

The Underbelly of Indian Citizenship:

Race, Discrimination, and Exclusion of Northeast Indians in Metropolis

A dissertation submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “The Underbelly of Indian Citizenship: Race, Discrimination, and Exclusion of Northeast Indians in Metropolis” submitted by Subhash, bearing registration no. 17SPHL14 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in Political Science is a bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance. It is a plagiarism free dissertation.

The dissertation has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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DECLARATION

I, Subhash, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “The Underbelly of Indian Citizenship: Race, Discrimination, and Exclusion of Northeast Indians in Metropolis” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in Political Science to the University of Hyderabad is my own work. It has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other university or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my dissertation can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Subhash', with a horizontal line underneath.

Subhash

To
my mother and sister

List of Tables

	Page number
Table 3.1: Major insurgent groups operating in the Indo-Myanmar Frontier.....	41
Table 4.1: Comparison of state wise literacy of Northeast India.....	50
Table 4.2: State-wise number of Universities.....	51
Table 4.3: State-wise number of factories.....	52
Table 4.4: State-wise number of workers.....	53

List of Figures

	Page number
Fig 1: Insurgency related violent deaths in Northeast Region.....	54
Fig 2: We are Indians, not Chinky.....	63
Fig 3: Manipur Tableau 2018.....	64
Fig 4: Tripura Tableau 2018.....	64
Fig 5: Train to Guwahati.....	67

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFSPA	Armed Forces Special Power Act
AMSU	All Manipuri Student Union
AMUCO	All Manipuri United Club Organisation
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
BRICS	Brazil Russia India China and South Africa
BTC	Bodo Territorial Council
DPs	Displaced Person
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FIR	First Information Report
GOI	Government of India
JMI	Jamia Millia Islamia
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University
LPG	Liberalisation, Privatisation, Globalisation
MNF	Mizo National Front
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NEC	North East Council
NEFA	North East Frontier Area
NESCH	North East Support Centre and Helpline
NNC	Naga National Council
NPMHR	Naga People Movement for Human Rights
NSF	Naga Student Federation
UCM	United Committee of Manipuri
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam
UMFO	United Mizo Freedom Organisation
NE	North East

CONTENTS

	Page number
Certificate	i
Declaration.....	ii
Acknowledgment.....	iii
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
List of Abbreviations.....	viii
CHAPTERS	
CHAPTER 1 – Introduction.....	1-5
CHAPTER 2–Theoretical framework: racism, citizenship, social discrimination, and exclusion.....	6-25
CHAPTER 3 – The historical and political context.....	26-47
CHAPTER 4 – Actually existing regime of racism, social discrimination, and exclusion.....	48-70
CHAPTER 5 - Conclusion.....	71-76
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	77-84

Chapter: 1

Introduction

This research work addresses the issue of racism, discrimination, and citizenship, faced by the people from Northeastern states of India in major metropolitan cities of India. Historically the Northeastern part of India remains neglected in terms of the development process, government initiatives and even in media discourse. Geographically the region is also isolated from the mainland that is why it remains underdeveloped in the economic sphere. The bleak possibility of employment and unavailability of higher education compel young generations to move out of the region in search of the same. With India's policy of liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation, (LPG) certain Metropolitan cities have attracted young people from the Northeast region. The young and educated migrants from Northeast India find employment in the urban spaces of Neoliberal India such as malls, call centers, spas, global brand outlets and in restaurants. In these urban spaces, their race and their physical features are utilised to reproduce de-Indianised visual without importing foreign labor. A large number of Northeastern migrants living in Delhi have similar physical feature as Southeast Asian and East Asian people. Therefore their labour is highly desirable in the hospitality industry and in global brands outlets.

However, it is the only economic sphere of the activity where they are included in the life of the city but outside these urban spaces, they are at the margin of the society. Hence they faced social exclusion as well as discrimination because of their race and physical appearances. Outside of these urban spaces, they not only become the easy target of racial remarks which reflects in the epithet "Chinky" and "Momos" but they are also victims of physical violence. Apart from these challenges, several times their nationality is also questioned in their everyday routine life. Therefore it becomes a moment of frustration for a person who belongs to India, but their identity as a citizen is questioned. This condition not only creates hurdles in their life but also generate a sense of hurt and otherness. In this context, this research is an attempt to examine the factors that produce discrimination and exclusion against the North-East migrants in Metropolitan cities.

1.1 Overview of Literature

The existence of racial discrimination in different parts of the world is a much debated and contested concept. It is also true in terms of Indian context where racism is considered something practiced by European and Australian against the Indian people. However, there are some thinkers who believed in the presence of racism and its practices in India while some others deny. For instance Yengkhom Jilangamba (2012) in his article “Let’s stop pretending there’s no racism in India” argued that most Indian sees racism as phenomena that exist in foreign countries, mainly in the west, and see themselves as a victim. However, they do not see their own racist attitudes as well as behavior towards others whom they understand as inferior. While on other side thinkers like Rakesh Sinha (2017) argued that on the basis of some incident against the Northeastern and people from African origin we should not brand any society as racist. For him, it is true that there are some violent incidents against these groups but that is not motivated by the color of their nationality or their race¹. It should be seen as a law and order problem, not racism.

McDuie-Ra (2012) in his ethnographic work *Northeast migrants in Delhi: race, refuse and retail* argued that racism is something that defines the experiences of Northeast migrants in India. The prevailing racism in India can be witnessed in terms such as “Chinky” and “Momos” which are used to refer to people from Northeastern states of India. Northeast migrants mainly those with Mon-Khmer, Thai or Tibeto-Burman origins, are judged on the basis of ascriptive notion derived from their physical features². Their physical appearance which is similar to Southeast Asian people and the cosmopolitan fashion sense makes them different from the rest of the population inhabiting in Delhi. Therefore it becomes very problematic for migrants to escape from their cultural and ethnic identity even if they wish too. Because of their physical appearances and their ethnic identity they faced racial discrimination in their everyday life.

¹Sinha, Rakesh (2017) “Is India is a racist country?” *The Hindu*, 7 April. Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/is-india-a-racist-country/article17854153.ece>, Accessed on 21 March 2018.

²McDuie-Ra, D. (2012). *Northeast migrants in Delhi: Race, refuse and retail*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

According to Hoineilhing Sitlhou and Salah Punathil (2017), Northeasterners in Delhi are greeted with various derogatory categories such as “Chinky” due to their different physical outlook and ethnic features. They further argued that the practice of racism against the people from the Northeastern states in urban spaces is of different order in which their identity as an Indian is interrogated. Apart from this, Northeasterners are also named as “Nepalis”, “Bahadurs”, “Firangis”, “Chinese” as well as “Japanese”. Such identification as foreigners despite their actual belonging to India generates a sense of otherness in their everyday life.

The existing literature on the subject mainly studied the issue of racism and discrimination confronted by the Northeast migrants from the racial perspective and in the contemporary situation, there is a need to understand the discrimination from the social exclusion framework. Social exclusion as a theoretical framework not only provides novel insight into the nature, cause, and consequences of discrimination but also help to understand the process through which a community or individual is pushed to the margin of the society.

Therefore, by concentrating on procedures driving inequality, power relationship, agency, and inter-linkage between different forms of deprivation and discrimination, it could stretch a new way to remedial policies and actions. This research not only examines the racial discrimination and citizenship status of Northeastern migrants in the metropolis of India but also try to track the implementation status of recommendations made by M.P Bezbaruah Committee³ to safeguard the interest of Northeast migrants living in different parts of the nation.

To sum up, this research is an effort to address the problem of discrimination, racial attacks, and exclusion faced by Northeastern migrants in the light of contemporary incidents by using social exclusion as its theoretical framework.

³ A Committee constituted in 2014 to look into the racial discrimination against the Northeast migrants.

1.2 Research question

The central research question of this study is why and under what circumstances migrants from Northeast India are likely to be subjected to racist attack, discrimination, and exclusion in the metropolis?

1.3 Research objectives

Following are major research objectives:

- The study aims to highlight racial discrimination faced by people from Northeastern states of India in metropolitan, especially in Delhi.
- To identify and analyse the pull and push factors that have intensified the flow of migration from Northeast to metropolitan cities of India.

1.4 Methodology

This dissertation uses a qualitative research method by drawing from both primary and secondary sources. This research adopts an analytical and descriptive method of study. My primary sources would comprise of various reports and data generated by

- The North East Support Centers and Helpline
- Ministry of Development of North East Region
- All India Survey on Higher Education
- Planning commission
- Bezbaruah Committee Report
- Census of India 2011

The secondary sources would comprise of books, articles, journals, dissertations, newspaper reports, and relevant internet sources.

1.6 Outline of Chapters

This study is organised into five separate chapters.

Chapter one is an introductory account of the present study. It includes an overview of literature, methodology and its sources. It poses the research questions and objectives.

Chapter two outlines the conceptual and theoretical framework that is used in this research to analyse the problem of racial discrimination, attacks and physical violence confronted by the Northeastern migrants in metropolitan cities of India. The racial and social exclusion perspective is used to understand how everyday life racism is practiced in Indian society.

Chapter three is about the historical and political creation of Northeastern states in India's political map. It explores the instrumental tools and strategies that were adopted during the integration of Northeastern state into the Union of India. It also examines the ways and policies through which "Northeast" as an identity comes into the picture. This chapter also discusses the social-political unrest and developmental & displacement discourse in the region to provide a comprehensive picture back at home.

Chapter four outlines the push and pull factor responsible for migration from the Northeast region to Neoliberal India's Metropolitan cities. It also discusses all the major factors that are responsible for racial attacks, racial remarks, physical violence and other related atrocities to the Northeast migrants in the metropolitan cities- especially in Delhi. This chapter also examines the inclusion of Northeast migrants in the city and exclusion in society.

Chapter five summarises the issues faced by Northeastern migrants in the metropolitan city. This chapter also focused on the recommendations suggested by Bezbaruah Committee to protect the interest of Northeastern persons in major cities of India. Lastly, the chapter concludes the research.

Chapter: 2

Theoretical framework: racism, citizenship, social discrimination, and exclusion

2.1 Historical origin of race and racial discrimination

The concept of race and racism are not new concepts in academic discourse. They have a long history and practices around the globe. Conceptually they have been defined in various ways at different point of time. To understand racism we need to understand first race. In academic discourse, various scholars have defined race in terms of a socially constructed concept and other defined as a biological concept. Banton (1987), defined the idea of race as a “division of persons into the groups based on a selected hereditary feature like skin, colour, facial feature and hair texture, is a social construct”. While on the other hand social Darwinism saw a relation between people of different races is biologically determined, by giving two supportive arguments. Initially, no two living beings were similar, species changed over time, consequently, there were no stable types. Secondly genetics, individual characters were not acquired by adaption but inherited from an ancestor (Banton 1987:89-90). According to Henry and Tator (2006), race is a socially constructed phenomenon, based on the false assumptions that physical differences such as skin colour, hair colour and texture, and facial features are related to intellectual, moral, or cultural superiority. In contemporary times, in biology and in social studies, it is a consensus that race is a social concept, not a biological attribute.

Broadly racism has been defined as An ideology of racial domination in which the presumed biological or cultural superiority of one or more racial group is used to justify or prescribe the inferior treatment or social positions of other racial groups (Wilson 1999:14). It can be visible in the attitudes, stereotypes, interpersonal relationship, social practices, and institutions.

Historically, racial differences have been used in terms of defining biological differences. According to Banton (1977) The concept of race, like class and nation was developed first in Europe to help interpret new social relation. For him, prior to the 18th century, the word “race” was primarily used in the sense of lineage, But in France and Britain, the words start to change its significance around the year 1800⁴. For Banton, the new use of the word “race” represented it

⁴Banton, M. (1977): *The idea of race*, London :Tavistock Publications.

as a physical category which led to neglecting the way in which race was socially utilized as a category for organising people.

When Europeans confronted non-European civilisations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, enlightened scientists and philosophers gave the race a biological meaning⁵. A group of sociologist considered that the physical features not sufficient to determine the race. On the contrary, race is a social idea that may have a different meaning from one society to another society. Dirlik (2008) believed that in the nineteenth century nationalism has provided a medium for the globalisation of racism. He further stated that nationalism frequently appeared historical stages accompanied by racialisation and ethnicisation of politics, more often than not expressed in the language of culture and culture unity. The modern form of race, as well as racism, gain meaning in capitalist social relations by means of production, ideology, politically, culturally and psychologically, and through slavery, sharecropping, under colonialism and imperialism⁶. In other words, it was contacts between European adventurers, colonist, and people of America, Africa and Asia that became the foundation of the development of racial categories. Therefore, colonial expansionist projects marked the beginning of modern race relation in the different parts of the world.

Teltumbde (2009) stated that the idea of the race is truly rooted in the medieval European imagination, covering only Europe, Africa as well as Near East. It was developed by various people fashioning practical human typologies along the physical axes of skin colour, hair texture, facial angle, jaw size, cranial capacity, brain mass, brain surface fissures, and convolutions. Dirlik (2008) also considered that it was the European who has coined the modern form of racism when they colonised the world, but it was the fertile ground of America, especially the United States where the evil of racism grew.

⁵Clair, M., & Denis, J. (2015). Sociology of racism, *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* 2(2), 857-863.

⁶Dirlik, A. (2008). Race talk, race, and contemporary racism. *Modern Language Association*, 123(5), 1363-1379.

2.2 Racial discrimination in the Indian context

Racial discrimination simply means when a person is treated less favorably in comparison to another person in a similar condition because of his race, color, origin, or ethnic origin or migrants status. However various thinkers and organizations have defined racial discrimination in a different manner. United Nation Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (1966) defined racial discrimination as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life” (Narang 2001:2497). India signed the 1969 Convention, endorsed disqualification and abolished all forms of discrimination. But it did not treat caste as part of racial discrimination (Natarajan 2007:65). According to Henry & Tator (2006), racism refers to a system in which one group of people exercise power over another on the basis of skin colour, an implicit or explicit set of beliefs, erroneous assumptions and actions based on ideology of the inherent superiority of one racial group over another, and evident in organizational or institutional structure and programs as well as in individual thought or behavior pattern.

By highlighting the origin of racism and color biases in the Indian context, Gupta (2017) says, racism is especially a colonial invention and narrative to defend the dominance of colonial interest. The colonial ruler was loyal to the homeland. So the distinction between “us and them” needs to be built on a solid foundation, that provided by the concept of race. He explains that even in pre-colonial times, physical differences were noticed and mentioned, but more out of curiosity than an insult. For him, in the pre-colonial era, slaves were bought and sold freely across the continents, and it does not matter if they were black or white. Slavery associated with the idea of the race only after colonialism made historical emergence. Therefore the color bias in India is colonial, not traditional. Social scientists also made a distinction between race and ethnicity. A major distinction is that the race is generally understood in terms of biology. But on the other hand, ethnicity is defined in terms of general physical characteristics, particularly by shared history and cultural practices which are self-asserted in their nature rather than imposed by others (Cornell & Hartmann:2007 in Clair & Dennis 2015: 857).

The Constitution of India guarantees equal rights to every citizen of India. It also prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth and guarantees equality of opportunity to all citizens in a matter relating to public employment. Despite this fact, people from Northeast India, have become victims of racial discrimination in their own country. The term “racism” due to the rhetoric of "Unity in Diversity", it is reasonably unbalanced (Liang & Naulak: 2014). The existence of racism is widely denied across cultures, countries, regions and it is also true about the Indian context, where the existence of race and racial discrimination has become a much-debated concept. Some thinkers believed in the existence of racial discrimination while some others deny. It should be noted that the previous discussion of racism in India was mainly conceptualised around caste-based discrimination. This phenomena of “denial make recognising, identifying and effectively addressing racism particularly difficult, denial operates at many levels including even in the language that is used to describe certain situations”(Gupta 2017). A term like “ethnic minority”, “ethnic conflict”, “immigration restrictions”, “urban poor” is applied to deny the racist aspect of certain social behavior or government policies (Narang 2001:2496). Therefore race and racial violence are always perceived as alien in the Indian context.

McDuie-Ra (2015), argued that there is a strong presence of racism in India for other communities too, which sometimes articulated as “casteism” or “communalism”. He further explained that the peculiarities of the Northeast Indians are more unique because it is understood in terms of race rather than other characteristics such as language, region, caste, and religion. Hazra (2017) also considered that India is a racist country. The practice of racism and racial discrimination reflected in the form of attacks on Africans and Northeast students in urban spaces like Greater Noida and Delhi.

