that they have flocked to such universities as they have been influenced by both research and CSE oriented works.

Safety at Workplace for Women from Northeast in Delhi - A Legal Enquiry

Mercy K Khaute*

Mutually beneficial migration has been a fundamental fragment in the history of human progress. Globalization has ushered in a number of questions sweeping across societies almost evenly with the same frequency challenging many of the constrictions of gender, time and space. Urban India had witnessed growth in women workforce participation from 14.6 per cent to 15.5 per cent in 2011-12. A workplace free from any form of discrimination is central for realizing sound output of work. Non-discrimination, equal opportunity and fair treatment may be treated as the three pillars to ensure basic labor rights, social justice and development that are suitable and sustainable. Migration of women from North East states of India has been significant and certainly a contributing factor to the percentage of women workforce in the urban cities. Racism often disguised under the veil of the sexual harassments as in the case of women employees from the Northeast states in Delhi, makes it a case rather peculiar. An attempt has been made in this paper to outline the various challenges encountered by women from this region in the city of Delhi, which reports the highest number of cases against racism. Based on the observations, the author concludes with suggestions.

Keywords: Migration, Employment, Racism, Women's safety, Workplace.

1. Introduction

Globalization is gender neutral, interested only in the end result, not concerned with how or who made it. This global phenomenon has ushered in a number of questions sweeping across societies almost evenly with the same frequency challenging many of the constrictions of gender, time and space. Migration thus, may be seen as a direct outcome of this trend that has narrowed the geographical divide more than ever before. Mutually beneficial migration has been a fundamental fragment in the history of human progress. Economic consideration has been a determining factor of voluntary migration within the country; this has undergone further modifications along with the socio-political and cultural scenario of the destination region, the acceptability of the migrants and their own inclination to embrace the dominant local culture have emerged as the deciding factors while choosing the area to one's migration.

Come 2050 and India will be the most populous country of an estimated 1.66 billion total people¹ with a great demographic population. However, as of today,

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¹ Population Reference Bureau .World Population Data Sheet. *International Indicators: Population Mid-2050.* < Data Center: International Indicators – Population Reference Bureau (prb.org)> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

women account for only 19.9% of the total labor force in India². Urban India had witnessed growth in women workforce participation from 14.6 per cent to 15.5 per cent in 2011-12³. Current researches have revealed four primary factors which discourage women's active participation in the work front- the ubiquity of established patriarchal social norms that deter women's agency, movement and liberty to work;⁴ increasing household incomes that disincentives labor market participation among women conforming to the former norm,⁵ the unbalanced burden of unpaid work discharged by women in their domestic realm;⁶ and the lack of suitable jobs for women reinforced by occupational segregation⁷ and significant wage gap amongst the gender.^{8,9}

Needless to state, that migration of women (in search of employment) from North East states of India has been significant and certainly a contributing factor to the percentage of women workforce in the urban cities. Even so, given the global average of 49 percent,¹⁰ women's under-participation in the Indian workforce is evident. One must not overlook the peculiarity of the movement from this region, which is surely not one in search of an identity. Rather it is a complex scenario as the region continues to battle failed development and neglect that the region had been subjected to since long. Sharing over 90% of its boundary, as international borders the issues that the region faces are uncommon, unwelcomed and accentuated. As these women transcend boundaries that earlier confined them once now in the cities they loose the protective shield of the family: they become anonymous. The first challenge they often face is the lack of accommodation or means of transport that are safe and sound for them added to the woes of language barrier. Hostels for working women come with drawbacks of limited vacancies, food habits etc.

² The World Bank. *Labor Force, Female (% Of Total Labor Force) - India*. <<https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-the-workforce-india/>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

³ Ilo.org. *Women's labour force participation in India: Why is it so low?* <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/genericdocument/wcms_342357.pdf> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁴ Hdr.undp.org. *Human development, disparity and vulnerability: women in South Asia* <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/latest_edited_banu_template_gl_1_august.pdf> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁵ Demographic Research, *Indian paradox: Rising education, declining womens' employment* <https://www.popcenter.umd.edu/research/sponsored-events/seminars/seminar_docs/Chatterjee%20et%20al> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁶ World Economic Forum. *Global Gender Gap Report 2017* <<https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁷ ILO. *Why Is Female Labour Force Participation Declining So Sharply In India?* <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---inst/documents/publication/wcms_250977.pdf> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁸ *Supra* note 5.

⁹ ILO. *India Wage Report, Wage Policies For Decent Work And Inclusive Growth*. <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_640335.pdf> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

¹⁰ World Bank. *Labor Force Participation Rate, Female (% Of Female Population Ages 15+) (Modeled ILO Estimate) | Data* <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

This paper attempts to inquire the state of safety for women from the Northeast in their workplace with situations depicting the growing rate of crime coupled with efforts to raise awareness amongst the masses in Delhi city, that are historically unprecedented and yet the re-occurrence of such, is in probability with struggle for security paving a wave of discontent thus necessitating an urgency to act upon.

2. The Menace of Mindset

Mongoloid features. Single. Available. Easy? Where does one fit the manifestation of such verbal spur used indiscriminately against women hailing from the Northeastern states? Perhaps a befitting response would be to term such within the contours of “harassment”. So what is harassment?

In 2010, the High Court of Delhi in Dr. Punita K. Sodhi v. Union of India & Ors¹¹ endorsed the view that sexual harassment being a subjective experience for which the court prefers to analyze harassment from the [complainant's] perspective. “A complete understanding of the [complainant's] view requires... an analysis of the different perspectives of men and women... The characteristically male view depicts sexual harassment as comparatively harmless amusement.”