Sinha (2017), says some incident can not declare any community as racist. However, we may not deny that there have been many visible examples of violence against persons of African descent in specific parts of the nation, but most of these occurrences are not inspired by the color of nationality. The underlying reason is sex, drug trafficking, as well as behavioural characteristics

that challenged the values of local communities. So we are observing the conflicts of cultures, not racism⁷.

According to Jilangamba (2012), most Indian sees racism something that is prevailing in other countries, mainly in the West. They do not see their racist attitudes and behavior toward others who are seen as inferior. By referring the murder of Ramchanphy Hongray, as well as suicide case of Dana Sangma as well as other such events argued that these incidents are reminiscent of the insecure conditions that do not allow young people from the Northeast to live in the metro cities of the country. He further elaborated that in India, Racism is hard to prove - whether in the case of Loitam Richard or the harassment of women from the Northeast. For him, both the incidents are visibly explicit manifestations as well as insidious, unseen machinations. In other words, there is a strong presence of discrimination in India but it is denied by labeling as caste discrimination or ethnic conflicts.

In response to Jilangamba, Ashley Tellis (2012), argued that it is true that there is the existence of racism in India against Northeasterners, but the fact is that Northeasterners from all eight states are racist themselves. For example, the Meiteis of Manipur have a term, “*Mayang*” for mainland Indian and it’s a term of derision and abuse. Tellis also elaborated that Jilangamba is also wrong to think racism is difficult to prove. For Tellis, it is too easy to prove racism in a country like India because Indians are obnoxious enough not to even want to hide it⁸. It can be seen in both institutionalised and everyday form of it, “the racial profiling and sneer, the look, the tone”. The only missing thing is the strict law to immediately book this kind of behavior even if it is from the stateside. Therefore Tellis believed that racism is not an invisible wound at all. In the Indian context, it is most visible on the face of India.

⁷Sinha, Rakesh (2017) “Is India is a racist country?” *The Hindu*, 7 April. Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/is-india-a-racist-country/article17854153.ece>, Accessed on 21 March 2018.

⁸Tellis, Ashley (2012): “Racism is in your face, not under your skin”, *The Hindu*, 7 June. Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/racism-is-in-your-face-not-under-your-skin/article3497933.ece>, Accessed on 2 Apr 2018.

2.3 Forms of racism

Racism as a practice occurs among persons on an individual level, as well as it is also associated with the organisations and institutions through their procedure, policies, and practices. In common, it seems easy to identify an individual act of racism; in the form of racial abuse, neglect, an act of violence. For example, racial discrimination in India against Northeastern people is like a routine practice which manifests in the forms racial remarks like “Chinky”, “Momos”, “Bahadurs” and an act of violence or physical attack by the mainland’s citizens in the market place, offices and in public places. Though the act of individual racism does not occur in a vacuum, it emerges from the fundamental belief of society and the ways in which things are viewed, which later manifested in institutions, organisations and the system. There are four broad categories of racism: (a) individual racism, (b) systemic racism, (c) stereotyping and prejudice and (d) racial profiling.

2.3.1 Individual racism

Individual racism associate to a person's racial assumption, belief, or behavior, and is a “form of discrimination that stems from conscious and unconscious, personal prejudice” (Henry & Tator: 2006:72). Individual type of racism is well-connected with socio-economic histories as well as processes and is fortified as well as reinforced by a systemic type of racism. At the individual level, it is manifested in everyday behavior which involves many small acts of communication between people. It is also called everyday racism. Because of its subtle nature, it has become very difficult to address human rights complaints⁹.

2.3.2 Systemic racism

Systemic racism includes policies and practices that are design in established organisations, that resulted in exclusion and promotion of certain groups. Systemic racism directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, promote as well as sustain differential benefits for some people and disadvantage for others (OHRC 2005:14). This kind of racism manifests in various ways:

⁹Ontario Human Rights Commission (2005): *Policy and guidelines on racism and racial discrimination*, Ontario: Human Rights Commission.

- (a) Institutional racism: This is a kind of racial discrimination that emerges from social prejudices. In other words, institutional discrimination strengthens from the prejudiced mindset of the society as a whole which incrementally inflicts the structure of discrimination at an institutional level.
- (b) Structural racism: Inequality rooted in system-wide operations of a community that exclude the members of a specific group from a crucial role in major social institutions (Henry & Tator: 2006:79).
- (c) Societal racism: This kind of racism is visible in the cultural and ideological manifestation that underlie or sustain the main values as well as beliefs. This is clearly visible in the entire range of ideas, ideas, images, concepts and institutions that established the framework of interpretation as well as meaning for racialised thinking in society. It sustained and reproduces through the socialisation and cultural transmissions such as the mass media (in which racialised persons are portrayed as different from the norms), schools, universities, religious doctrine and practices, art, music, and literature. It reflects in the ordinary linguistic pattern, for instance, whiteness is associated with excessive positive meanings, while black is related to undesirable meanings. The societal form of racism is maintained through the process of socialization which later manifests in the forms of racial abuse and physical attacks¹⁰.

2.3.3 Stereotyping and prejudice

One of the most evident forms in which people faced racial discrimination is stereotype and prejudice. Stereotyping may be defined as procedure through which persons uses social labels such as color, ethnicity, race, religion, in acquiring meaning and information about others. (OHRC: 2005:18). The process of stereotyping includes assigning a similar distinctiveness to an entire member of society, not considering their differences. It is generally created on false impression, false oversimplification about members of a particular community. Most of the time stereotypes ascribe a negative identity to a particular community. For instance in the case of Northeast migrants, are stereotypes uncivilised, dirty, violent in their attitude and appearance.

¹⁰ Ibid,p.14.

2.3.4 Racial profiling

Racial profiling is a way of stereotyping based on a predetermined assumption about the character of a person. This means that “any action is undertaken for the reason of safety and security or public protection that relies on a stereotype about race, colour, ethnicity, religion, ancestry rather than on reasonable suspicion, to single out an individual for greater scrutiny or different treatment”. According to a study from the Center for North East Studies Policy Research, a report by the National Commission for Women, the simple form of discrimination involves overcharge by autorickshaw driver (27%) and molestation (26%) verbal abuse (27%) and difficulty in finding accommodation (26%), (Puri 2006:54).

2.4 Dimensions of racial discrimination

2.4.1 Race and gender

In contemporary time, it is considered that racism does not affect men and women in a similar way. In specific cases, women associated with a specific racial or ethnic group may face multiple kinds of discrimination based on race, caste, ethnicity. Women face higher levels of violence because of gender-based discrimination and the dominant power of patriarchy makes them the most powerless group in society. Women who have been discriminated on base of race, as well as ethnicity, are at dual risk of violence. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the gender dimension of racial discrimination in order to deal with various form of racial discrimination. The intersection of gender and racism can be summed up in a number of contexts: human trafficking, the labor market, and displacement.

In the 21st century, the process of globalisation has not only created the opportunities for economic development and prosperity but simultaneously it has also increased social inequality and discrimination that has broadened the gap amongst rich and poor and pushed the marginalised sections of societies at the verge of exclusion. However, among these marginal sections of societies, children and women are more prone to face greater vulnerabilities. Discriminatory as well as exploitative practices affect women and marginal groups and also limit their employment. “Women from a particular racial or ethnic group seeking employment may

have to resort to working in informal sectors because of their sex, race, and ethnicity or language limitations”. In the informal sector of the economy, women are subject to the poor working environment and low wages. for example in Delhi, women from northeast India finds work in the spas, clothing stores, and cosmetic stores where they are cast in highly sexualized roles in tight-fitting clothes, heavy eye makeup, and lipstick.

In a globalised world, “human trafficking” has become a very complex problem. It is generally recognised that trafficking of women is the consequences of the intersection between racial and gender discrimination. The intersection of race and gender has created the dynamic of power that makes women vulnerable. Women from specific ethnic and racial groups such as Dalit as well as native are often trafficked into the sexual business because present economic and social conditions fail to provide them equal opportunities, the right to subsistence to live a dignified life without being subjected to the structural hierarchies¹¹.

2.4.2 Race and employment

Sometimes race of a person works as an influential character that affects the income credibility of the person who comes from a socially proclaimed marginalised racial or ethnic background. Racial discrimination in terms of employment is not a new thing; it was practiced at a large scale in the U.S.A against the black native population. Discrimination in employment is widespread in developed countries as well as in developing states, where the strong local groups often through the complicity of the government, subordinate the weaker groups. Racial discrimination in the employment sector may occur either directly or indirectly. A direct form of discrimination comes into existence when the employer denies job opportunity to an individual because of his color, origin, and race. While on another side indirect form of discrimination comes when institutional policies have the effect to systemically exclude people from specific groups from employment opportunities. This kind of discrimination is most widespread as well as not easy to eradicate.

¹¹Ibid,p.79.

2.5 Citizenship: origin and development

The most well-accepted definition of citizenship originates in the writing of British sociologist T.H Marshall (1950). For him, “citizens are members of the political community and all those who have the status of citizen are bearers of equal civil, political, and social rights”. Marshall definition embedded the idea of equality and integration within a political communal. There is a distinction between a political community and ascriptive community. Ascriptive community is constructed on the ties of blood relation, caste, kinship, religion, etc. While on the other side political community comes into existence when people have common consent to live together within a framework of shared rules and regulations, consenting to give a sovereign political authority¹².

The idea of citizenship has not always been the same. As an idea, it drives back to traditional times of Greek as well as Roman. It consolidated around two main understanding of citizenship namely: Greek version of citizenship and Imperial Rome version of citizenship which later evolved in the forms of “Republican” and “Liberal” account of citizenship. The Greek version of citizenship first emerged in the writings of Aristotle. He regards the human being as “political animals” because it is in human nature to live in a political community. He strongly believed that human potential can fully be realised only within a *Polis* or city-state. Aristotle describes Greek citizens as “all who share in the civic life of ruling and being ruled in turn”. Finley (1983) says: that to be the citizens of Athens it was necessary to be a male age 20 or above, of known genealogy as being born to an Athenian citizen family, a patriarch of a household, a warrior - possessing the arms and ability to fight, and a master of labour of others – notably slaves. Therefore it was gender, race, as well as class which defines the citizenship of a person (Bellamy 2015:649). In the context of classical Greek, citizenship was limited to those who have the capacity to participate in the procedure of governance and was confined to free native-born man excluding women, slaves, children as well as resident aliens (Roy 2008:12). Therefore the Greek idea of citizenship was based on active participation in public life.

¹²Roy, A. (2016): *Citizenship in India*, Delhi:Oxford University Press.

In contrast to the Greek model of active citizenship, the Roman Empire introduces the “Passive notion of citizenship as a legal status”. In the Roman version, the eligibility criteria for citizenship was quite similar to Greek’s citizenship but it was further given new shape in Italy, that spread all over Europe than to Africa and finally to Asia. They have granted citizenship to the Non-Roman people who were conquered by the Roman Empire¹³.

Some fresh grounds of inclusion were added to meet the need of integrating a diverse population into the Roman Empire. This element brought a large number of people, ethnically different from Romans, within the purview of Roman-influenced by extending to them the protection of uniform set of laws (Roy 2008:15). Roy further elaborated that, the new element of citizenship not only brings a possible degree of inclusiveness but it also brings the hierarchy of status by intruding another class of “*civitas sine suffragio*” (citizenship without franchise, i.e. legal but not political rights). Moreover women and lower class were continuous to be denied the status of citizens. In this form of citizenship, citizens were obligatory to develop the quality of “civic virtue” to perform military duties, patriotism, and law of the land.

Both these conceptions of citizenship undergo a significant shift in response to changing socio-economic as well as political conditions and new intellectual environments. The Republican idea of citizenship contains an idea of a shared good that is prior to the individual and his choice. In this tradition “rights are granted in accordance with the contribution of citizens in the common good”. The collective nature of citizenship becomes the basis of unity, a sense of belongingness and security. On the other side, the liberal view of citizenship sees a person as a bearer of a set of rights, intended to defend her individual liberty¹⁴. In this tradition, citizenship is considered as legal status and people have the right to decide or choose, when and how to enter in the public sphere. In this context, the liberal conception is more inclusive and universalistic in its nature. This form of citizenship was very dominant in the 20th century.

Marshall (1950) in his book titled “*Citizenship and Social Class*” established a description of the development of the modern idea of citizenship. He saw citizenship as a product of “interrelated

¹³Bellamy, R. (2015): Historical development of citizenship, *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2(3), 643–649.

¹⁴Ibid,p.648.

process of state building, the emergence of capitalism and industrial society and the construction of national consciousness”. He categorised the idea of citizenship in three elements namely: civil, political and social citizenship. For Marshall, in the early days, these three elements of citizenship were combined. He explores the history of citizenship by studying it as a process of fusion and separation. Marshall attached the development of each element to a century - civil rights to the 18th century, political rights to the 19th century, as well as social rights to the 20th century.

In Marshall’s views of citizenship, firstly civil rights came into existence with the passage of the First Reform Act (1832). Political rights came next, and their expansion was the significant feature of the nineteenth century. The concept of civil citizenship includes the right to individual freedom, freedom of speech, and the right to justice. For Marshall, in all these civil citizenship rights, the right to justice is very crucial since it is defend and assert all one’s rights on terms of equality with others by due process of law. The institution like the court of justice is directly associated with the civil citizenship rights of an individual.

According to Marshall (1950), in the early 19th century, the idea of civil citizenship was universal, but the political franchise had the status of a limited economic class. For him, the most significant change occurred with the Act of 1918 which recognised manhood suffrage. He regarded political citizenship as “the right to participate in the political power as a member of the body invested with political authority or as an elector of the member of such a body”. The organisations concerned with the claim of political rights are Parliament and the idea of local government.

The idea of social citizenship includes the whole range of rights from to a modicum of economic welfare and security and to the right to share to the full in social heritage and to the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society (Marshall 1950:312). Institutions that are more closely related to the idea of social citizenship rights is the educational system and social services. Marshall believes that the idea of social class and the idea of equality are based on the contrary principle. At one hand social class is based on inequality while on another hand, citizenship in its ideal sense based on the equality principle. Therefore it was expected that the influence of citizenship on the social class would result in a conflict between the two principles. But in contrast to expectation, there was no antagonistic relation between two

principles, even they grow and flourish together. Marshall explains this situation by arguing that, from the seventeenth century onwards citizenship was the developing idea in Britain which growth coincided with the rise of capitalism. For him, the concept of the social class is the outcome of the principle of inequality, so it brings social asymmetries which are necessary to capitalism. Civil rights were imperative to a modest market economy. They gave every individual the right to involve as an independent unit in financial activities. In the eighteenth century, civil rights become a device for raising their social as well as economic status besides claims for certain social rights. The existence of poor law and social rights like “Elementary schooling” was an aid to capitalism. Elementary education was significant in the increase in the value of workers. Therefore, the capitalist mode of production or capitalism was not contrary to citizenship rights, even it proved complementary to the historical evolution of citizenship rights.

In the late 1980s, the traditional notion of citizenship namely liberal and republic notion of citizenship was challenged by the idea of multiculturalism. However, the idea of liberal citizenship grants equal rights, status and considered more inclusive in its nature. But despite this fact there were certain groups in the society such as women, migrants, blacks, ethnic groups, minority communities who were left excluded from the realm of citizenship rights and fueled with the feeling of discontent and detachment as their cultural practices are not given due priorities, therefore the neglect led to the violent insurgencies to uphold the dignity of their cultural and political concern which young called “Differentiated citizenship”. These circumstances become the basis of the emergence of “multiculturalism”. Therefore, there are three kinds of group-specific rights which are prevalent and accepted by most of the modern democratic society to accommodate various national as well as ethnic differences. These rights are (a) self-government rights (b) polyethnic rights (c) special representation rights.

2.6 Citizenship: An Indian experience

The date of adoption of the constitution 26 November 1949 manifests a crucial transformation in the status of the people of India. The Constitution comes into force only on 26 January 1950, but the provisions related to citizenship become operative on the date of its commencement on 26 November 1949. The word “citizen” nowhere is defined in the Indian Constitution, Part II of the

Indian Constitution (Article 5 to 11), titled “citizenship” concerned itself with the question of who is a citizen of India? The Constitutional provision mention citizenship accruing on the ground of birth and domicile (Art 5) but it also addresses the question of citizenship of people migrating between India and Pakistan (Art. 6 & 7) in the course of partition. The Citizenship Act of 1955 was later enacted by the Parliament with detailed provisions specifying how to obtain citizenship by birth, registration, naturalisation, descent or through the incorporation of territory (Roy 2016:10).