The Canadian Human Rights Commission describes harassment as a form of discrimination in the form of any unwanted physical or verbal behavior aimed to offend or humiliate. Although generally speaking, harassment is a behavior that persists over time nothing bars a one-time incident from being considered harassment¹². The laws of the United States, defines harassment as any repeated or continuing “uninvited” contact that creates alarm, annoyance, or emotional distress.

In 2006, President George W. Bush signed The Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing (CAN-SPAM) Act of 2003, which prohibits spamming over the Internet (*aka* spamming) without disclosing the sender's true identity.¹³

Thus, the term ‘Harassment’ is undoubtedly a form of discrimination that is inclusive of any unwanted physical or verbal behavior with the objective of causing mental stress, aimed at offending and/or humiliating. May be commonly understood as behavior that embarrasses the person characteristically branded by its unlikelihood in terms of social and moral sensibleness. In the legal parlance these are behaviors that appear to be threatening. Their evolution may arise out of a sense of what women of psychology will call as superiority complex that have an effect of nullifying or impairing a person from taking benefits of their rights.

¹¹ W.P. (C) 367/2009 & CMS 828, 11426/2009.

¹² Canadian Human Rights Commission. *What Is Harassment?* <<https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/what-harassment-1>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

¹³ Federal Trade Commission. *Controlling The Assault Of Non-Solicited Pornography And Marketing Act Of 2003 (CAN-SPAM Act)*. <<https://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/statutes/controlling-assault-non-solicited-pornography-marketing-act-2003-can-spam-act>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

3. Ensuring safety for women in her workplace: International Commitments and Global overview

A workplace free from any form of discrimination is central for realizing sound output of work. Non-discrimination, equal opportunity and fair treatment may be treated as the three pillars to ensure basic labor rights, social justice and development that are suitable and sustainable. The International Labor Organization (ILO) Declaration of Philadelphia of 1944¹⁴ highlighted that discrimination on the grounds of race, creed or sex amounts to the violation of human rights enunciated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1945¹⁵¹⁶. The ILO affirmed that all persons have the right to pursue their material as well as spiritual well being in an environment that promotes freedom, dignity, economic security and equal opportunity¹⁷. Member states of the ILO adopted the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, (No. 111) in 1958¹⁸. The aim of the Convention is to protect all persons against the evils of workplace discrimination. There is an obligation created on the ratifying States to ensure protection against discrimination in employment and occupation on seven specific grounds, namely race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction and social origin, in addition to other grounds prohibited in national legislation by governments after due consultation with the representative employers' and workers' organizations. This convention has been ratified by India and over 170 states, expressing their commitment on preserving human rights of their workmen though legislations, polices and welfare programmes. The C111 of 1958 (No. 111)¹⁹, seek to provide guidance to national legislation to promote non-discrimination and equality in the world of work thereby making it one of the fundamental documents on labor legislation²⁰. ILO Resolution on Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women in Employment, ILC, 71st Session, 1985 recommended that actions be taken to encompass social protection to women and men concerning reproductive hazards and sexual harassment.

The right to fair conditions of work is enshrined in Article 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966. Article 11 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against

¹⁴ ILO. *ILO DECLARATION OF PHILADELPHIA :Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the International Labour Organisation* <<https://www.ilo.org/legacy/english/inwork/cb-policy-guide/declarationofPhiladelphia1944.pdf>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

¹⁵ UNO. *Universal Declaration Of Human Rights* <<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

¹⁶ Articles 1, 2 and 7 speak about equality in dignity, rights and freedoms and equal protection against any discrimination.

¹⁷ *Supra* note 13.

¹⁸ ILO. *Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)* <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_decl_fs_85_en.pdf> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Haspels, N., De Meyer, T. and Paavilainen, M., 2011. *Equality And Non-Discrimination At Work In East And South-East Asia*. Bangkok: ILO, p.16.

Women (CEDAW), 1979 recommends States to eliminate discrimination against women and equality of men and women in the sphere of employment. ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) mandates Governments to adopt within the framework of domestic laws and regulations, and in co-operation with the people concerned, such measures to confirm enjoyment of equal opportunities and equal treatment in employment and protection from sexual harassment.²¹ While the ILO Decent Work for Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) upholds that each Member shall adopt measures to ensure that domestic workers are not deprived from enjoying effective protection against all forms of abuse, harassment and violence (Article 5).

Article 1²² of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993 gave a comprehensive and inclusive definition on “Violence against women” is not limited but rather compasses physical, sexual and psychological violence in the community including rape, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in education institutions and elsewhere. The Beijing Platform of Action drawn at the United Nations’ Women’s Conference in 1995 was aimed to advance women’s rights and to eliminate violence against women including sexual harassment at work with a renewed vigor. In 2010 the ILO HIV and AIDS Recommendation (No. 200)²³ held that for the reduction of transmission of HIV adequate measures should be taken in or through the workplace thereby alleviating its impact by warranting actions to prevent and prohibit violence and harassment in the workplace.

A. Foreign Chapter

In pursuit of the goal to secure the right of every individual to work in a safe environment the Nepal Government enacted the Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Elimination) Act, 2071 (2014) (SH Act)²⁴. The Act provides that no one should be subjected to sexual harassment in workplace, and contains detailed definitions, scope, and measures for enforcement and remedies. A remarkable aspect of this Act unlike the corresponding legislation in some other jurisdiction such as India is that the law gender-neutral and not limited to female workers.

People’s Republic of China enacted the Law on *Protection of Rights and Interests of Women* (which came into force on 1 October 1992, and revised n 2005)²⁵ that seeks to protect woman’s legal rights. Sexual harassment against women is prohibited and recognizes as a ‘right’ the right to complain to the employer and/

²¹ Article 20.1-3 (d)

²² any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

²³ Article 14 (c).

²⁴ ILO. *Brief on Strengthening Action against Violence and Harassment in the World of Work in Nepal* <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-kathmandu/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_740056.pdf> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

²⁵ Refworld. *Refworld | China: Law Of 1992 On The Protection Of Women's Rights And Interests.* <<https://www.refworld.org/docid/4a38f8b72.html>> (Accessed 13 January 2021)..

or competent authority. Aimed at raising the standards for labor protection for female employees and imposed stricter punishments for violations. The *Special Provisions on Labor Protection for Female Employees* issued by the State Council on 28 April 2012 is specifically concerned with sexual harassment in the workplace. The New Provisions are intended to enhance regulate labor relationships, which are consistent with recent global labor law legislative trends.²⁶ Interestingly the new People's Republic of China (PRC) Civil Code, are to be effective as from 1 January 2021, intends to broaden the ambit of protection against sexual harassment by extending it to both men and women. The new PRC Civil Code also mandates that employers should take both pre- and post-measures to prevent and stop sexual harassment in the workplace.²⁷

In the United States of America, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination based on race, sex, color, national origin or religion. The Civil Rights Act of 1991 added provisions to Title VII protections enlarging the rights of women to sue for damages against sexual discrimination or harassment. The case of Barnes v. Train²⁸ is viewed as the first sexual harassment case in America, although the term „sexual harassment“ was not specifically used. Paulette Barnes, an African American woman, was a payroll clerk who worked for the Environmental Protection Agency. She brought the case after losing her job for refusing the advances of a male supervisor. The case was initially dismissed but Paulette Barnes won on appeal in Barnes v. Costle²⁹. During this case, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals ruled it was discrimination on sex, to expose a woman to suffer tangible employment losses in exchange of sexual favors. The court held that companies are to be liable for not prohibiting sexual harassment. In 2010, the US Court of Appeals, in the case of Reeves v. C.H. Robinson Worldwide, Inc.³⁰ ruled that the work environment can be called hostile if sexually explicit language and pornography are present.[24] A hostile workplace may also exist depending on how the employees are treated as a group, even if any particular employee may not be targeted per se.[25]

B. The National Chapter

The core objective of the Constitution of India is to secure to all its citizens Justice, Liberty, Equality³¹, Fraternity and Dignity of the individual laid down in the

²⁶ AMAZONAWS, *China Raised Labor Protection Standard For Female Employees*. <<https://s3.amazonaws.com/documents.lexology.com/6933c39c-41ae-4fcb-8a3c-492c6d7cafe9.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAVYILUYJ754JTDY6T&Expires=1610180576&Signature=RrXGLkBSKH3l3Itc6v338B2UW9k%3D>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

²⁷ CMS EXPERT GUIDES. *Sexual Harassment In The Workplace In China* | <<https://cms.law/en/int/expert-guides/cms-expert-guide-on-sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace/china>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

²⁸ 13 Fair Empl. Prac. Cas. 123 (D.D.C. 1974).

²⁹ 561 F.2d 983 (D.C. Cir. 1977).

³⁰ 2010. 594 F.3d 798 (11th Cir. 2010).

³¹ Article 14.

Preamble. It is interesting to note that although some of the Indian states continue to govern themselves by their customary traditions in matters of inheritance, marriage and divorce yet any practice that infringes on Part III- Fundamental rights is subjected to judicial review, and if declared unconstitutional shall be invalid³². Discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth is prohibited³³. All citizens shall have the right to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business³⁴ and thereby guarantees the right to life and personal liberty³⁵. Thus the Commitment to ensure a safe workplace in India is a woman's legal right which is further reinforced by India's ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979. Often designated as an international bill of rights for women, CEDAW underlines that discrimination and attacks on women's dignity violate the principle of equality of rights. Furthermore, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) has provisions especially worded to protect women against all and in any form that could pose a threat to outrage her modesty³⁶. Offence under section 509 includes words, gestures or acts intended to insult the modesty of a woman.

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 prohibits indecent representation of women through the medium of advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, and figures or in any other manner. Companies will be held if there has been "indecent representation of women" in and within the workspace³⁷. The Information Technology Act, 2000 contains provisions³⁸ to ensure that the electronic medium is not used as a platform where women are made victims of abuse.

C. The Road Leading to the Vishaka-genesis and Repercussions

In 1992, Smt. Bhanwari Devi, was engaged by the state of Rajasthan as a Sathin (rural level change agent) to raise awareness on the evil perils on the practice of child marriages. The nature of her work attracted huge resentment and harassment especially from the male members in the community. There was no action taken on reporting the matter to the local authority even when Bhanwari was facing threats when she prevented the marriage of a one-year-old girl. The failure to be protected by the state was starkly horrific, as the Sathin soon became a victim of gang rape. This incident exposed the vulnerability and the plight of millions of Indian women who faced similar dangers at their workplace in some form or the other. A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed by Vishaka³⁹ and other women

³² Article 13.

³³ Article 15.

³⁴ Article 19 (1) (g).

³⁵ Article 21.

³⁶ Section 292, 293, 294, 354, 354 A.

³⁷ Section 7 (Offenses by Companies).

³⁸ Sections 67 & 72.