As mentioned in the Indian Constitution, every citizen of India is equal as well as possesses the same rights as others but despite this fact citizens from Northeast faced severe discrimination in urban spaces of India. The sense of "isolation" and "strangeness" felt by the citizen from Northeastern states in their mother country is evident among Northeastern's living in a metropolitan city like Delhi. The “feeling of minority, vulnerabilities and a feeling of discrimination is magnified in their encounters with state agencies like the police and in the workplace where they encountered maltreatment and misbehave” (Ngaihte & Hanghal 2017:42), which has brought the entire Northeast community together to resist racial attacks. Racism faced by migrants from Northeast India is clearly visible because of their distinct racial and ethnic profile which reflects in their skin color as well as in physical appearances. Feature denoting Thai, Tibeto-Burman as well as Mon Khmer lineages mark them as separate (McDuie-Ra 2012:122). However, Dalits also suffered from all kind of discrimination, but their sense of being Indian was never questioned. In the case of Northeast, race consistently raises the questions on the nationality and citizenship of Northeast migrants that have been threatening by the city dwellers. For Northeasterners, being recognised as foreigners is a common incident when they leave their own region to India’s mainland.

In normative terms, the idea of Multiculturalism is inflexibly entrenched in our Indian Constitution, which recognises "rights to culture". This is similarly evident in the discourse of multicultural egalitarianism put forward by succeeding prime ministers as well as other political leaders. Indian Multiculturalism is about national integration, which reflects in the “unity in diversity” (Wouters & Subba 2013:128). But despite this multicultural egalitarianism principle, certain cultural practices of Northeasterners forbidden from the sense of "Indianness" and subjected to "cultural policing". These regimes of negative surveillance are unlawful and invoke

the “language of legality” which operates to delineate the moral frontier of civil society and to criminalise in vernacular practices deemed uncivilised (Comaroff & Comaroff 2004: 539 cited in Wouters & Subba 2013:30).

This regime of negative surveillance is supported by the language of the legal system and restored through the certain organs of government. In 2007, Delhi Police released a booklet entitled "Safety Tips for Northeast Students/Visitor in Delhi" which consist do's and don't for Northeast people. This booklet advised them not to cook and eat traditional dishes (such as “bamboo shoots”, “akhuni” and fermented fish) that are popular in Northeast because these dishes are considered smelly by inhabitants of Delhi. It similarly inculcates Northeastern women not to wear “revealing dresses”. In other words, for Northeasterners in order to live freely as well as fearlessly in their own city, they were forced to change their habitual livelihood such as their eating habits, dressing sense, and to throw up customs that are not measured “properly Indian” by the people of Delhi.

Indian Constitution enshrined the concept of “differential treatment” by the policy of affirmative action for “Scheduled caste”, “Scheduled tribes” and “Other Backward Classes”. However, it is differential treatment meted out to Northeasterners is the exact opposite of affirmative action policies. This is the “suppression of differences, the assertion of cultural hegemony and the patrolling of proper Indianness, which is itself extremely diverse and split but nevertheless sufficiently hemmed exclude into Northeasterners”¹⁵. Therefore the practice of cultural policing, discrimination, seeing them as foreigners in their own land is the seeding ground on which their citizenship rights, as enjoyed by other citizens of India, are curtailed which pushed them into the margin and treat them as second class citizens.

2.7 Social exclusion: An understanding

In common understanding, the idea of “social exclusion” and the notion of “social discrimination” are sometimes considered overlapped. But theoretically, both concepts have some differentiated characteristics. Broadly the concept of social exclusion is considered as a

¹⁵Wouters, J. J., & Subba, T. B. (2013). The “Indian face,” India's Northeast, and “The idea of India”. *Asian Anthropology*, 12(2), 126-140.

complex as well as multi-dimensional in its nature which includes diverse social phenomena such as poverty, discrimination, unemployment, poor housing, and low attainment of education, “lack of access to social and political institutions”. While on the other side, social discrimination can be elaborate as sustained inequalities among individuals on the base of religion, ethnicity, sex, disability and so on (Bhugra 2016:336). In a broader sense, social exclusion as a concept largely operationalize on group-based analysis but on the other hand, social discrimination is largely related to an individual level.

The idea of social exclusion is invented by Rene Lenoir in 1974 in his work *Les Excludes: Un Francais sure Dix*. He coined the term social exclusion referring to the:

Mentally and physically handicapped, suicidal people, aged invalids, abused children, substance abusers, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginal, asocial persons, and other social misfits.

(cited in Silver 1994:532)

In the 1990s, the term "exclusion" became synonymous with "underclass" and replaced "poverty" in the European Union dictionary. The French definition of social exclusion defines "social exclusion as a rupture of social bonds". Various thinkers have defined social exclusion in their own terms and circumstances such as Arjan De Haan (2000) defines “social exclusion as a process through which individual or group wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live. He considered that the concept has two main distinct characteristics: (a) its multifaceted nature (b) focuses on the relationship and the process that cause deprivation. He explained that exclusion occurs at all levels of society and group creation is a fundamental part of human society by excluding others.

S.K Thorat (2007) defines social exclusion as the denial of equal opportunities imposed by certain groups of society upon others which leads to an inability of an individual to participate in the basic political, economic, and social functioning of the society. According to Mohanty (2012), social exclusion is associated to an illegal as well as a non-democratic social process in which some groups are deprived of admission to basic rights, employment as well as key properties and kept away from the development process and societal integration.

Naila Kabeer (2005) defines “social exclusion as an institutionalised form of inequality, the failure of society to extend to all section of its population the economic resources and social recognition which they need in order to participate fully in the collective life of the community”. Therefore, the social exclusion framework is associated with institutional rules, relationship, and procedure through which resources are distributed and value is assigned in the society.

2.7.1 Various paradigms of social exclusion

Broadly there are three main paradigms of social exclusion which developed in European countries to understand the nature and relevance of the problems. The dominant paradigm is known as, “Solidarity paradigm” or “French Republican Tradition” developed in France. It emphasizes the idea of solidarity and the state embodiment of the general will of the nation. In this paradigm, the exclusion is defined as “rupture of the social bond between the individual and society” that is cultural as well as moral in its nature. It defined a poor, unemployed person and ethnic sections as outsiders (Haan 2000:27). It draws its philosophical roots from Rousseau.

“The Anglo-Saxon Tradition” described by Silver as “Specialisation Paradigm” illustration from the liberal intellectuals like John Locke. In this paradigm, social exclusion regarded as a slightly different assertion. One of the key theoretical distinctiveness is that “Poverty” is understood as a problem which is discrete from social exclusion. It accepts unenforced rights and failure of the market as a cause of exclusion¹⁶. It considered individual as a primary social actor who is capable to move across “boundaries of social differentiation and economic division of labour”. Beyond the “social discrimination threshold and the economic division of labor”. It also recognises the contractual exchange of rights and obligations. In this model, exclusion reflects in discrimination that denies an individual to participate in social interaction.

The third paradigm is the “Monopoly paradigm” which is based on Weber’s idea of “social closure” a paradigm particularly influential in U.K and northern part of Europe. This paradigm considered that social order is coercive in nature and imposed by hierarchical power relationship. It believed that commanding groups limit the entry of outsiders through social closure. It defines

¹⁶De Haan, A. (2000). Social exclusion: Enriching the understanding of deprivation. *Studies in Social and Political Thought*, 2(2), 22-40.

exclusion as the result of the creation of group monopolies and group distinction where inequality overlaps. These inequalities can be mitigated through social democratic citizenship and full participation in social life.

2.8 Regimes of social discrimination

Social discrimination adopts various procedures and forms. It may be straight or unintended in its nature and application. Direct discrimination occurs when there is a thoughtful attempt is made to exclude a certain group or individual from opportunities. Indirect discrimination comes into existence when supposedly neutral provisions, practices, and criteria disadvantaged an individual owing to their social status as well as competences which resulting after socialisation distinguished by social status (Harriss & Prakash 2010:03). They further elaborated the various regimes of social discrimination which are responsible for sustaining and maintaining the regime of social discrimination in society.

(1) *Maintenance of Hierarchy*: Generally, contemporary societies practice the principle of “maintenance of hierarchy” in the relationship amongst diverse social groups. This principle of hierarchy brings the element of differentiation amongst “we and them”, “self and others”. This differentiation, as well as a hierarchy, are maintained through the normative framework of social, cultural and economic practices. These practices not only help in maintaining the differentiation but also socially legitimised the hierarchy. For instance, in the Indian context, Adivasis have been mainly recognised as individuals who do not associate with Indian civilisation. They are referred to as outsiders who lives a parochial life with barbaric practices and since the traditional way of carrying out the subsistence is not similar to the so-called modern outlook, Adivasis are considered subordinate and perverted. Eventually, the subordination and marginalisation resulted from discriminatory practices helps to internalised and accept the principle of hierarchy as “natural” and even “just” social, cultural, political as well as economic order.

(2) *Hierarchy in the forms of capillary power*: It means that the standards of social order backed the dominant social group to act against the disadvantaged groups in the society.

Their antagonism to the normative provision is met with reaction ranging from competitive to the coercive and violent. For instance, in Bhavnagar district of Gujarat, a young Dalit man was brutally bludgeoned to death supposedly by members of the higher caste, who was enraged at him for riding a horse. This incident shows that the higher caste has the only privilege to use horse riding¹⁷.

(3) *Politics of discrimination*: it means that social discrimination is created in the appearance of laws as well as movement to the contrary. The politics of discrimination formally grant a space for disadvantaged social groups (in Indian context these are Dalits, Adivasis, and Muslims), charitable them an authorised voice in the politics, society as well as in economy. Though, the politics of discrimination likewise confirms that only granting constitutional “space and voice” be unsuccessful to overthrow the discursive hierarchical structure inflicted on them. In other words, it ensures that emerging voice does not interpret into a successful and effective engagement. Therefore through this strategy, the dominant section of the society or upper caste in Indian context tries to maintain control over the productive social, political and economic resources.

Therefore, through these ways, the regime of social discrimination is institutionalised and practiced by the state, market and civil society.

2.9 Indian experience of social exclusion and social discrimination

In the Indian condition, the notion of social exclusion is closely linked with social rights and material deprivation. As a concept, it is not only related to the “lack of access to goods and services” which trigger poverty but also exclusion from security, social justice, representation, and citizenship. In Indian circumstances, the notion of social exclusion “revolves around the societal interventions and institutions that exclude, discriminate, isolate and deprive some groups on the basis of group identities like caste, language, and ethnicity” (Ziyauddin & Kasi 2009:14).

¹⁷The Times of India 2018 Mar 31, Gujarat dalit youth killed 'for owning, riding horse', 3 detained Retrieved from, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/dalit-man-killed-in-gujarat-for-keeping-riding-horse/articleshow/63547882>, accessed on 20 April 2018.

Amartya Sen (2000) considered the idea of social exclusion has theoretical involvement through the notion of poverty as well as deprivation. Sen also made a distinction between two situations in which some people are kept out and some are included. He describes two situations as "Unfavourable exclusion" and "Unfavourable inclusion". Sen believed that social exclusion framework helps to understand poverty as capability deprivation. He made a distinction between the active form of exclusion and passive form of exclusion by arguing that the active form of exclusion occurred when a planned attempt is made to exclude people from participating in social activities or when migrants are not granted full political status or citizenship. On the other side, passive exclusion exists when there is deprivation occurred without manual effort, for example, due to a sluggish economy. Therefore, There is a great overlap between the concept of social exclusion and the definition of poverty.

In Indian circumstances the practice of social discrimination is not a new thing, it was practiced from ancient time against people belonging to “shudras” and “Adivasis” community. This fact is recognised by the Constituent Assembly while drafting the Indian Constitution and in order to resolve the matter and to cherish the idea of “right to equality”. Therefore the notion of positive discrimination in the realm of education, employment, and representation for the Dalit and Adivasis was enshrined under Article 15. But despite this positive discrimination, the condition of disadvantaged social groups like Dalits and Adivasis is not good.

Since the 1990s, with the process of LPG (liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation) and the shrinking power of the state in the formal sector has pushed people from socially disadvantages groups especially Dalits and Adivasis into the informal segment of the economy. The vicious circle of exploitation impinged on the lives of Adivasis in terms of more working hours, low wages, no insurance scheme in case of death or injury while working, for women the threat of sexual harassment and no access to daily hygiene facilities are also vital. Through this way, the state is also contributing to the maintaining and sustaining social inequalities that anyway facilitates social discrimination which leads to social exclusion in the social, cultural and economic sphere of life.

Chapter: 3

The historical and political context

We had demolished the artificial barriers between the state inter se and the rest of India and had indeed laid the foundation of an integrated administrative and financial structure. But the real integration had to take place in the minds of the people.

V.P Menon

(Sajal Nag 1998: 1).

3.1 The historical and political creation of India's Northeast

The Northeast territory of India contains seven states, usually referred to as the “Seven Sisters of India”. They are Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and the later included Sikkim as the eighth state. Geologically it is segregated from mainland India because of its peculiar location. The expression "North East" was first utilised by British rulers to distinguish a territory. The term "North East Frontier" was first coined by Alexander Mackenzie to identify Assam, including the nearby mountainous regions of Manipur and Tripura in 1884 (Mackenzie: 1995). For Mackenzie “The North East frontier of Bengal is a term used sometimes to denote a boundary line, and sometimes more generally to describe a tract” (Rath & Acharya: 2018). Originally, the term continued a geographical concept, as well as during colonial period British rulers referred to Assam as the "North East Frontier of Bengal".

Historically, Northeast India as a distinct geographical region came into existence through a geopolitical mishap. The separation of Burma from the Indian subcontinent in 1937 and partition in 1947 created the region called "North East". Prior to partition, there was no idea of separate Northeastern region but it evolves over time. Every modern state endeavor to accomplish the objective of national integration through its policies and democratic means. However, integration is a major challenge especially in the plural and post-colonial society like India. Historically Indian experience of national integration has been characterized by both the solidarity and the risk of discontinuity. “Initially, Indian National Congress which was likely to assume the power from British was not against the right to self determination and even right to secession to the aggrieved constituents and agreed to prepare a constitution acceptable to the all section of the

society” and a “ federal one with residuary power vested in the units¹⁸”. But, frightened by growing number of cases it must be determined that the Congress can not consent to any proposition to deteriorate India through offering freedom to any segment state or regional unit to withdraw from the Indian Union. Therefore, post-independent Indian state wanted to acquire as much of British India as reasonably be expected and was not willing to accommodate with any part of India quitting India, despite the fact it expressed “it cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will” (Nag 1998:02).

In September 1945, Wavell had just guaranteed full self-government to India. But the final declaration came in February 1947 that they would leave India by June 1948. Now with the imminent lapse of British paramountcy, rulers of some princely state longed to return to their despotic way of retaining their sovereignty. In this circumstance, the task of nationalist government which had just taken over power from British was to curtail these disintegrative tendencies, merge them with the subcontinental territory and secure the territorial limit that they acquired from the British. A Ministry of the States was established under the leadership of Sardar Patel (Also recognised as Iron Man of India) for the reason. The “incorporation of Indian states took place in two phases: with a skillful combination of baits and threats of mass pressure”¹⁹. The primary “bait offered was that of very generous privy purses, while some princes were also made governors or Rajpramukhs” (Sarkar 1983:451). North East India was also part and parcel of this procedure of integration. Manipur, Tripura, and Khasi were the princely states. The Naga, Mizo and Arunachal Hills (NEFA) though not princely state, were excluded areas of British India. The British withdrawal turns out to be the most pivotal point of history for the Nagas, Mizo, and the Meiteis of North East India. When there was a clear sign that the British were to leave India soon, the minds of hill people were loaded with uncertainty and anxiety. Some of the inherent replies of tribal persons at the moment where the unification of the clan to protect their benefits as well as interests. To clarify their political ambitions, the Northeast Tribes first found

¹⁸ Nag, S. (1998). *India and Northeast India: Mind, politics and the process of integration, 1946-1950*. Regency:New Delhi, p-2.

¹⁹ Ibid, p03.

the Hill Leaders Union in Shillong in 1945, which aimed welfare and safety of the hilly region of Assam.

“The structure of their new consciousness and the political process of mobilization had massive repercussion on the state of their minds²⁰”. It created distinctive kinds of sentiments among various individual. For the Nagas the developing circumstance produced extreme fear that shifted to Indian majority rule, they would not be able to “sustain the reproduction of their social, cultural and biological system and whatever they had been able to establish by this time would also be taken away” (Nag 1998:54). For Mizo, circumstances created a trust that now they had the alternative to live under a social democratic framework. The Meiteis were suspicious and fearful about the Indians and what kind of rule it would introduce in Manipur. These arrangements of the fear, apprehensions, and hope were the central factor as far as to the question of their integration into India was concerned. After independence in 1947, with the expansion of Indian state and political institutions has been challenged and questioned by various extremist groups of the region. Arunachal Pradesh, formerly known as NEFA (North East Frontier Area) accomplished statehood in 1987, was a special case that did not avoid its integration into the Indian Union. The procedures of integration of the major Northeastern states are briefly described below.

3.1.1 Assam

Oral history ascribes the word Assam as a vulgar form of Sanskrit word ‘Asama’ meaning uneven. Sankaradeva, the eminent saint and socio-religious reformer of Assam, in his *Bhagavata Purana* written in Assamese during the early 16th century, popularised the name Asama (Rath & Acharya 2018:47). Historically the territory of Assam, home to various ethnic groups, has been a center of a number of social besides political upheavals since the British era. This was a point of convergence of the British Government for the integration of North East and political action of India after Independence. “After the conquest of Assam by British, the idea of Swadin Asom

²⁰Ibid.,p.03.

(Assam) came into existence, which further led by the farmers' agitations (1857-1858) due to an increase in tax rate” (Haokip 2012: 310). In more robust form it emerged after the unification of the Assamese nationalism on linguistic grounds. History of Assam was re-interpreted and rewritten and reconstructed by Assam's forces to build a theoretical basis, that Assam was always an independent nation. Misra (2013) argued that the "the concept of independent Assam" has been strengthened after the massive migration of East Bengal and the control of the land of agriculture and the disadvantage of the general public in Assam.

In these circumstances, the Assamese intellectuals put forward the need to protect the life of the Assamese land against outsiders invasion. The inability of the Congress to stand on the issue of continuous influx from East Pakistan and its attempt to force Assam to acknowledge the Cabinet Mission plan that pushed *Jathiya Mahasabha* to raise the voice for independent Assam. (Haokip 2012:310). The idea of “*Swadin Asom*” was propagated by various Assamese intellectuals in British India. The leading intellectual of Assam Jnananath Bora said that:

Kamrupa has always been a separate country and has now become the province of India. The history of our country is not the same as that of the other provinces of India, and there is no need to repeat that our culture and society have little in common with them. To this day, our people have not recognised our country as the province of India.

(Cited in Haokip 2012:311)

Bora maintained that the British were forcibly combined Assam into India, but Assamese continuously regarded themselves as an independent nation. Hence, Assam can not be part of India because of they are brought under a single executive unit under British India. He also blamed intellectuals among the Assamese for betrayed Assam's cause. The educated section amongst us have been trying to prove for a long time that since Assam has been under British administration for quite some time, it is naturally a province of British India...It is these people who are trying in different ways to turn our country into a province of India (Bora:1938 cited in Misra: 2013: 88). This statement is similar to the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) current viewpoint on the role of academicians in Assam who are regarded as Indian agents. The ULFA leadership has warned scholars that they should not act as New Delhi's operators. Their

complaints include loss of self-determination, Indian colonial attitude, manipulation, neglect, cultural anxiety, nativism as well as illegal migrants, and citizenship.

3.1.2 Nagaland

One of the staunchest resistances of integration into the Indian union comes from Naga Hill District. According to Nag (1998), Nagas were not the same people in the 1940s whom the British had conquered in the later parts of the 19th century. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, education had made great advancement in the life of Nagas which give rise to emerging small middle class among Nagas. The Naga Club was designed in 1918 with the support of the British, and this was "the first attempt to organise the political sentiment in the Naga Hills" (Misra 2013:29). The idleness of Naga club led the Deputy Commissioner Charles Paswey to form the Naga Hill District Tribal Council. Though, Naga Hills District Tribal Council did not last long because it was not a representative body of various tribes of Naga. To meet the quickly moving political situation, Tribal Council was reorganized as well as transformed into The Naga National Council at a meeting held by the representative of different tribes in Wokha in February 1946 (Nag 1998:23). It primarily aimed at representing Naga interest and mobilizing support to the British officers working for the community, political as well as cultural development of the Nagas.

In 1946, when Cabinet plan for a federal India was being examined and discussed, the Naga National Council stands "for the solidarity of Naga tribes and strongly protested against the grouping of Assam and Bengal and demanded that Naga Hill should be retained in an autonomous Assam in independent India with local autonomy". However, Nehru agreed to give autonomous status to Naga Hills under the province of Assam. But NNC was separated on the issue: One faction of NNC was pushing for an independent Naga homeland. Others preferred a mandatory status, with Great Britain as the guardian power (Haokip 2012: 309). However, at one point they were consistent that, the Nagas were not part of India and had to make the choice of the nature of their relations with India. Unsatisfied with Nehru's assurance of autonomy to the Naga Hills, the NNC demanded a Ten year "Interim Government" for the Nagas, to Advisory Group on Aboriginal tribes under the chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi (Nag 1998:71). However, Bordoloi was not convinced of the demand which creates a deadlock between NNC

and Committee on Aboriginal Tribes on the issue of autonomy and Naga's association with the guarding power. The gridlock was endeavored to be broken by the Hydari Agreement. Its introduction recognises "the rights of the Naga to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes"²¹.

According to Chaube (1973), the agreement also stated that all cases involving the Nagas within the Naga Hills should be tried through duly established Naga courts according to customary law. However, Hydari Agreement was approved by the Naga National Council with the majority vote, despite this fact, the extremist section (underneath the leadership of A.Z.Phizo) within NNC declined to acknowledge it by focusing ninth point of the Agreement that the Naga should be given the right to choose their future whether to be the part of Indian Union or to choose independence.

The moderate fraction under the leadership of Aliba Imti Ao and T.Sakhire within the Naga National Council soon lost ground as well as declares that the Nine Point of the agreement actually gave the rights to complete independence to Nagas. But, the government "interpreted the Agreement in the light that Nagas had the freedom only to suggest a revision of the administrative pattern after ten years, an interpretation which was unacceptable to the NNC"²². Extremist group leader A.Z. Phizo on July 19, 1947, went to meet Mahatma Gandhi with a five-member delegation. After the failed argument with Naga delegation, Gandhi said: "Nagas have every right to become independent" (Chaube 1973:144). Phizo in the wake of returning home on 14 August 1947, declared independence for Nagaland. Aliba Imti also visited Nehru to press the view of the NNC, where nothing considerable turned out from the gathering aside from Nehru asking Imti to acknowledge the Sixth Schedule. Phizo progress toward becoming the President of NNC in November 1949, and the moderates in the council was silenced and demand for Naga independence picked up force. The Naga leaders took the violent for attaining statehood for Nagaland and finally on Sep 1962, the Parliament passed the Thirteenth Amendment Act, 1962 to provide the formation of Nagaland as the sixteenth state of the Republic of India.

²¹Chaube, S. K. (1973). *Hill Politics in Northeast India*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

²²Ibid,p.144.

3.1.3 Manipur

Historically Manipur was a princely state until the Anglo-Manipur war of 1891, succeeding it originated underneath British control. But, with the lapse of British paramountcy on 15 August 1947, The Maharaja of Manipur gained full control of administration once again after 86 years (Nag 1998:99). At this juncture, Manipur was at a very critical point of its history. On the one hand, it witnessed a massive demand for responsible government and on the other side, there was preparation underway among the Congressites to effect its merger with Indian Union²³. Hijam Irabot, a communist pioneer of Manipur, was one of the forerunners in mobilizing people. In 1946, Irabot along with Longjam Bimol established a political party of Manipur known as "Praja Sangh". Irabot wanted Self-governing Manipur through its individual Parliament, Constitution as well as Cabinet. Rather than the monarchical framework, he wanted a government of the people to rule the state based on a socialist pattern of society (Chatradhari 1993: 34). Those who did not subscribe to Irabot's ideas formed a new political party known as Manipur Congress to counter Irabot's movement²⁴.

In 1947, the Constitution of Manipur was framed under the leadership of Pearson, the president of the Manipur State Durbar. "Under the provisions of the Manipur Constitution Act of 1947, assembly elections were held in 1948". In this election, no political party could secure a clear cut majority. However, Congress emerged as the biggest party. Therefore a non-congress alliance government was formed and Maharaja Kumar Priyabrata Singh became the first Chief Minister. The election result gave a jolt to the aspiration of Congressites. It also sealed the idea of "Purbanchal Pradesh" (Nag: 1998:100). But people opposed to the idea of Purbanchal Pradesh which made the situation tense. At a public meeting held on 18 September, all the leaders of both the hills as well as plains strongly oppose the move and declared that the people of Manipur would resist any type of imposition of the proposed province. The Manipur Congress similarly launched a movement aimed the merger of Manipur with India²⁵.

²³Nag,1998.

²⁴Haokip, T. (2012). Political integration of northeast India: A historical analysis. *Strategic Analysis*, 36(2),p.308.

²⁵Ibid.,p.308.

Akbar Hydari Governor of Assam visited Manipur to measure the situation and investigate likelihood integration of Manipur into India. By the visit of Hydari to Manipur, Government of India took the perspective of the king and its people. Dhabalo Singh, the Leader of the ruling party in Manipur, inscribed a memorandum to the king on December 17, 1948, stating his wish to continue with the Manipur king as constitutional head and its sovereignty (Haokip 2012:308). Because of its worries about the overall global circumstance, particularly the communist uprising in Burma, the Manipur State Congress adopted a resolution favoring strongly the merger of Manipur into Indian Union. In September 1949 the Maharaja of Manipur was invited in Shillong to talk with regards to the merger with India. On the first day of the meeting, an already prepared “Merger Agreement” was placed before the Maharaja by Akbar Hydari, whereby Manipur would be merged Manipur into the Indian Union (Haokip 2012:313). The Maharaja asserted that the agreement could not be accepted without consulting the Cabinet.

According to Haokip (2012), the Maharaja of Manipur was positioned underneath house arrest as well as barred from any correspondence with the external world. The Maharaja was in this way compelled to sign the 'Merger Agreement' with India on September 21, 1949. However, the merger agreement was signed on 21 September 1949 under strictures from the Home Ministry. But, the merger was officially announced on the 15th Oct 1949 when the Maharaja was back to Imphal. With that Manipur ceased to be an independent Monarchy and become a 'Part C state' of the Indian Union (Nag:1998:111). The way in which the merger was achieved has left a residual bitterness. Many rebel groups regarded merger as illegitimate as well as illegal, and many Manipuri intellectuals, are bitter about the way it was effected. (Baruah 2001:48).

3.1.4 Mizoram

The rapid political changes of the 1940s created political awareness among the Mizos too. Fearing for their future and their uncertainty, the Mizo intelligentsia realised the necessity of their own political party and which would determine the course of their future (Chaube 1973:25). Therefore, they established their First political party; Mizo Common People's Union (1946), which later became the Mizo Union. The Mizo Union was a primary political party in the Leh Lushai Hills and had a program of social change in Mizo society, against the rule of tribal chiefs. As far as Mizo was concerned, both the Mizo Union which was a new political party and other

District Conference, comprising of the leading member of Mizo society claimed to be representative organizations (Nag 1998:83). The Bordoloi Committee recognised the Mizo Union as the sole characteristic body of the Lushai Hills as well as invited the Union to become a member of the Subcommittee.

Joining the sub-committee had essential ramifications for the Mizos. The Mizos have no delegates in Constituent Assembly yet the Bordoloi Committee was a vital part of the Constituent Assembly and its suggestions were going to be included while making the Constitution of India. Henceforth joining the sub-committee would imply consent to merge into Indian Union. This activated open debate among the Mizo Union leadership as well as they were separated into two factions on this issue. The Pro-India group (left-wing) led by Vanthuama. The anti-merger group (right wing) was led by Pachunga. The right-wing in their memorandum stated that the Mizos not same as the rest of Indians inside and out subsequently their position would not be secure if they merged into Indian Union. Henceforth they needed to be left in indistinguishable status from they were preceding the British success of the Mizo hills, i.e., independent. Thus the memorandum of the right wing made the official demand for independence for the first time. However, on September 24, 1946, Mizo Union passed a resolution to merge of the Lushai Hills with the Indian in its first General Assembly to be held in Kulikwan, Aizawal.

In July 1947 the United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO) was established in response to Mizo Union. One of the key goals of UMFO began a movement to join Burma. Their main argument was that Mizos were ethnically and linguistic close to Burma, therefore it would be more beneficial to join Burma as it was smaller than India that would give Mizos a voice in political matters

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The poor management of famine of 1959- 1960 and inadequate measures created exceptional dissatisfaction among Mizos. It combined with the burden of the Assamese as the official state language, quickened "politics of negativity". In 1960, the Mizo National Famine Front was designed to embrace help task which later transformed into a political party in October 1961 by Laldeenga. The party's aim was to gain independence for Greater Mizoram. In July 1971,

Government of India promised to convert Mizo Hills into a Union Territory. Mizo leaders were ready to accept the offer on the pre-requisite that Union territory would be upgraded to a full state. On January 21, 1972, the Union Territory of Mizoram was formed. After a long discussion with the Union Government, the MNF agreed to become a state of Indian Union. Therefore, the state of Mizoram was formed on February 20, 1987.

3.1.5 Tripura

Historically like Manipur, Tripura was a royal kingdom dominated by tribal population. During the British rule, Tripura did not originate below British rule, nevertheless, the King paid tribute consistently and Tripura was considered as a princely state of British India. Throughout the partition of Bengal in 1897, many Bengali Hindus traveled to the state as well as occupied the plains (Haokip 2012:313). Even after independence, the migration of individuals from Bangladesh continued. In 1947, for example, the Tripuri population accounted for over 85% of the population is presently under 30 percent.

Historically the Royal kingdom of Tripura was never part of India. Three months before India's independence, Bir Bikram, last independent king passed away On May 17, 1949. The situation was so dramatic when the British left India, there was a rumor that the Muslims were being evicted from neighboring East Pakistan and conspired to merge Tripura with East Pakistan. As a condition of India's aid, Tripura merger agreement was approved by the "Queen of Tripura" Kanchan Prabhadevi in September 1947, and its final merger with India effected from October 15, 1949. Accordingly, Tripura became a 'Part C State' of Indian Union, was administered by a Chief Commissioner as its Administrative Head. From November 1, 1956, Tripura remained the Union Territory when it acquired full statehood on January 21, 1972.

3.1.6 Meghalaya

Meghalaya, which actually signifies 'abode of clouds' in Sanskrit, comprises Khasi, Jaintia as well as Garo Hills. Historically, British conquered Khasi Hills in 1833, the Jaintia Hills in 1835, as well as the Garo Hills in 1872–73 (Haokip 2012:312). The British government recognised 25 Khasi states and categorised them as semi-independent and dependent. The emergence of political activity in these hills in the early twentieth century influenced the rulers of the states to

establish the Federation of Khasi States in 1934. Since 1945 when the tribal people of North East India began to show more enthusiasm for their own future, the Khasi, Jaintia, as well as Garo people, also raised their voice. A meeting in Shillong, which was attended by most of the prominent people, categorically opposed their inclusion either in India or Pakistan. On 8 August 1947, The Federation of Khasi states agreed to consent into the Indian Union on three terms: defense, communication, as well as Foreign policy²⁶. Khasi states with effect from August 15, 1947, also signed a Standstill Agreement which guarantees that all the existing authoritative measures between the province of Assam, the Union, and the Khasi States shall remain in force for two years or until the point when new or changed arrangement would be landed at. On December 2, 1947, equipped through an order from Delhi, Akbar Hydari asked the Khasi chief to sign the Instrument of Accession, which they later did. After the executive order as well as the Declaration of the Constitution of India, the integration of the Khasi State into Indian Union was completed (Haokip: 2012: 312). The Assam Reorganization (Meghalaya) Act of 1969 gave Meghalaya an autonomous state with effect from April 2, 1970, including the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District and Garo Hills District (Haokip 2012: 312). In this way, with the passing of North Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act 1971, Meghalaya becomes a full state of India on January 21, 1972.