³⁹ AIR 1997 Supreme Court 3011.

groups against the State of Rajasthan where the primary demand was to uphold and ensure the protection of women in her work place and accountability of all workplaces/establishments/institutions should there be any failure to observe this right of women. This PIL paved the way wherein the Supreme Court generated legally binding guidelines establishing it on the right to equality and dignity accorded under the Indian Constitution as well as by the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Sexual harassment has been given an extensive definition by the apex Court as any unwelcome, sexually determined physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct (innuendos) and additionally covers situations where a woman can be disadvantaged in her workplace as a result of threats that can have negative impact on her work life. Remarkably the Supreme Court placed an obligation on workplaces, organizations, institutions and those in position of power and responsibility, to uphold working women's fundamental right to equality and dignity at the workplace. Three crucial obligations were imposed on institutions to meet the standard, namely: (a) Prohibition (b) Prevention (c) Redress.

The meaning and content of the fundamental rights guaranteed in the Constitution of India are of sufficient amplitudes to encompass all facets of gender equality.... Late Chief Justice J.S. Verma⁴⁰.

The case of Vishaka served as the tipping point for the country to have a law specifically designed to govern women in the sphere of her employment, free from the clutches of insecurity arising from the threat of (sexual) harassments. In 2013, the Government of India implemented the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (referred to as Act hereinafter) adopting measures consistent with the Court's judgment in the Vishaka case. The Act seeks to ensure women's right to workplace equality- free from sexual harassment through compliance with the above mentioned three components. It is imperative to note that the Act provides a civil remedy to women, which is in addition to other laws that are currently in force⁴¹. Accordingly, the right to take recourse of both civil and/or criminal proceedings is available to any woman who wishes to report instances of sexual harassment at the workplace. The Act provides a detailed parameter for the appointment, qualifications, powers, duties and tenure of designated persons and thereby postulates that no court shall take cognizance of any offense punishable under this Act, or any of its rules except on a complaint made by the aggrieved woman, or any other person authorized by the Internal Complaint Committee (ICC)⁴² and the Local Complaint Committee

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Section 28.

⁴² Section 4.

(LCC)⁴³. Every employer is obligated to establish an ICC through a written order⁴⁴ at every administrative unit and office. A significant step adopted by Law is the inclusion of an independent external person⁴⁵ possessing expertise to deal in the issue of sexual harassment with utmost sensitivity having regard to the nature of the case . The presence of such expertise is to ensure fair and informed handling of complaints that will lead to healthy results.

No court other than that of a Metropolitan Magistrate or Judicial Magistrate of the first class, shall try any offense punishable under this Act⁴⁶. Every offense under this Act is non-cognizable⁴⁷. The Law strictly prohibits the publication⁴⁸ or making known

Step 1: Acknowledgement of the complaint received from the complainant by the Complaints Committee. Inform and discuss with the complainant the option to route the matter either through formal or informal mechanism. Precede the matter after obtaining decision of the complainant.

Step 2: Careful planning while preparing the file and factors taken under consideration.

Step 3: Outlining interview plan and conducting fair and reasonable method while interviewing the complainant, respondent and witnesses.

Step 4: Reasoning after due analysis of the information gathered to check the similarities/ dissimilarities of the statements in step 3.

Step 5: Observations, finding and recommendations on the basis of all materials collated.

Step 6: Final lettering and report submission.

the contents of a complaint and the inquiry proceedings, identity and address of complainant, respondent and/or witnesses by the designated authority. Any breach of this confidentiality clause will lead to specific consequences. The Act also provides detailed timelines to be observed for ensuring timely redressal of the grievances⁴⁹.

⁴³ Section 6.

⁴⁴ Section 19 (b).

⁴⁵ Section 7 (c).

⁴⁶ Section 27.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Section 16.

⁴⁹ Chapter III, Chapter IV and Chapter V, The Sexual Harassment of Women At Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition And Redressal) ACT, 2013.

Figure 1
Timelines as Given in the Act

Submission of Complaint	Within 3 months of the last incident
Notice to the Respondent	Within 7 days of receiving copy of the complaint
Completion of Inquiry	Within 90 days
Submission of Report by	
ICC/LCC to employer/DO	Within 10 days of completion of the inquiry
Implementation of Recommendations	Within 60 days of submitting the report
Appeal	Within 90 days from receipt of the recommendations on the matter, by either party

Figure 2
Overview of the Complaints Committee/s to Acquire Information for addressing a Complaint of Workplace Sexual Harassment