3.2 Emergence of Northeasterners: as an identity

When we visualize India's Northeast what comes to our mind are the rhinos of Kaziranga, the rain clouds of Meghalaya, the bamboo handicrafts and lovely handloom dress material, the orchids and last but not the least, the tea gardens (Kachhal 2018:05). However, the North East is not just about the lovely places of interest, remarkably crafted works or its well-disposed individuals; it is a region with a substance of its own. This territory is ethnically particular from other parts of India. The area is identified by the dominance of the Tibeto-Burman languages. In self-governing India, the eastern Himalayas, as well as Brahmaputra valleys in the Indo-Myanmar suburbs, including Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya besides Sikkim, are recognised as a single topographical unit. This is the political

²⁶ Ibid.

procedure and administrative suitability that legitimised this region as “Northeast India²⁷”. The British pioneers were the first to popularise the idea of a “Northeastern frontier” after they colonised Brahmaputra valley as well as encompassing slope area on the Indo-Burma border. At first, the idea remained a geological one; it was politically formulated in 1972 when the North East Council (NEC) was formed by order of the President. Therefore, “Northeast” turns out as a single coherent analytical unit of governance, through administrative practices and with the enactment of special governance institutions such as the Northeast Council as well as Ministry of Development Northeastern Region (Wouters and Subba: 2013:06). Even the term “North East” as an analytical category additionally achieve the significance in light of India’s look policy. Accordingly, throughout the years, this geological entity, social setting, economy, legislative issues, as well as desires of the traditional ethnic gatherings of the area were packed together into one unit. In this way alluding these eight states of the area as "Northeast" in administrative and Policymaking fortified the “Northeast” and “Northeasterners” as an identity in the brains of the general population.

Generally, the term “Northeast” Usually applied at all levels of the discourse to refer to Northeastern states of India. However, the clubbing together of the region in one basket, or question of single Northeast identity, continued to be questioned and critiques by some scholars, academicians, and others (Ngaihte 2017:38). In reference to the creation of “Northeast” or Northeastern as an identity there are two contending paradigms, viz., the ‘apologists’ and the ‘Sceptics’.

For sceptics, the Northeastern states are not one identity. The core argument of sceptics is based on the diversity of the region, which is not worth putting in one basket. They considered that using the term “Northeast” for whole Northeastern states, led to disregard or unnoticed the rich diversity of the region (Ngaihte & Hanghal 2017:39). Sceptics question the rationality behind putting Northeast region below one broad label on every problem. Udayon Misra (2013), a prominent skeptic also argued that the utilisation of the term "North East" is tricky because as the region represents the various culture and does not consider itself as one compact unit. For Haokip (2012), the tendency between scholars and policymakers to combine all Northeastern

²⁷Shimray, U. A. (2004). Socio-political unrest in the region called Northeast India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(42), 4637-4643

states into “Northeast” and use of the word as an analytical unit for the whole region can be questioned in terms of its practical relevance. Historian Manorama Sharma also stated that “The Northeastern states of India may be looked upon as a political unit for purpose of administrative convenience by the Government of India, but historically at no point of time it has been a political unit either culturally, economically or politically²⁸”. She further stated that each state and each tribe has different historical experiences. Therefore using “Northeast” as a single analytical category to describe Northeastern states leads to ignorance of the rich diversity of minority communities of the region²⁹. For sceptics, it is an elusive perception of the Indian policy makers, social scientists, and mainstream media to consider Northeast as a homogenous unit occupied by people of Mongoloid race. But actually, the region is far from being homogenous. Therefore unique culture and history of each individual of the Northeast cannot be skirted while dealing with the Northeastern states of India, and any endeavor to club all together as the Northeast should be avoided.

If sceptic’s argument in reference to questioning the existence of pan Northeast identity is true, then it becomes necessary to question that what are the elements that shaped the “Northeast” and “Northeasterners” as an identity in academic and mainstream discourse? The answer to this question came from the apologist side. For apologist, there is a solid presence of Northeast identity. The premise of their argument is based on the Northeast presence as a concept and a legitimate word used in all levels of debate. They firmly hold that “acceptance as being a Northeasterner is very much visible among the people of the region, which no authority can deny” (Ngaihte & Hanghal 2017:39). Their stand is additionally reinforced by the Indian state itself. The Indian state is amongst the prominent advocator of one Northeast identity. Another important question by this debate raise is how Northeast or Northeastern took the form of pan Northeast identity?

The seeds of pan Northeast identity can be found in protest events to resist the physical violence regime in a city like Delhi where people from different Northeastern states, tribes, clan come

²⁸Sharma, M. (2004). Socio-economic history in pre-colonial Northeast India: Trends, problems and possibilities. Cited in Haokip (2012) In There a Pan-Northeast Identity and Solidarity? *Economic and Political Weekly*, 47(36), pp. 84.

²⁹Ibid.

together to demonstrate solidarity. This collective protest, emotions generate a collective sense of belonging and solidarity. Social media in modern times also had emerged as a tool of solidarity and generating a pan Northeast identity. This can be verified in case of Loitam Richard incident that took place Bangalore in 2012. After Loitam Richard was killed in the hostel room, social networking media was utilised to register protest and resentment, and solidarity movement (Ngaihte & Hanghal: 2017:46). Therefore in spite of criticism, the truth of the matter is that the “Northeast” Identity is a rising reality which can be seen in the forms of North-East Student Unions, Northeast Help Centers³⁰.

3.3 Ethnicity and socio-political unrest in Northeast India

In Northeast India, the ethnic profile is very complex because of multi-ethnicity and diverse social-cultural settings. Ethnicity exhibits a kind of culture, etymological and religious profile not to exist in any other part of India. Ethnicity as a concept refers to “a sense of identity or a feeling of belongingness to a particular community”. According to Brass (1991), “Ethnicity as an idea also involves a claim to status and recognition either as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups”. Ethnicity exemplifies both a positive and negative perspective. On the positive side, it includes an appreciation of one’s particular social roots in a community and socio-cultural group without deriding others. Then again, a negative perspective makes it tricky for social harmony and peace in the multicultural social order. The negative angle reflected in political instability, which has tormented various multiethnic societies around the world. Karna (1991) said that the procedure of ethnic identity construction in Northeast India was built on the thought of larger group formation. Endeavors were made to unite different small gatherings to project a unified identity which later brought forth the development of ethnic personality in a contiguous geological area³¹. By distinguishing between race and ethnicity, Cornell and Hartman (2006) argue that race is based on physical characteristics, which are thought to be fixed,

³⁰Wouters, J. J., & Subba, T. B. (2013). The “Indian face,” India's Northeast, and “The idea of India”. *Asian Anthropology*, 12(2), 126-140.

³¹Karna, M N (1991): 'Ethnic identity and socio-economic process in Northeastern India in Shimray, U. A. (2004). Socio-political unrest in the region called Northeast India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 47(36),4637-4643.

whereas ethnicity can be defined by perceived common ancestry, history, culture practices which are seen as more fluid and self-asserted rather than assigned by others³².

The process of ethnic consolidation and social movement can be learned from the states of Nagaland and Manipur. In Naga society, there are numbers of ethnic-based organisations which represent the various ethnic groups of Nagaland for example “Naga Hoho”, Naga Student Federation (NSF), and Naga people movement for Human Rights (NPMHR). These Naga social associations are not confined to state political boundaries. The associations such the All Manipuri Students Union (AMSU), All Manipuri United Club Organization (AMUCO), United Committee of Manipuri (UCM) and Meira Paibee (Meitei women organization) represents the Meitei community (Shimray 2004:4637). Every ethnic group has its own respective organization- for instance, Khasi, Garo, Boro, Naga, Mizo, Kuki, Meitei, Karbi, Dimasa, Assamese, etc. Not only ethnic-based social organizations but also most of the ethnic groups in the state have insurgent groups. The region witnessed inter-ethnic conflicts frequently sponsored by their particular insurgent groups. In the Indian context, ethnicity is not only an important part of reality but also a source of many problematic issues.

In modern times, the region has experienced an increase in social movement built on ethnic politics & consolidation (Shimray: 2004:4639). And such an emergence of ethnic assertion and contest aimed at political authority poses serious social-political issues. The social-political turmoil in the Northeast is not recent but it has a long history. After independence, the region experienced social clash and development of ethnic-based insurgent activities. India’s state formation process has involved a number of ethnic secessionist insurgencies in several peripheral Northeastern states of Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, Tripura, & Meghalaya. Conflicts in the region can be broadly classified in the following types:

3.3.1 National conflicts

It involves the idea of a separate ‘homeland’ like a distinct state & pursuit of the realisation of that aim through its votaries. In the mid-1940s the idea of Naga nation was developed. Hence it began a battle, which has gone on for more than 50 years. The Naga people group was the first to challenge the nation-building and political process in independent India (Shimray: 2004:4640).

³²Cornell, S., & Hartmann, D. (2006). *Ethnicity and race: Making identities in a changing world*. Delhi:Sage.

In the long run, the battle took the insurrectionary forms in the mid-1950s. In 1960s numerous extremist groups belonging to Mizo, the Meities of Manipur and tribals from Tripura joined the Nagas in pursuing guerrilla fighting against New Delhi. Today there are various ethnic-based insurgents (Table: 3.1) demanding political self-determination and autonomy.

Table 3.1: List of major insurgent groups operating in the Indo- Myanmar Frontier

S.No	Insurgent Groups	Ethnic Groups
1.	National Socialist Council of Nagalim (IM)-NSCN(IM)	Nagas
2.	Non-Accordist faction of Naga National Council (NNC-NA)	Nagas
3.	People Liberation Army (PLA)	Meities
4.	United National Liberation Front (UNLF)	Meities
5.	Manipur Naga Revolutionary Front	Meities
6.	Kanglei Yaol Kanna Lup (KYKL)	Meities
7.	Kuki National Army (KNA)	Thadou-Kuki
8.	United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)	Assamese
9.	Hmar National Army	Hmar
10.	Naga Rengma Hills Protection Force (NRHPF)	Naga
11.	Kuki National Front(KNF)	Kuki
12.	National Liberation Front of Tripura	Tripurri
13.	Hmar People Convention (HPC)	Hmar
14.	Achik National Liberation Army (ANLA)	Garo

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal: 2019

3.3.2 Conflicts between Nagas and Kukis

The region not only witnessed movement for separate distinct Homeland but also has a long history of intra-ethnic conflict between various ethnic groups of the region. The underlying rationale behind most of the intra-ethnic conflicts in the region is “ethnic political aspirations and the effort to protect local territories and resources”. For instance-the Sardar hills issue always remains a bone of dispute between Nagas and Kukis. In another case, in 1992, the region has witnessed notorious Naga- Kuki clashes, hundreds of people were killed and thousands of home and villages of both communities were destroyed (Shimray: 2004:4640).

A sub-regional conflict involves movements that are often called upon to acknowledge sub-regional goals & frequently emerged in direct conflict with the State Governments or even the Autonomous Councils. face through conflict using national governments or autonomous bodies. After independence, most of the Indian states were reorganized on the linguistic pattern to establish a fit between ethnicity, territoriality, and regional aspirations. In the state where culture was homogeneous, the linguistic pattern ended language conflicts within the states. But, in culturally heterogeneous states, the linguistic pattern gave a boost to new conflicts (Baruah 1986:128). In this manner, the principle of the linguistic state became problematic in the case of Assam. In the 1960s the state administration of Assam declared “Assamese” as the official language of the state on the basis of thin majority. The imposition of Assamese language & culture upon Non-Assamese speaking tribes generates strong resistance and separatist movement in the region which ultimately generate socio-political unrest in the region.

3.3.3 Illegal Migration

The major factor of socio-political turmoil in the Northeast is illegal migration-related problems particularly in Assam, Mizoram, Tripura, and Arunachal Pradesh. In the Assam movement of 1979, illegal migration from neighboring Bangladesh emerged as a prominent issue which has affected social harmony in the region. Sabari and Dabesh (1999), before the partition of India, the migrants to the region came mostly from rest of India but in the post-partition period, the fraction of migrants from outside of India was found to be larger. It is estimated that in post-1971

approximately 12 million Bangladeshis have illegally migrated into the various states of Northeast India³³. Similarly, it has been observed that migrants from Bangladesh mainly came for an economic reason but political reason also plays some role. This illegal migration particularly from Bangladesh into the region has threatened the local tribal's sociocultural system and created burden over the economy and natural resources. The fear of assimilation and dissemination gradually gave rise to xenophobia in the local population. (Shimray: 2004:4642). In sum, illegal migrants into the Northeast region have largely changed the ethnic composition of the population. Such streams have certainly posed a direct threat towards the social-cultural uniqueness of the native population.

3.4 Development projects and displacement in the region

The term “development” is the most debated concept of the 21st century where it has a different meaning for different people. The trajectory of development in contemporary economic system uphold the interconnection between two profound paradoxical ideas, i.e. the continued engagement of government in reconstructing the realm of economic growth with the expansion of industrialisation process in the form of building up of large-scale dams, setting up of industrial zones, mining projects and power plants to generate more energy resources, electricity and so on. But at the same time, government institutions remain ignorant towards the plight of millions of people who are being displaced from their indigenous habitats & never being properly rehabilitated again.

Theoretically, the term “development” has been defined in various ways. Amartya Sen (2003) identifies development as building capability. Capability approach perceives human life as a set of “doing” and “beings” and relates not only to the evaluation of the standard of living but also to the assessment of capability to function. Sen (1999) has established a close link between income and capability, for instance, low level of income can be a major reason for illiteracy and ill-health, and one can attain better prospects of life with the development of individual capability which will lead to better income and subsequently to improve the standard of living & quality of

³³ Report of the Group of Ministers on National Security, 2001, p. 13.

life. For N. Somorendro Singh (2006) “A developed situation means people not only have the necessity of life, but equal opportunities are available to all”. From the state, perspective development may be creating mega-dams, highways, industries, power plants. Therefore the development as a process becomes the matter of contestation.

In the context of Northeast India, political and administrative integration has been largely achieved but the economic and emotional integration of the region with the mainland is still a challenging task³⁴. India’s Northeast India is rich in terms of natural resources which include resources like, petroleum oil and natural gas, food grains, horticulture produce and forest product included rubber, medicinal herbs, can, and bamboo³⁵. But despite having rich natural resources the region remains underdeveloped and backward. Historically from the British period, the Northeast was a storehouse of raw materials such as coal, natural oil, forest and tea (Wadhwa: 2018:12). There was mass extraction of these assets which were then traded to different parts of the nation for processing. This region did not get advantage from this procedure as the British did not setup processing and manufacturing unit here, nor did they give careful consideration towards the advancement of transportation and communication facilities in the region. With the partition of India in 1947, for an extensive stretch of time, trade with Bangladesh (East Pakistan) came to stop which genuinely harmed the financial and development capability of the region. This widened the gap between the Northeast area and the rest of India.

In the constitutional framework, India is a federal country where each state has the autonomy to take decision-related to their state development agenda. According to Baruah (2003) India’s Northeast region, the union government had a monopoly in the decision making and implementation of the development projects from above. Maximum Northeastern states have few sources of income. They are "special category" states, which mainly dependent on central government financial support. They are given 90 percent grants and 10 percent loans. For him, a large degree of reliance on the central government for funds also means that most “development projects are designed and funded far away from the region, with little likelihood of reflecting a

³⁴Singh, N. S. (2006). Integration and development in Northeast India: An assessment. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 67(2) 329-342.

³⁵Ibid,p.334.

local vision of prospect and these state government have little power vis a vis New Delhi”(Hussain 2008:86).

Generally, it is postulated that economic development brings not only qualitative change in the life of the general population but it similarly degrades the socio-economic and cultural lives of several marginalized sections of society³⁶. Therefore contemporary development process has its beneficiaries and victims. In terms of developmental projects, planning and implementation in regards to “Northeast India” central government’s top-down approach play a crucial role and ignore the local wisdom. Consequently, it resulted in unbalanced economic development which contributed towards unbalancing human lives and community structure. In order to understand this underrated and largely ignored area, we need to bind ourselves explicitly to locate the development induced displacement of the population.

In post-independent India, the Union Government has started various developmental projects. But in contrary to some developmental projects, people’s rights are being disrupted by the state. Monirul Hussain (2008) highlights various sector of development which has generated large scale displacement in the Northeast region such as security establishment, hydropower projects, and projects related to transportation. It was the Indo-China war of 1962, which shows India’s critical condition into this area. Since then as a part of its security threats perception and defense requirement, the postcolonial state established camps and containments to station armed forces in various parts of the region. In light of such political and state-driven security necessity, the Indian state has procured land for defense and security reason, in the process large numbers of ordinary citizens got displaced by the state.

India’s Northeast region has been considered the country’s future powerhouse because of its hydroelectric generation potential. India’s Government had recently approved the construction of 145 mega dams to harness the hydroelectric possibility of the area by changing Northeast India into India’s powerhouse. But unluckily this development has arrived as a “homogenizing entity of the capitalist development machine, with complete disregard for the people, ethnicity, culture,

³⁶Hussain, M. (2008). *Interrogating development: State, displacement and popular resistance in North East India* (Vol. 1) New Delhi:Sage.

history, and geography of this region” (Ferguson 1990). Therefore, it has generated multiple issues in the region. In early 1960, the Assam state government established three thermal power stations named Chandrapur thermal power station (CTPS), Namrup thermal power station (NTPS) and Bongaigaon power station (BTPS). These three power stations have displaced several thousand people mostly tribal. All these projects aiming at the generating power affected powerless tribal of both Hills and Plains of Assam severely (Hussain:2008). The Paglidiya dam project in Assam has seen vast confrontation by an unorganized group known as “*Jivan Aru Jivikar Nirapatta*” (the safety of life and livelihood) (Bharali: 2009:135). As per latest and informal assessments, it will dislodge more than 50,000 individuals and 5000 families into 38 villages³⁷. The submergence territory part of proposed Bodo region, the Bodo Territorial Council (BTC). Therefore the Bodo tribal people who are being affected by these mega-dam projects in Assam.

In the case of the Tipaimukh dam in Manipur, the dam is mainly built to prevent flooding in the Chachar plains of Assam. In Manipur, 275.5 sq km of land is submerged. Two tribal communities in the region will be mainly affected by the Hmars of Churachandpur and Zeliangrong Nagas in Tamenglong district. Approximately 15,000 people will be directly affected by this dam and the “Hmar and Zeliangrong people will lose their ancestral rights to land and natural resources which is the backbone of their tribal economies” (Ranjan: 2003: 79)

Apart from mega-dams and security establishment, rapid urbanization is another factor which has contributed towards development-induced displacement in the region. With the creation of Meghalaya in 1973, the Government of Assam chose towards move capital from Shillong near Guwahati. For this, the government required a large tract of land to built up another capital and that too very rapidly, here the choice of state fell on a cluster of the tribal villages adjoining to Guwahati city. For the state, it was moderately easy to uproot the tribals than the developed area of the non-tribals. Thus Bodo needs to pay the cost of development of new capital. The construction of new capital has displaced more than 10,000 people nearly all of them tribals (Hussain: 2008:88). In this whole procedure, tribals were denied the advantages of urbanisation,

³⁷Chowdhury, A. R., & Kipgen, N. (2013). Deluge amidst conflict: Hydropower development and displacement in the Northeast region of India. *Progress in Development Studies*, 13(3), 195-208.

appropriate compensation, and rehabilitation. Gita Bharali (2009) says the projects, have displaced 50-60 million people in post-colonial India. Only 25% of DPs were partially rehabilitated, some were compensated and others were neglected. Therefore, a large proportion of them was destroyed for the sake of national development, by depriving them of their right to live with dignity.

To sum up, we can say that, the impact of these development ventures is not just constrained to the financial angle however it has a direct effect upon the cultural and social existences of dislodged people. Instead of empowering the ordinary citizens living in the peripheral region through its development activities and projects, the state has disempowered them to a considerable extent. Thus the issue of citizen rights and progress must be appropriately addressed & acceptable consideration must be rewarded towards the demands and aspiration of people.

Chapter: 4

Actually existing regime of racism, social discrimination, and exclusion

4.1 Globalisation and neoliberal India

In the twenty-first century, the term “Globalisation” has emerged as widely discussed and used in the academic discourse. The term has been defined by various people in several manners. But simply it is understood as the integration of economies and societies through the cross country flow of information, ideas, technologies, goods, services, capital, finance, and people. In economic terms, globalisation is the dominant driving force which has generated ample source of economic opportunity in many parts of the world. These economic opportunities have attracted the international as well as internal migration in several major cities of the world. In the Indian context, liberalisation of the economy since the 1990s has opened the door for private investment, large scale consumer based production and service sector. This Indian drive of LPG not only connected the Indian cities to the world market network but also transformed the nature and prospect of major Indian cities. David Harvey (2007) defines neoliberalism as a “ theory of political- economic practice that proposes that human well being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free market, and free trade³⁸”. In this situation, the state's primary role is to deliver infrastructure to support and functioning of the markets.

In the case of India, neoliberalism has transformed the nature of the Indian state from Nehruvian socialism to state as a facilitator of private investment and market (McDuie-Ra 2012:118). The neoliberal transformation of Indian cities (especially Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Hyderabad, and Bangalore) not only attracts FDI in India but also boost the flow of migration from a rural area to urban centers. As most of the benefits attached to the LPG are extracted by the major Indian metropolitan cities, therefore, every individual did not get the equal benefit of the liberalisation of the Indian economy. Hence it creates the situation like “core-periphery model” where few Indian cities become the hub of manufacturing, service sector industries and other remain only underdeveloped by providing manpower, raw materials, and other resources to the metropolis

³⁸Harvey, D. (2007). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

cities. Therefore this core-periphery kind of relationship enhanced the migration from various part of the country to metropolis cities in seeking more robust economic opportunities.

In the case of India's Northeast region, it is the region of the country which remains underdeveloped from a very long time because of its peculiar geographical location and ignorance by the national leadership. This underdevelopment and poorly governed situation in the region give space for migration from the area. Generally, those migrating outside the region went to cities much closer to the frontier including, Calcutta and Siliguri in West Bengal (McDuaie-Ra 2012:1630). But after the post-liberalisation period, this pattern has been changed. Now, maximum migrants from Northeastern states of India preferred Delhi and Bangalore as the destination for migration.

This pattern is supported by the latest survey information by the North East Support Centre and Helpline, which put the number of Northeast migrants in Delhi at approximately 200,000 people and this accounts for 48.21 percent of the total population of northeast migrants in Indian cities (NESCH 2011:10). This report also notes that the number of Northeast migrants has increased twelve times in the post-liberalisation period. This trend raised a very serious question that what are the major factors which enhanced the flow of migration from the Northeast region to the urban center of neoliberal India? cities the? To understand this changing pattern we have to look into the prevailing situation and circumstances of the region.

There are multiple factors that have intensified the flow of migration in the post-liberalisation period. One of the most important determinants behind the flow of migration from Northeastern states to urban metropolis is the educational opportunities available in the city like Delhi, Hyderabad. It is generally accepted that, despite having high literacy rate (Table: 4.1) in the Northeastern states in comparison to national literacy rate (74.04%), the region is facing the issues of lack of adequate resources and quality education. According to a report by NESCH, approximately 66.35 percent of the migration from the Northeast region to metropolitan cities of India is for the education purpose only (Ramesh 2012:2). In comparison to other parts of India, Northeastern states have a very limited presence of government-funded universities and other higher education institutions in the region (Table: 4.2). Along with this fact, the lack of quality higher education in the region is another important determinant that motivates students to migrate from the region to metropolitan cities. However, there is decimal growth in a number of

colleges and universities since 2011, but it is not sufficient to enroll all the student of the region. consequently, it resulted in migration from the region to metropolitan cities.

Table: 4.1

Comparison of state-wise literacy of North East India according to 2001 and 2011 Census

State	Literacy rate of 2001			Literacy rate of 2011		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Arunachal Pradesh	54.3	63.8	43.5	65.40	72.60	57.70
Assam	63.3	71.3	54.6	72.20	77.80	66.30
Manipur	70.5	80.3	60.5	76.94	83.58	70.26
Meghalaya	62.6	65.4	59.6	74.40	76	72.90
Mizoram	88.8	90.7	86.7	91.30	93.30	89.30
Nagaland	66.6	71.2	61.5	79.60	82.80	76.10
Sikkim	68.8	76	64.4	81.40	86.60	75.60
Tripura	73.2	81	64.9	87.20	91.50	82.70

Source: Statistical Year Book of Manipur 2016, Directorate of Economic and Statistics,
Government Of Manipur

There is similarly a mismatch between the demand of the labour market and the weak education system to meet the requirement of the new economic industries and service sector³⁹. These conditions, combined with deficient economic infrastructure have a direct impact on the migration decision of goal-oriented youth. This generally comprehended that a decent extent of this youth preferred to live in an urban center after education, aimed at business or employment purpose. According to report by Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network and North East India Women Initiative for Peace, out of total people who move outside the Northeast, around 85 percent numbering 275,250 left to pursue higher education while 15 percent numbering 139,600 went out in pursuit of employment (Bezbaruah: 2014).

³⁹Lyndem, B.& De, U. K. (Eds.). (2004). *Education in North East India: Experience and Challenge*. Concept.

Table: 4.2

State-wise number of Universities in North East India, 2010-11 to 2015-16

State	No. of Universities					
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Arunachal Pradesh	3	3	3	7	8	9
Assam	9	9	12	18	19	21
Manipur	3	3	3	3	3	4
Meghalaya	9	10	10	10	10	10
Mizoram	3	3	3	3	3	3
Nagaland	4	4	4	4	4	4
Sikkim	6	6	6	6	7	7
Tripura	3	3	3	3	3	9
NER	40	41	44	54	57	67

Source: North East Databank Portal: 2019

Considering the poor infrastructure of the higher educational institution in the region, Delhi becomes the most preferred location for migration. Delhi is the home for the best universities in India and a place where the preparation of Indian bureaucracy can be done.

The bleak employment opportunity into the local labour market is the second significant factor which is responsible for the migration of youth from the region. In spite of having rich natural resources, the region is still largely dominated by the agrarian economy, poor industrial base and lack of infrastructure and very low presence of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) (Table: 1.3). The poor industrial base is not adequate to provide employment to the aspiring youth in the region(4.3). Therefore a large number of people are dependent upon the economic opportunities provided by the public sector companies. Because of a limited number of opportunity in these public sector companies, the competition for the job is very high in the Northeast. Hence a large number of educated youth is compelled to migrate for seeking employment in other parts of the country. However, the migration trend from the entire Northeastern states is not similar. According to the Census of 2001, Assam (28510), Nagaland

(51857), Manipur (30867) and Mizoram (31739) were the largest contributor in out-flow migration, while on the other side, Sikkim contributes very less in comparison to other Northeastern states. The underlying reason for the high rate of migration from these four states (Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram) is the insurgency activities, instability, poor infrastructure, and socio-political unrest. These factors not only created the instability in the region but also an “environment of fear” in the minds of civilians. While on the other side, Sikkim has recorded less number of insurgency activities, and stability compared to other Northeastern states. Therefore Sikkim has witnessed less migration from the state.

Table 4.3

State-wise Number of Factories, 1990-91 to 2015-16

Year	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Nagaland	Sikkim	Tripura	NER	India
1990-91	1548	60	32	50	-	242	1932	110179
1991-92	1625	63	29	63	-	200	1980	112286
1992-93	1708	73	32	68	-	222	2103	119494
1993-94	1435	32	29	96	-	168	1760	121594
1994-95	1514	74	30	85	-	157	1860	123010
1995-96	1631	78	39	154	-	202	2104	134571
1996-97	1534	74	41	165	-	218	2032	132678
1997-98	1861	77	43	165	-	243	2389	135551
1998-99	1424	65	25	145	-	206	1865	131706
1999-00	1647	61	27	147	-	206	2088	131558
2000-01	1435	59	30	129	-	239	1892	131268
2001-02	1421	61	34	117	-	240	1873	128549
2002-03	1531	44	41	119	-	259	1994	127957
2003-04	1570	45	47	120	-	269	2051	129074
2004-05	1710	55	58	113	-	275	2211	136353
2005-06	1864	59	66	109	-	307	2405	140160
2006-07	1967	63	76	106	-	324	2536	144710
2007-08	1859	69	90	104	-	340	2462	146385
2008-09	2211	72	95	91	-	363	2832	155321
2009-10	2247	85	100	90	46	407	2975	158877
2010-11	2795	96	94	84	64	472	3605	211660
2011-12	3019	102	100	86	61	446	3814	217554
2012-13	3303	128	116	106	65	534	4252	222120
2013-14	3518	145	108	134	66	552	4523	224576
2014-15	3717	160	109	197	67	548	4798	230435
2015-16	3890	173	102	185	68	548	4966	233116

Source: North East Region Databank Portal, 2019

Apart from less economic opportunities, the “bandh culture” or “economic blockades” also adversely affect the everyday life of local. Manipur is the state affected state by bandh culture. “A bandh or economic blockades are an effort to cut off essential commodities of life like food, clothes, supplies, medicine, and communication from a particular area by force, either in a part

or totality”⁴⁰. These bands not only disturb the economic life of the states but also the activities associated with education for example attendance in school, and Coaching. Therefore this factor becomes a push for migration.

Table: 4.4

State-wise number of workers, 1990-91 to 2015-16

Year	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Nagaland	Sikkim	Tripura	NER	India
1990-91	90878	815	3434	1908	-	9869	106904	6307143
1991-92	100992	1154	3394	3226	-	7996	116762	6269039
1992-93	110905	1251	3909	3274	-	8639	127978	6649310
1993-94	94832	804	1504	3437	-	6386	106963	6632323
1994-95	101371	1120	705	3365	-	6623	113184	6970116
1995-96	122712	2295	4074	4035	-	7257	140373	7632297
1996-97	109717	2019	3803	3949	-	6921	126409	7208133
1997-98	124504	2825	3701	3388	-	7142	141560	7604907
1998-99	94262	974	628	2793	-	6132	104789	6364464
1999-00	95592	847	742	2604	-	6800	106585	6280659
2000-01	92474	695	870	2440	-	7839	104318	6135238
2001-02	93365	992	1282	2278	-	9162	107079	5957848
2002-03	93128	1048	2042	2265	-	10910	109393	6161493
2003-04	95936	1090	1773	2356	-	13105	114260	6086908
2004-05	101265	1607	2405	2332	-	13818	121427	6599298
2005-06	110036	1734	3602	2455	-	17369	135196	7136097
2006-07	116253	1913	4779	3216	-	19110	145271	7880536
2007-08	113132	2442	4574	2494	-	20696	143338	8198110
2008-09	126338	2313	4571	2468	-	23643	159333	8776745
2009-10	125759	2950	4984	2676	4854	25756	166979	9157802
2010-11	141274	3894	6105	1900	5235	30458	188866	9901970
2011-12	150065	4552	8821	2195	7138	27304	200075	10438156
2012-13	140896	5213	9483	2677	8052	25793	192114	10051626
2013-14	157687	4988	10998	3303	10227	26524	213727	10444404
2014-15	163348	6568	11870	4843	11100	26256	223985	10755288
2015-16	173328	6982	10812	4867	9158	23677	228824	11148079

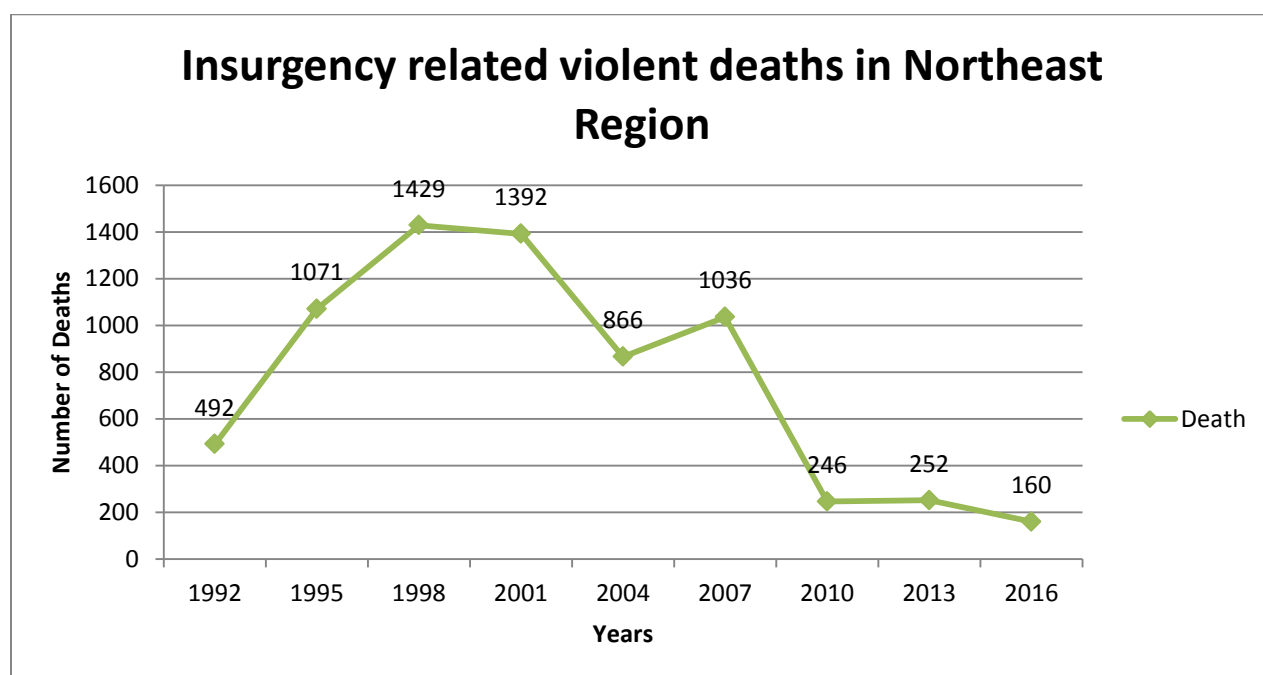
Source: North East Region Databank Portal: 2019

The socio-political turmoil in the region is another factor which motivated the local northeast population to move out from the region. Since independence, considerable of the area has witnessed insurgency and counter-insurgency movements in the region. These movements not only created the region as disturb area in the mind of outsiders population but also create an “environment of fear” in the region that has a direct impact upon the everyday life of the local

⁴⁰Sharma, Sushil Kumar (2014). Dynamics of bandhs and blockades in Northeast India: A study of Manipur and the way ahead. New Delhi. http://www.claws.in/images/publication_pdf/1017393661_MP48-DynamicsofBandhsandBlockades.pdf

population. Insurgency activities in the region have resulted in violence and a huge number of deaths which includes civilians, security forces and terrorists (Fig:1). In order to tackle armed insurgency in the region, the GOI has enacted the Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA). The most controversial provision comprises the “power of securities forces to make preventive arrests, search premises without a search warrant, and shoot and kill civilians, and effective legal immunity of soldiers implicated in such actions since court proceeding are contingent on the central government’s prior approval” (Baruah 2007:02). Therefore the provision of this law and violation of human rights in the Northeast region created a militarised environment which fosters the ground for migration in the search of a good life.