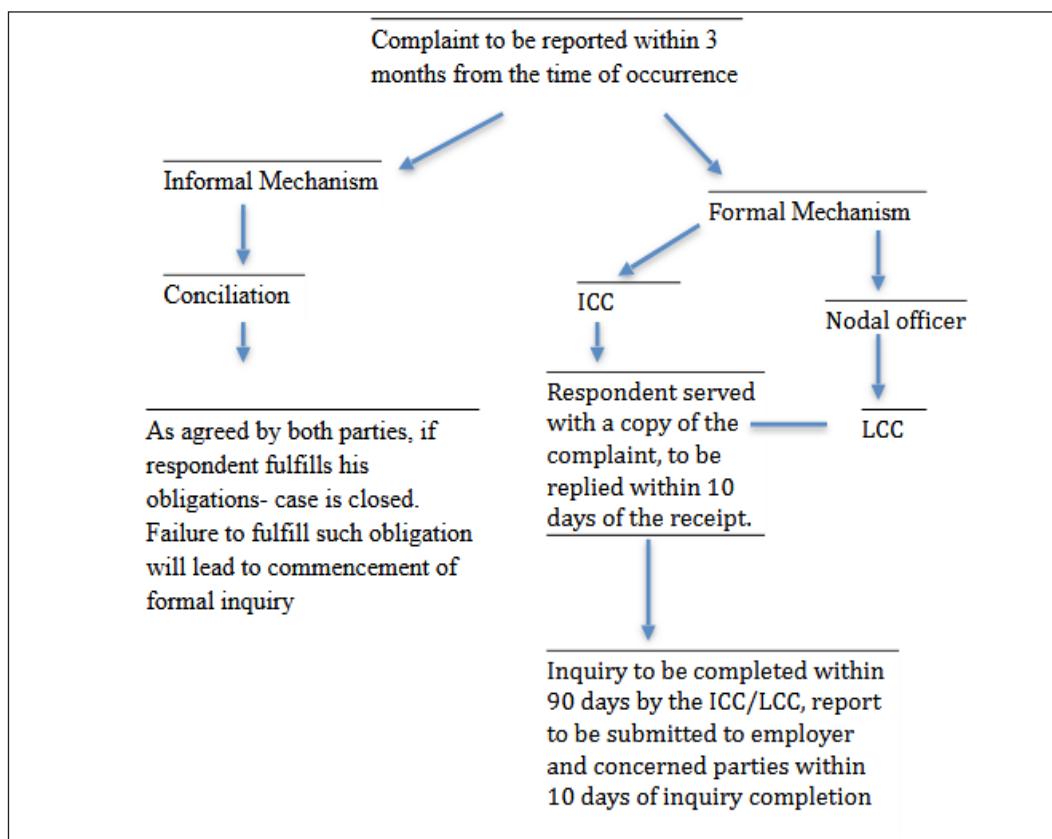


Figure 3
Inquiry Procedure at Glance

If, complaint is NOT upheld- case closed.

When complaint is upheld, recommendations to be implemented by employer/authority within 60 days

Non-satisfaction of the recommendations/findings/or

Implementation by concerned authority appeal to be filed within 90 days from the receipt of the report.

The Act has introduced significant improvements in the domestic criminal law. The Amended Criminal Law Act, 2013 recognizes and provides a clear definition of sexual harassment and the punishment for it through Section 354 A⁵⁰. The definition of sexual harassment is wide and also peculiar in its coverage including within its ambit offences of voyeurism⁵¹ and stalking⁵².

4. Tales of Unsavory Encounters: Dynamics of Sexual Harassment

In 2012 the Australian Human Rights Commission in a national telephone survey⁵³ findings disclosed that sexual harassment in workplaces in the country was extensive. Approximately one in five people aged 15 years and older who were sexually harassed in the workplace during 2008-2012; the harassment was not confined to women alone as one in four women (25%) and one in six men (16%) have been sexually harassed in the workplace. The targets of sexual harassment were found to be mostly women less than 40 years of age, and harassers were mostly male co-workers. The survey also suggested that women are at least five times more likely than men to have been harassed by a boss/superior and/or employer. Women accounted for more than 50% of all sexual harassments⁵⁴. About 40 and 50 per cent of women experience unwanted sexual advances, physical contact

⁵⁰ Section 354 C: Any man who watches or captures the image of a woman engaging in a private act¹³ in circumstances where she would usually have the expectation of not being observed either by the perpetrator or by any other person at the behest of the perpetrator, or disseminates such image. Punishments are imprisonment from three to seven years and fine on the first conviction, and one to three years and fine on the second subsequent conviction.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Section 354 D (stalking): "Any man is said to commit the offence of stalking when he i) follows a woman and contacts or attempts to contact such woman to foster personal interaction repeatedly despite a clear indication of disinterest by such woman, or ii) monitors the use by a woman of the internet, email or any other form of electronic communication, or iii) watches or spies on a woman in any manner that results in a fear of violence or serious alarm or distress in the mind of such woman or interferes with the mental peace of the woman. Punishment is imprisonment of either description from one year to five years and fine.

⁵³ Human Rights Commission. *Working Without Fear: Results of The Sexual Harassment National Telephone Survey*. <<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/working-without-fear-results-sexual-harassment-national>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

or other forms of sexual harassment at work in the European Union countries⁵⁵. 83 per cent amongst girls in the United States, aged 12 to 16 experienced sexual harassment in public schools in some form or the other⁵⁶. While the studies in the Asian countries of Japan, Philippines, Malaysia and South Korea showed that 30 to 40 per cent of women experienced workplace sexual harassment⁵⁷.

Within a month of joining at The Statesmen Newspaper, Rina Mukherjee had filed a sexual harassment complaint against the news coordinator, Ishan Joshi, to the Managing Director, Mr. Ravinder Kumar. The concerned persons initiated no action. Meanwhile on grounds of her work being "tardy" and "lacking in quality" Rina was fired from her job. When the matter was adjudicate by the Industrial Tribunal (West Bengal), the tribunal held that the managing director of the organization had failed to understand the seriousness of the complaint that made to him in confidence and such lackadaisical attitude was against the spirit of the law as laid down by the apex court in the Vishaka's case. The Statesman was directed to reinstate Rina with full back wages⁵⁸. A study titled Sexual Harassment at Workplaces in India 2011-2012⁵⁹ was carried out in India jointly by Oxfam India and the Social and Rural Research Institute covering over 8 cities and 400 respondents, reported that 17% of the women employees faced sexual harassment at work place. However, a majority of the victims did not resort to any formal action against the perpetrators⁶⁰. Indicating economic hardships, 26% of the workingwomen reported to be the sole earning members thereby making them more vulnerable to sexual harassments at workplace⁶¹. The diminishing margins of traditional bulwarks and women competing on equal terms with men especially in service sector, night shifts are *de rigueur* and interaction with clients and co-workers are a common sight. Hearing of the numerous unpleasant incidents women face at their workplaces one is compelled to think and re-think about the price of working in the city owing to various compulsions. Miss X, 20 years who arrived in New Delhi on the sultry hot afternoon in June 2004 with the hope to support her family of 5 younger siblings and aged parents both of who were in their mid 70s. The train journey from Dimapur to Delhi was over 36 hours. Not equipped with the vices of city life, having crossed the safety of her home for the first time. The instant brush she says, with the evils of the city was the hounding