Fig:1



Sources: South Asia Terrorism Portal 2019

It is much visible fact that in the post-liberalisation period there are multiple reasons such as poor infrastructure, less economic opportunities, socio-political unrest and lack of quality education which has intensified the flow of migration from the region to the urban cities. The nature of migration is internal and in most of the cases, the records of the migrated population are not accounted for the state. Therefore, we have to depend upon the data provided by the informal agencies working in the field of migration. According to North East Support Centre and Helpline

(NESCH) survey, there are approximately 200,000 Northeast migrants in Delhi that accounts for 48.21 percent of the entire Northeast migrants population (NESCH 2011: 10). Therefore Delhi has emerged as the most preferred metropolis city among the Northeast migrants. This fact motivates us to inquire about the factor that establishes Delhi as a preferred destination for migration in compare to other metropolis cities. How migration from Northeastern states is distinct from others?

4.2 Delhi as an inclusive city

The neoliberal transformation of Delhi has resulted in a shift from the manufacturing and heavy industries to the service sector. In response to pressure to clean up the city in the 1980s and 90s, coming from what Bhaviskar (2002) refers to as the diffusion of “bourgeois environmentalism” among the middle class and upper classes, the Supreme Court ordered the relocation of polluting industries outside residential areas. Thereafter Delhi emerged as the hub of service sector especially call centers. According to McDuié-Ra (2013a), *new consumer space* such as shopping mall, global brand outlets, and *call centers* are the urban spaces where most of the Northeast migrants are accommodated in the city. Gurugram and Greater Noida have emerged as the home of the BPO industry, which largely dependent on low-cost labour force and one that is well versed in English (Taylor & Bain 2005). Maximum Northeastern students from the hilly region attend English medium school and literacy rates are also very high⁴¹. Even the English language works as a lingua franca among several ethnic groups of the region. Apart from this fact, most of the Northeast migrants are at a very young age and the bulk of them are unmarried. Therefore this unique feature of “flexibility and well educated” workforce establish Northeast migrants as the most desirable workforce to provide service in Australian, European and North American business hours (McDuié-Ra 2013a:1627). Therefore it is the call centers which include Northeast migrants in the city by offering them a livelihood.

Neoliberalism is typically thought to be antagonistic to the ethnic minorities, particularly the indigenous or culturally vulnerable groups. But in the case of northeast India’s tribes, Delhi

⁴¹Government of India (2002) *National human development report 2001*. Planning Commission:New Delhi.

shows a distinct story. The transformation of Delhi's economy from traditional industries to service sector industries has created a more inclusive space for the marginal community especially for tribal migrants from northeast India. Brosius (2010) has examined consumerism into Delhi, argued that malls are planned to gratify the need of upper and ambitious middle classes to 'live abroad in India'⁴². Most of the tribals leaving in Delhi have similar physical feature as Southeast Asian and East Asian people. Therefore their labor is highly desirable in the hospitality industry, in global brands outlets to reproduce de-Indianised aesthetic without importing foreign labor. These northeast migrants because of their ethnicity and racial feature created a niche in the labor market which helps them to find works into restaurants, clothing stores, spas & in cosmetic stores. Therefore it is their ethnicity which provides an advantage over other ethnic groups to get a job in modern urban spaces.

Another factor in choosing Delhi as a preferred city is the availability of quality higher education. As Delhi represents India's most popular universities, such as Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University, and others. In all these universities seats are reserved for Scheduled tribe and member of other communities under different reservation schemes (McDuaie-Ra 2012:12). Apart from this, Delhi provides opportunities to join India's most prestigious services such as IAS, IPS, and IFS. Therefore Delhi is the destination where both work and education are possible.

If we compare the migrants from Northeastern states and other parts of India then it is visible fact that the migrants from Northeast belong to better educational background. That's why they are motivated toward following advanced education or in a white color job in government or in private sector firms (Ramesh 2012:15). Another important factor associated with North East migrants is the absence of seasonal migration which makes them as a distinctive labour force in the market. Therefore the migrants from Northeast India are seen as stable workforce because of their higher retention possibility and it is the new urban spaces such as malls, call centers, hospitality industries which have provided working opportunities to the migrants from major Northeastern states. This inclusion in the city not only provides a livelihood to Northeast

⁴²Brosius, C. (2012). *India's middle class: New forms of urban leisure, consumption and prosperity*. Routledge India.

migrants but in return, it also created a very stable and an educated workforce in the economy that helps to maintain Delhi its status as a global city.

4.3 Dream city and discrimination

It is a much-witnessed fact that in the post-liberalisation era, Delhi has emerged as a preferred destination for migration from Northeast India in comparison to any other metropolitan city of neoliberal India. Northeastern migrants come in Delhi to achieve their goals such as education and jobs. But in reality, it is observed that they find the city “tougher than expected” and opined that they feel more insecure in Delhi⁴³. For instance the Migrants from a state like Manipur where the AFSPA has created the “environment of fear” primarily move to Delhi to live in a quiet atmosphere aimed at education & occupation, which is not available in their home state. With the growing service industries, migrants from the Northeast region are able to find work in the urban spaces of Delhi such as malls, spas, global brand outlets, restaurants, and the hospitality industry. In other words, it is the economic arena of activity where people from the Northeastern region are included in the city while their experience outside these economic spaces reinforced their marginality. Outside of these urban spaces, they become the soft target of racial remarks, physical attack, discrimination, stereotypes, and harassment. This situation of economic inclusion and socially marginality of Northeast migrants in the city raises a very serious question: why and under what circumstances people from Northeast India are likely to be subjected to racist attack, discrimination, and exclusion in the metropolis?

According to V.V Giri Institute Report 2012, “right from climate, food habits, customs and costumes everything in Delhi is different for migrants and adjusting to these entire changed situations is the first challenge confronted by the Northeasterners”. When contrasted with a normal North Indian, the migrants from Northeast are progressively conversant in English. Their

⁴³Ramesh, B. P. (2012). Migration from Northeast to urban centres: A study of Delhi region. *National Labour Institute of Research Studies Series*.

dressings style and entertainments are additionally unique, which seems to be near to the South East Asian community than subcontinent India. These features provide the ground for the creation of faulty stereotypes such as foreigners, and immoral, which are later used for labeling them as socially inferior. The incapability of migrants towards speaking Hindi fluently frequently provides a wrong impression to the native people that migrants are unconscious/ dumb on a certain aspect (Ramesh 2012:19). Therefore it not only leads the domination of locals over the migrants in terms of social life but also creates the ground of continuous exploitation of migrants in terms of their bargaining capacity.

The housing market is the space where most of the migrants from Northeastern states experienced discrimination. A large of migrants from Northeast India are in their twenties and rarely hold any property or vote in Delhi. Therefore, for housing needs, they are much dependent on property dealers and local landlords. An ethnographic study conducted by McDuié-Ra in the period between December 2010 and February 2011, finds that housing for Northeast migrants is much expensive in comparison to other migrants of the country in the metropolis. A Northeast migrant was spending between 5500 rupees (US\$122) for a single room and 8500 rupees (US\$ 190) for 1+1 (one bedroom with a kitchen) per month (McDuié-Ra 2013:1635). The rent charged to Northeastern migrants is found fairly high compared to ongoing market rates. Another study conducted by the V.V Giri Labour Research Institute observed that an average Northeast migrant is paying 6535 rupees per month as a rental. This same report also notes that Northeastern migrants pay about two times rent then people from other parts of country. On the basis of evidence provided by these two studies is clear that the Northeast migrants in Delhi are paying much higher rents. For those migrants who are working in malls and BPO, this is between 40 to 80 percent of their regular salary (McDuié-Ra 2013a:1633).

The stereotype of the immoral Northeasterners is utilised by owners and property dealers to defending the higher rents. As most of the Northeastern society are largely community-based and the relation of gender is distinct where a female member of the family enjoyed greater equality and freedom in their respective life. But when these young migrants from Northeastern societies arrived in Delhi and behave in the manner as they practiced in their home states, they are often misunderstood and considered as immoral. Delhi is the place where social values are mainly shaped in the patriarchal pattern. The local residents do not have much exposure to cultural and

social norms of the tribal and community-based societies, therefore, they often view the migrants as uncivilised and those who lack moral values (Ramesh: 2012:27). Therefore it is the cultural and social differences of two different societies, which create the ground for generating stereotypes in the mind of the local population. Numerous families have male and female occupants, occasionally in a relationship with each other, yet ordinarily, they are friends or the individual from a similar clan or tribe back home. This fuel anxiety about the profound ethics of Northeast inhabitants and unmistakably separated them from the mainstream value system, where such things are not accepted (McDuie-Ra: 2012:100).

Food habits of the Northeastern migrants are considered as one of the underlying reasons behind discrimination in the housing market. A large number of landlords did not prefer Northeasterners as potential customers to lease their flats by referring their way of life. “They have loose morals”, “They eat pigs and dogs”, “their presence will pollute our children” are the explanation given by the several local landlords (Ramesh 2012:18). Indeed, even in the booklet realised by Delhi Police in 2005, Northeast individuals are encouraged to abstain from cooking “*bamboo shoots* and *akhuni*”. If they somehow managed to cook it, they ought to manage without making a hub in the neighborhood⁴⁴. Aside from this, the most offending situation for Northeast tenants is the interruption in the individual lives and moral policing by the proprietors.

Northeast migrants in Delhi not only faced discrimination in terms of housing but also faces similar discrimination at their workplace. A study conducted by V.V Giri Labour Research Institute in 2012, clearly reflects that the aspect of discrimination encompasses varied issues like allocating higher work goals or extensive hours of work, denial of leaves, discrimination at the time of promotion, holding up of salaries, holding salaries and termination from the job without notice⁴⁵. Most of the Northeast migrants in the city like Delhi works in shops and urban establishment in malls and late working hours in the BPOs for which workers have often to come home late. This often exposes them to anti-social element and also make their movement suspicious in the minds of neighbors (Bezbaruah Committee 2014: 11).

⁴⁴Police, D. (2005). *Security tips for north east students/visitors in Delhi. Delhi Police West District.*

⁴⁵Ramesh,p.22.

4.4 We are Indians, not Chinky

Northeast India has progressively turned into the appealing and charming face of diversity of contemporary India. Then, this diversity has also produced discrimination and racism. Migration to urban cities from Northeastern states is not a new phenomenon, it was also prevalent in the past, but in the contemporary times, nature, scale, and problem associated with the flow of migration is something new, which was not witnessed in the past. The existence of racism is something that has emerged in a more robust form after the liberalisation process in India. In contemporary India, it is argued that there are multiple groups and people who face prejudice and discrimination when they arrive in metropolitan cities as a migrant, for instance- migrants from Uttar Pradesh in Maharashtra, migrants from Bihar in Delhi. So if there are some incidents of discrimination against the migrants from Northeast India then what makes the experiences of the Northeast migrants different? The answer lies in the concept of race.

Racism is the key factor that defines the understandings of Northeast migrants in major metropolitan cities of India, for example, Bangalore, Pune, and Delhi. As I mentioned earlier, India's Northeast is culturally diverse. It is the home of people from Tibeto-Burman, Mongoloid & Mon-Khmer roots, which marks Northeasterners as distinct from the mainland population (McDuie-Ra: 2012). It is also considered that most of the Northeastern people have Mongoloid phenotypes, for example, high cheekbones, & yellowish skin tones. India comprises of numerous community marked as "others" on the basis of religion, caste, and culture (Wouters & Subba 2013:02). Regardless of their differences into phenotypes, there is usually no misperception around their "Indianness". But this politeness is not reached out towards the Mongoloid phenotypes, which are normally misrecognised like foreigners.

Being a person from Northeast India, the physical outlook is the focus in communication with the members of different societies and with peer groups. Their Mongoloid phenotypes not only separate them from the mainstream population but also lead to questioning of their nationality and citizenship in their everyday life. Because of their physical characteristics, they are not only observed as others, but their strangeness is also related by the way the Northeast frontier is understood and misunderstood in social as well as in the political framework of India (McDuie-

Ra: 2012:88). The Northeasterners are unrecognised and misunderstood as foreigners, coming from China, Nepal, Thailand, and Japan to visit India or less than equal citizens. (Wouters&Subba: 2013). For instance, in 2012, the BRICS SUMMIT was planned in Delhi, Through this summit, an unknown number of Northeasterners were meshed by police to determining their nationality in the awakening of protest by Tibetan refugees. It was only a negligible physical resemblance to the Tibetan refugee that had landed numerous Northeast migrants in the trouble. Describing her harrowing experiences, Chandana Baro (a Northeast migrant in Delhi from Assam) said:

After finishing work on Wednesday, I was at the Rajiv Chowk metro station around 9-30 p.m. to catch a train home when two men in uniform approached me. They took me aside, stating that they wanted to have a word with me. I was taken aback when they asked whether I was an Indian national. I told them I was a local resident and belonged to Assam. I deliberately started replying in Hindi to make it clear that I was indeed an Indian. I showed them my PAN card and driving license and then they allowed me to go. This has not happened with me for the first time. she said, adding that it was humiliating for an Indian national to be stopped and quizzed by the police in such a manner⁴⁶.

Chandana Baro's experience in Delhi is not only about narrating the hurdle faced by Northeast migrants in their everyday life but also about the pain of being misrecognised in their own country even after six decades of independence. Along these lines being misrecognised is a common experience shared by most of the Northeasterners when they arrive in India's metro urban areas. Northeasterners are the only group in India's metropolis whose nationality is regularly questioned in their daily life, which established them as "exceptional citizen". For instance- normal acts like signing a rent agreement, purchasing a new mobile sim card and gaining admission to ancient monuments require verifying nationality – an execution that does not have any significant bearing to other ethnic groups. Bureaucratic doubt is plausibly yet it is the everyday suspicion that makes the most disappointment for individuals from northeastern states of India. Their mistaken identity not only pushes them into the margin but at the same time, it also generated various kinds of stereotypes in the minds of the local population. McDuie-

⁴⁶The Hindu. 2012 Mar 30, "A harrowing time for people from Northeast." accessed on April 2, 2019.<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/a-harrowing-time-for-people-from-northeast/article3261158.ece>.

Ra (2012), mentioned Northeasterners are judged as “immoral, sexually promiscuous, backward subject from the misty jungle, anti-national rebels, Chinese nationals, and as privileged elites” benefitting from government affirmative action policies such as reservation. Even on the basis of their dressing appearance, people created a stereotype about Northeasterners. These stereotypes and prejudices manifest in the form of verbal abuse, racial attacks, physical violence, and harassment.

Although racial ideology is not recognised by the government or academia in Indian society, people belonging to Northeastern India experience it in their everyday life in the urban part of India. (Thounaojam 2012:10). In 2012, with the death of Richard Loitam in Bangalore and Dana Sangma in Gurgaon, the debate and discussion on racism made some space in the politics as well as in the academic discourse of the country. It is the solidarity of Northeastern migrants and the availability of strong informal communication channel such as social media which catalyzed protest for justice and against racism. In a city like Delhi, racism is a common and integral part of Northeastern migrants everyday life. The racism faced by the Northeast migrants is epitomized by the epithets such as “Chinky”, “Nepali”, “Thapa”, “Chini Malai”, “Chin Chong”, “Momos” and so on.