⁵⁵ ILO. *When Work Becomes A Sexual Battleground*. <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/mission-and-objectives/features/WCMS_205996/lang--en/index.htm> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ ILO. *Action against Sexual Harassment at Work in Asia and the Pacific* <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_bk_pb_159_en.pdf> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁵⁸ Scribd, *Handbook on sexual harassment at work place* <<https://www.scribd.com/doc/293105181/Handbook-on-Sexual-Harassment-of-Women-at-Workplace>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁵⁹ Business Standard. *17% women face sexual harrassment at work place: Oxfam* <https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/17-women-face-sexual-harrassment-at-work-place-oxfam-112112700191_1.html> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

innuendoes of the auto drivers to ferry her to those localities, which they deemed was the obvious choice for her to stay!

5. Author's Research

Pertinent to our study of migration is the crucial question on migrant women's safety in the destination place. NE women have continuously faced threat to their safety in the Capital. A survey carried out in 2014 revealed that 81% of the women from NE region faced harassment in Delhi.⁶² The author carried out an exploratory research based on random sampling amongst 116 women working aged between 21-30 years in different departments of the service sector. The average duration of residence of the respondents are 08 years. For the sake of easy understanding the workplaces have been broadly identified into 04 categories namely, (1) Food and beverage sector which includes fast food joints {30 respondent}(2) Apparel stores {30 respondents}(3) Tele marketing and Business process outsourcing organizations (BPO) {30 respondents} & (4) Healthcare industries- Private/ Government {20+06 respondents}. Data was collected through questionnaire and interview/interaction with some of the subjects. Each respondent received a letter/email covering the purpose of the study; the theme to be covered; and the name, address, and phone numbers of the author for any inquiry. The letter/ email explained that participation of the respondents was purely voluntary which she could be terminated at any time, and that name of the respondent or her workplace would remain confidential. Phone interviewers asked for verbal consent to participate before starting the interview. The survey covered organizational practices – personal information were kept to the bare minimum. Attempt has been made to present the experiences just as closely as related to the author.

On asked about any untoward incident experienced by the any of the respondents, almost all of the responses were in the affirmative. Gathering from the experiences shared all of the women had been subjected to some form of name calling by a co-worker and even by clients/customers especially in the food and beverage sector. While women engaged in Government healthcare sector did offer a solace of not having faced "discrimination based on racial features" as much as the others related.

109 out of 116 respondents admitted to having faced unwanted sexual advances from their co-workers. While 09 admitted to having had to change their place of work owing to fear of their safety and constant threat of repeated gestures from their superior. As against unwanted physical advances verbal sexual innuendos were reported to be common during the initial phase of them joining the job profiles that later became less frequent.

⁶² Times of India. 81% of northeast women harassed in Delhi: Survey <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/29270244.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

On the awareness of the Law on prevention, prohibition and redressal of sexual harassments in work place, 92 out of the 109 respondents answer positively while the 17 of the responses were in the negative. Further on the channel of information on such, 64 of the respondents had the information through the bulletin board in the organization and 23 respondents via social media viz., Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram and Twitter, the 05 respondents credited their friends who appraise them on the same. The role of newspaper does not seem significant, almost all respondent stating lack of time to read through.

When queried if the respondents were sensitized of the procedure to access the grievance redressal mechanism in their workplace against sexual harassment, 99 of the respondents were aware of it, 17 pleaded ignorance of the same. The employees in the apparel stores, Tele -marketing and BPOs though were aware of the system, 30% of them did not know the procedure to avail the mechanism should the need arise.

As a matter of policy whether the management as a matter of policy in the respective workplaces had organized workshops, seminar or formal/informal talks during or after their induction, apprising the workers of the legal recourse on prevention of (sexual) harassment at workplace, there was a dismayed response.

107 of the 109 respondents answered in the affirmative when asked if they considered their racial difference with the rest of the workers as a factor of (more) vulnerability to against (sexual) harassments at workplace. On a request to rate on a scale of 10 the safety and security the respondents opinioned in their workplace, 79 respondents assigned 08, 12 persons assigned a score of 07, 14 marked 06 and rest of the 04 respondents gave 05 on the scale.

A. Observation

The author observed that there were five crucial factors that were echoed by the respondents in regard to the (un) safety of their workplace. The common threat was of isolation from most of the co-workers attributed to stereotyping. This further makes them feel vulnerable to unsolicited advances from the opposite sex especially from a senior. Second factor was the language barrier and flack of fluency (in some cases) exposing them to verbal sexual innuendoes and "dirty jokes". Third, mannerisms and social skills which most of the respondents felt was innate in the environment they grew up in. Northeast states being regions where there is no stark social discrimination between men and women, more often than not, co-workers mistake them to be "casual" or "too welcoming" in their interactions with the opposite sex. The fourth impediment was the obvious factor of the respondents being far away from their hometown in a city where they do not have relatives/friends/guardians to assist them in case of any unacceptable incident that befalls on them. The last factor was the lack of knowledge- ranging from the development of laws, facilities available or assistance that the state extended in

case of any emergency or times of need. The lack of lucid communication between most of these women and the persons in the managerial posts or the concerned authority, should the need arise, appears to widen the gap of reluctance to approach the management or the police, added to the fear of being "labeled" and character assassinated.

It is a hard task to know whether the guidelines on sexual harassments have helped, because harassment program, regulations, effects, and harassment by itself, are extremely difficult to measure. Training and grievance systems may materialize to backfire because, by accumulative recognition of harassment, they may increase complaints⁶³⁶⁴. Surveys may not record harassment in workplaces where it is common since pervasive harassment can foster psychological denial⁶⁵. Presuming whether the agendas truly reduce harassment, and if they can be tweaked to work more efficiently, should be a priority. The effort of the organizations should be to ensure that people who file grievances should not face retaliation.

B. Towards the Lighthouse

Sexual harassment at the workplace is a prevalent vice that leads to decreasing labor force participation rate of women, jeopardizing inclusivity hence disrupting the notion of gender equality. It ruptures national legislations and international conventions and obliterates the sanctity of conducive work environment for men and women. What is crucial is thus a cumulative and reinforced commitment from all quarters of the society, as the undeniable fact of the matter remains the disability that women suffer from their inability to participate in the economic sphere.

Research has shown that the Indian women have easy accessibility to public spaces in mixed use areas, where shops and business establishments are open to late hours of the night, confirming activity at all times.⁶⁶ Yet, on discussions pertaining to availability of adequate infrastructure for women, an evading reply⁶⁷ often resonates that there are not sufficient women in public spaces to warrant for more. A concerted effort needs to be re-emphasized least our steps falter and wean out before we reach the lighthouse. Some suggestions of the author are as follows.

Social support system: The aim of developing, adopting and implementing a comprehensive policy on the prevention of sexual harassment should be to change behavior and attitude of both women and men at the workplace. In this regard

⁶³ O'Leary-Kelly, A., Bowes-Sperry, L., Bates, C. and Lean, E., 2009. "Sexual Harassment at Work: A Decade (Plus) of Progress". *Journal of Management*, 35(3), pp.503-536.

⁶⁴ Antecol, H. and Cobb-clark, D., 2003. "Does Sexual Harassment Training Change Attitudes? A View from the Federal Level". *Social Science Quarterly*, 84(4), pp.826-842.

⁶⁵ Journal of Management. *Too Good to Be True? Understanding Change in Organizational Outcomes*. *Journal of Management* < https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247570341_Too_Good_to_Be_True_Understanding_Change_in_Organizational_Outcomes > (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁶⁶ Sage. *Invisible women. Index on Censorship*, < <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0306422013500738> > (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

social support plays a pivotal role, as it is a catalyst that motivates a tormented woman to take action as family backing instills confidence in mitigating the impact of highly stressful situations.⁶⁸ While those who fail to garner support from family members and peers, the likelihood of suffering from acute mental depressions and stress leading to irreparable damage to the person, is very probable.⁶⁹

Strengthening organizational support: Apparent unwillingness to uphold the dignity of women in the workspace is made obvious by the constitution of sexual harassment committees often in a perfunctory manner, simply in fulfillment of the legal obligations. There exists the predisposition that actions even if taken on receipt of the complaint are merely towards face saving exercise of the organization. All the more when the respondent is a senior male employee. Driven by performance and results, the concern for building work culture that endorses ethics of respect, dignity, and safety in the workplace, appears far less significance. This brings to the fore the disjuncture that may exist between an everyday form of harassment and role of the committees, which otherwise should be strictly based on scientific evidence⁷⁰. Thus further compounding the inconspicuousness of sexual harassment cases notwithstanding its rampant presence^{71 72}. It is in the organizations own interest to inculcate a strong work ethos that will develop a conscious sense of commitment to gender diversity and ethical practices thereby enhancing productivity and results. The Ministry of Human Resource & Development, Govt. of India, through its notification in 2012 had mandated the setting up of North East Cell in academic institutions in Delhi. On similar lines, if not a cell, a helpdesk can be designed to assist any complaint of sexual harassment by a woman hailing from Northeast, who becomes an easy prey made worse by the language barrier, difference in culture belonging to the Mongoloid stock far away from the protective aura of their native communities.

Encourage Open Conversations: An area of great concern is when a woman chooses to be silent but begins to question her role when she had been abused! Why should women hold themselves responsible when they are treated inappropriately against their wish or consent? V Geetha⁷³ reckons that women's silence is partially due to

⁶⁸ Ghadially, R. and Kumar, P., 1988. Bride-burning: The psycho-social dynamics of dowry deaths. In: R. Ghadially, ed., *Women in Indian society*. New Delhi, India: Sage., pp.166-177.

⁶⁹ Times of India. *Fighting Sexual Harassment At Work - Times Of India* <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/relationships/work/Fighting-sexual-harassment-at-work/articleshow/16569948.cms>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁷⁰ Sen, R., 2010. 'Women's Subjectivities of Suffering and Legal Rhetoric on Domestic Violence: Fissures in the Two Discourses', *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. Vol 17, no. 10.1177/097152151001700304, pp. 375-401.

⁷¹ Rediff. *How far is too far in harassment?* <<https://www.rediff.com/money/2003/sep/12guest2.htm>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁷² Legally India. *Sexual Harassment And Consensual Flirting: The Firm Video Review* <<https://www.legallyindia.com/content/sexual-harassment-and-consensual-flirting-the-firm-video-review-20100830-1239>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁷³ Economic and Political Weekly. *On Impunity* <<https://www.epw.in/journal/2013/02/commentary/impunity.html>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

the sexual nature of violence that is considered as matter of "shame", and partly due to the furtiveness the aggressor displaces onto his victims. This reflects not only the obnoxious existence of patriarchy embedded strongly in our society, but also on the educational system. Though pedagogics is not within the ambit of this article, yet it is invincible to comment that our education does endow women to develop skills and aptitude to be economically independent, yet be it the family or institutions there has been a failure to empower and emancipate them. Inspite of their capability and proficiency to work outside the home, many are unable to raise their voice against the wrongs she is subjected to, more so when such are sexual in nature. It is for organizations to encourage women to speak up unrestrained even if the social milieu embedded in patriarchy and deep-rooted prejudices surrounds them. Silence for women is certainly not an option. Social mobility within the organization may be encouraged through 'ice-breaking' activities, as these tend to embolden an otherwise shy and timid to speak up.

Enforcement and Monitoring – Conducting surveys and feedback forms may be introduced at regular intervals to identify factors and situations leading to incidence of sexual harassment. Monitoring is important as it delivers credibility and gives the employees confidence that the organization is making efforts in a realistic and fair manner. It can help to improve a company's internal control mechanisms to counter unwarranted incidents that disrupt the tranquility of the work place. Enforcement and Monitoring should include updating General Staff Order, Information bulletin where the summary of the periodically conducted feedback forms may be highlighted. With strong confidentially clauses observed intact suggestions can be collected from the (migrant) workmen to understand the challenges faced by her and thereby design feasible solutions to address the issues on point.

6. Closing Annotations-connecting the Dots!

In Delhi, sexual harassment against women is rather pervasive and common. The National Crime Records Bureau stated that crime against women in Delhi decreased in 2017 as compared to the previous year yet continues to remain numerous times greater than that in other metro cities⁷⁴. The NCRB report 2019 revealed that Delhi had witnessed the highest degree of crime against women accounting for nearly 1/3rd of the total incidences of such crimes⁷⁵. The 'India Startup Outlook Report 2016', stated that from a demographic angle, Delhi emerged as the most sought-after location for starting new ventures⁷⁶. Most jobs in Delhi are in the service sector⁷⁷.

⁷⁴ The Hindustan Times. *Conviction rate is still a cause of concern*. <<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/crimes-against-women-conviction-rate-is-still-a-cause-of-concern/story-y9sAq18x8Fetdn3YbpegDJ.html>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁷⁵ NCRB. *Crime in India in 2019: Statistic, Volume 1* <<https://ncrb.gov.in/sites/default/files/CII%202019%20Volume%201.pdf>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁷⁶ The Hindu Businessline. *Delhi most preferred location for starting new ventures: Report* <<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/info-tech/delhi-most-preferred-location-for-starting-new-ventures-report/article8260986.ece>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁷⁷ The Wire. *Why Are So Few Delhi Women Participating In The Workforce?*. <<https://thewire.in/labour/why-are-so-few-delhi-women-participating-in-the-workforce>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

Study by Chakraborty denotes that more than 60 percent of the female workforce is engaged in the service industry⁷⁸. With the emerging trend of NE women stepping out of their homes, often as the sole bread earner of the family, what is now most crucial to counter, besides job opportunities, is offering women a safe workplace. Often the State has chosen the easy escape route citing safety reasons by imposing restrictions on the movement of women without sufficient undertaking to tackle the deep-rooted troubles of violence and sexual harassment against women. A World Bank report of 2016, '*Women, Business and the Law*' disclosed that 155 out of 173 economies had at least one law inhibiting women's economic opportunities, like limiting them from working in certain jobs and in the night.

Current trends demonstrate that gender-neutral policies do not always lead to gender-equal outcomes. Large migration from the Northeast states to metro cities like Delhi in pursuit of jobs has been a prominent feature in recent times. One reason for such exodus is the absence of infrastructures in the region. A detailed socio-economic study of the nature of migration from the North East maybe considered to enable inclusivity in developing work place policy against racism which is often disguised under the veil of the sexual harassments as in the case of women employees from the Northeast states in Delhi, thus making it peculiar. The Bezbaruah Committee⁷⁹ reported Delhi as the worst offender pitted against the other metro cities on racial discrimination against people hailing from the Northeast states. It is time to implement the recommendations of the Committee⁸⁰ to instill the sense of belongingness in the Capital of their own country. For, a victim of racism apologizing for her identity, looks, culture and embodied experiences of oppression more so as sexual harassment is not how structures of inequality can be dismantled. Thus, to achieve gender equality by 2030 collective action is the urgent call. In short, all the Sustainable Development Goals depend on the achievement of Goal 5.⁸¹

As the Roman philosopher Marcus Cicero said, "The safety of the people shall be the highest law."

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Firstpost. *Bezbaruah Report On North East Community: Five Key Recommendations - India News* <<https://www.firstpost.com/india/bezbaruah-report-north-east-community-five-key-recommendations-1678393.html>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁸⁰ Mha.gov.in. *Report of MP Bezbaruah Committee* <<https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/ReportOfMPBezbaruahCommittee.PDF>> (Accessed 13 January 2021).

⁸¹ unwomen.org. *SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. < In focus: Women and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 5: Gender equality | UN Women - Headquarters>* (Last accessed on 15 January, 2021).

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