The diverse ethnic identities that define life at their home states are dismantled in urban spaces as all Northeastern migrants are clubbed into one singular category, loaded with various kind of stereotypes and prejudices. Northeast migrants hear the term “Chinky” at their workplace, at university and even from non-tribal friends. These remarks express extremely entrenched stereotypes that have substantial impacts on the lives of ethnic migrants (McDuie-Ra 2013b:1635). They are considered as backward, uncivilised, anti-nationals, violent, loose and immoral. Before inquiring, how does a stereotype impact the life of the Northeast migrants? We should examine, how these stereotypes are formulated in the minds of the mainland population.

Fig 2: We are Indians, not Chinky



Source: open source Internet⁴⁷

Most of the people from mainland Indian cities often do not communicate directly to the people from Northeast Indian states and never tried to understand the prospect of similarities between the so-called binary of us and them. Therefore their knowledge about the Northeast region of the country is accumulated through the media, museum, and advertisement campaign and republic day parade. In the advertisement campaign, the tribals of Northeastern states are portrayed as exotic, and still living with their primitive lifestyle. Pictures of tribals and other traditional groups into the tourism campaign equally make and reproduce the prevailing way of seeing Northeast people (McDuaie-Ra 2012:93).

Museums are also the places where children, students, and adults come for outing and knowing the past of our great civilisation. Therefore the images and the way of portraying our past in museums also have a profound impact upon constructing the images of our ancestors. In Kolkata National Museum, there is a distinct segment on Human Anthropology where the images and dioramas of tribal groups from Northeastern states are depicted in a painted background, suggesting a close connection with nature. Dolly Kikon describes the exhibition as follows: "All models are a little yellow and look similar to the epicanthic folds of the eyes, but look like a

⁴⁷ https://www.google.com/search?q=we+are+indians+not+chinky+images&safe=active&rlz=1C1NHXL_enIN819IN819&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiTuuHzp7PhAhXLRo8KHZb8AagQ_AUIDigB&biw=1242&bih=568#imgsrc=TB2jRxKzMCTMzM: Accessed on 03 April, 2019.

child dressing a doll in dollhouse" (McDuie-Ra 2012: 92). The presentations are not historicised as the different groups in India. For tribals, their past is similar to their present.

Even at the time of Republic day parade, held every year on 26 January, a similar representation of Northeastern people is displayed and telecast across the nation. In the parade, every state has a float and the floats demonstrating the Northeast states generally belong to the key ethnic groups in traditional costume dancing on the top of an agricultural product. "Many other states and peoples within India are represented by emphasizing dances, traditions, and distinctive cultural traits. Even, most of the other communities are also represented in other ways, whereas tribals are not" (McDuie-Ra 2012: 93).



Fig 3: Manipur Tableau 2018



Fig 4: Tripura Tableau 2018

Source: The Sentinel⁴⁸

In contemporary times, media is a very important tool to accumulate knowledge and construct an image in the mind of ordinary citizens about any particular aspect of society. Northeast India has not received considerable attention in Delhi based English-language newspapers. Problems in this area do not make a headline in the national policy agenda (Sonwalker 2004: 390). Reporting on insurgency and terrorism in the Northeast is the only opportunity when the Northeast and its people are mentioned in Delhi based media. Daisy Hasan (2009) argues that it is the focus on terrorism that has attracted the attention of the mainstream media, otherwise, the region does not represent in national media, as it is considered as politically and culturally insignificant.

⁴⁸ <https://www.sentinelassam.com/news/assam-republic-day-tableau-yet-to-get-mod-nod/>.

Even the social-cultural and political realities of Northeast India are not adequately represented and discussed in the academic curriculum, particularly at the university level. With the exception of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Jamia Milia Islamia (JMI) which separately have specialised North East studies programme/center since 2006 and 2009, no major central university outside North-east India has offered courses on north-east India⁴⁹. Therefore lack of familiarity about the rich social and cultural tradition of Northeast India, provide the ground for generating faulty assumptions and stereotypes against the people belonging to North East India.

Northeast migrants in the city like Delhi are seen as loose and immoral. These stereotypes influenced man and women in different ways in their everyday life. The female migrants from Northeast India are the worst victim of racial stereotypes. They are seen as loose in morals and sexually promiscuous (McDuie-Ra: 2013a). A large number of female Northeast migrants work into extremely observable professions where they are cast in extremely sexualised characters. For instance- in fashion stores, restaurants, & spas. They also live in together with male friends in a shared apartment; most of them are not married and living without marriage with male companions, which is not considered as morally good in the traditional and cultural value system. Subsequently, a number of suffering and complications faced by the migrant's youth in the metropolitan city like Delhi because of the cultural differences and the deviation in social norms of the guest and host societies.

The female members in Northeastern societies are socialised in egalitarian norms where social bonding with male friends is quite common. But in patriarchal societies, free social assimilation is frequently mistaken as an absence of ethical values, which ultimately leads towards social profiling and resultant atrocities- especially towards women migrants. Northeast men are too subjected to certain stereotypes as they are mostly seen as heavy drinkers, unpredictable and violent (McDuie-Ra: 2012: 97).

⁴⁹ Hausing, Kham Khan Suan (2015). Framing the North-East in Indian politics: Beyond the integration framework. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 3(2), 277-283.

Apart from these stereotypes, the people from Northeastern states especially women faced sexual harassment at their office and in the streets of urban villages. “Women are seduced by the senior staff, managers, and owners for sexual advances and molested in the workplace” (NESCH 2011:27). In fear of losing jobs, the victim keeps quiet without reporting, when reported, accused are covered by the company and complainants are victimised, suspended and their salaries are held up. Northeasterners believed that they are targeted because of their race, they have no option to justice and they are blamed for the violence they suffered.

Reveals the dress to avoid. Avoid the lonely road/byline when wearing clothing. Dress conferring to the understanding of the local people (Delhi Police: 2005).

In most of the cases Northeast women are held responsible for the sexual harassment they have to endure and the criminals are regularly unnoticed. If we closely analyse the security pamphlet of Delhi Police, it is the revealing or scanty dresses which are considered as the root cause behind the sexual harassment but in reality, it is the mindset or attitude of local people which are the sole reason behind these acts. Because “even after wearing the sari or salwar kurta it is very easy to recognise our differences due to our fair skin and wrongly pronounced Hindi by everyone- be it is auto drivers, street vendors or eve teasers and sooner we will fall prey to discriminatory treatment”⁵⁰. The quiet nature and cordial attitude of Northeast migrants are frequently taken as wrong and indication of weakness. According to NESCH report, 78 percent of Northeasters in Delhi experiences racial discrimination in various forms, though approximately 50 % of all sexual assault in the capital city happens to Northeastern females (cited in Wouters & Subba 2013:132).

Physical violence against the people of Northeast India is the clear visible appearance of racism in Delhi. During the period from 2005 to 2011, there is 12 fold growth in migration from Northeast India to metropolitan cities. Therefore, the graph of atrocities against migrants has also increased throughout the similar time (McDuffie-RA 2015:311). The killing of Loitam Richard (a student from Manipur learning in Bangalore) in April 2012 was the moment when migrants from northeast

⁵⁰Ramesh.,p.94.

India released their displeasure and disappointment. The killing of Loitam Richard (a student from Manipur learning in the Bangalore) in April 2012 was the moment when migrants from northeast India released their displeasure and disappointment. Following this exodus, Naga scholar, Dolly Kikon wrote in *The Hindu*:

The majority of those who left (Indian cities) for northeast India are, along with other similar migrants, the invisible face of global India: cooks in ethnic restaurants that can whip up cuisine from every corner of country, security guards who protect ATM machines, corporate offices, or industries that push India as a global power, drivers who chauffeur cosmopolitan citizens and corporate executives, or waiters who wear ethnic costumes so that customers can absorb the aura of India. The exodus of these workers from Indian cities reveal their insecurities being “confident citizens” and their position as vulnerable workers with minimum right in global India⁵¹.

Fig 5 : The train to Guwahati.



Source: The Hindu, 20 Aug 2012, Photo Credit: Bhagya Prakash k

This exodus from metropolitan cities across India not only exposed the vulnerability of migrants from Northeastern states but also reveals that they do not trust the state in terms of safety measures. Subsequently, attention to the relation among Northeasterners as well as rest of Indians increased and carried racism into the national level discussion. In February 2014 there was a case of Nido Tania (Arunachal Pradesh student studying in Delhi) who was assaulted by

⁵¹Kikon, D. (2012). Home is hardly the best. *The Hindu*, 20 August, [<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/home-is-hardly-the-best/article3796017.ece>, accessed on 1 Apr 2019].

iron rods and sticks. It occurred next to an argument by a shopkeeper who intentionally made fun of his clothes & hair.

If we believe this fact that there is a strong presence of racism in Delhi then it raises a serious question: why migrants do not retaliate to racist remarks? The response of this query lies in the sense of minority in the metropolitan. The feeling of the minority is the major determinant which restricts most of the Northeastern migrants from retaliation. As most of the migrants are at their young age and live independently or lonely in the city and generally believed that a strong retaliation can hamper their stay in the city. Therefore at many occasion, they try to escape confrontation with locals by ignoring or pretending that they have not heard the racial remarks. Another important determinant which restricts the retaliation capability of migrants is the insensitive behavior of the police officials. From a legal perspective, the Constitution of India (Art.15) prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of any religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth or any of them. But despite this right against discrimination, there is no single specific law that may address the problem of racist atrocities. Therefore the absence of a dedicated law to the problems of the Northeast migrants is a major cause which made them an easy target of racial attacks in the metropolises of neoliberal India.

The people from Northeastern states in a city like Delhi faced twofold injuries. On one hand, they not only become the walking target of racial discrimination and associated atrocities in the streets and public places. While on the other hand, they also faced institutional racism. Institutional racism comes into the forefront when the victim of racial attack seeks to take remedy through the law. The racist prejudice is experienced here in the form of attempts made by police to suppress or to make light of the crime, and refusal to register FIRs, or of putting unnecessary pressure on the victim to withdraw her/his case, etc (Bezbaruah 2014:14). It is a very unhappy circumstance where the institution of law administered society itself become the place where racism happens.

4.5 Stereotypes and exclusion in the city

Stereotypes against the Northeastern migrants not only create hurdle in their everyday life but also pushed them into the margin of society. In the report of V.V Giri Institute Report (Ramesh: 2012), it is clearly observed that landlords and flat owners partially opposed Northeast migrants registering themselves into the voter list. In spite of the point that they have been living there for several years. It is generally comprehended that using voter rights into the local constituency, the bargaining capacity of the Northeasterners will significantly increase. Moreover, there are several residential areas such as Green Park, Kotla Mubarakpur, Safdarjung Enclave, Munirka and in GTB Nagar where the Northeast migrants are in good numbers that can influence the result of local self-government elections. Social exclusion in principle defines boundaries between groups locates the different groups in a hierarchy and regulates and guides their interaction (Mohanty 2012:1079). Keeping this in mind, there are planned obstructions from the local people however migrants want to register their name into the voter list. In contrast to migrants from other states, the migrants from Northeastern states are much educated and aware about their rights and know the importance of basic documents that are important for surviving in the city (for example voter card, ration card, bank account, etc.). As most of the Northeastern migrants do not own any property in the city, therefore a large portion of migrant's lives in rented accommodation. But the rental system that the Northeast people have to accept is also ad-hoc in nature and no proper deal or rent agreement is signed (Bezbaruah 2014:12).

Without any address proof, it becomes very difficult for Northeastern migrants to obtain the basic documents. In this way to obtain these document, most of Northeastern have to spend more money, time and resources in comparison to local and migrants from different parts of India. On the basis of the above description, it can be argued that the Northeast migrants in a city like Delhi are systematically placed outside the boundary of inclusion by denying those rights, opportunities, and resources which are necessary to formal inclusion in the society for instance-shelter, legal housing, civic or political participation. The pathetic status of Northeastern migrants itself clearly indicates their social marginality in the city.

The Constitution of India gives rights of equal opportunity and the right to freely move anywhere in the country to its every citizen. But the racial remarks by the local population against the Northeastern migrants in public places not only insulted or hurt their dignity but also affect their

social mobility in the city like Delhi. Because of racial remarks, a good number of citizens who belong to Northeastern states of India lost the confidence of coming out of their introvert spaces and to indulge in talkative conversation with the other person. This is true particularly for Northeastern females; those are studying or working in Delhi lonely and supporting their families at back home. Through this, they are not only socially excluded but also from the political arena of society.

To sum up we can say that there are multiple circumstances under which people from Northeastern states of India become an easy target of racial abuse and discriminatory treatment. These factors majorly include cultural gaping and differences in social norms, different lifestyle, patriarchal norms of mainland societies, underestimating Northeast region by mainstream media groups, insensitive behaviour of police and certain stereotypes and prejudice in the mind of the local population. These factors not only create a “sense of fear” but also provide the ground for social and political exclusion from society.

Chapter: 5

Conclusion

In this research work, we examine the factors and circumstances that create the ground for racial attacks, discrimination, and exclusion against the Northeast Migrants with a particular focus in Metropolitan cities like Delhi and Bangalore. Locating the debate on racism, discrimination, and citizenship in chapter 2, we examine the different theoretical framework to understand the regimes of racism, discrimination, and exclusion. Following the Banton's idea of race, we have tried to examine the presence of racism in Indian society. In the Indian societal framework, the existence of racism is widely denied, But in reality, it exists in different forms. In 1969 India has signed the UN Convention on Elimination of racial discrimination and committed to eliminate all forms of discrimination. But India did not consider caste as a part of racial discrimination. Various label such as ethnic minority, ethnic conflict and urban poor is used to deny the racist aspect of certain social behavior. Therefore racism and racist attack are perceived as an alien thing in Indian society. This study also emphasises upon the way racism is practiced in everyday life actions and behavior such as the individual and systemic form of racism. Following Marshall's narrative of citizenship and its evolution in modern form, we have tried to understand why the nationality of Northeast Indians is questioned? Indian Constitution guarantees equal rights to every citizen and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, caste, sex, and place of birth. But despite this fact, the nationality of Northeast migrants is continuously questioned because of their physical outlook and race. This study also focused on various paradigms of social exclusion and theoretical dimension that broaden our understanding to understand how and under what circumstances Northeast migrants are excluded in the metropolitan city.

In chapter 3, we described how the Indian drive of national integration created the ground for distrust and uncertainty about the future in the minds of Northeast India's citizen towards the Indian state. It also described various tactics and strategy through which the goal of national integration was achieved. The structure of their new consciousness and the political process of mobilisation had massive repercussion on the state of their mind which in turn, generated various kinds of reactions in reference to the merger of Northeastern region with India. It also concentrated on the factors that are responsible for creating an environment of fear and

instability in the Northeast region. These factors include illegal migration, ethnic conflict, demand for a separate homeland and government inability to handle the issue of illegal migration in the region in a proper way. It also analyses that in spite having rich in terms of natural resources why Northeast region lagging behind in the development process.

In chapter 4, we examined how the process of globalisation, privatisation, and liberalisation has generated the new economic opportunity that attracts the young population of the Northeast in Metropolitan cities. We also discuss various push and pulls factors that intensified the flow of migration from the region to urban spaces of neoliberal India. These factors include lack of quality education, bleak employment opportunities, socio-political unrest and a vision of good life in the metropolitan cities like Delhi. The neoliberal transformation of Delhi in post-liberalisation period and the emergence of various new economic opportunities in the sector of hospitality, BPO, malls, restaurants, etc. have created a niche in the labour market for Northeast migrants. In this sense, they are included in the economic life of the city. But outside these economic spaces, they faced racist comments and discrimination in the housing market, public space which mark them as the community at the margin. We also examined, how the faulty stereotypes are generated in the mind of an ordinary citizen residing in metropolitan cities against the Northeast people. Subsequently, these stereotypes reflect in the actions of an individual. These stereotypes not only created the hurdle in their everyday routine life but also exclude them from participating in community life. Max Weber's idea of social closure help in this context, to understand how Northeast Indians are continuously placed outside the boundary of inclusion by denying those rights, opportunities, and resources which are necessary to formal inclusion in the society for example shelter, legal housing, and political participation.

This study also examines how stereotypes affect man and women in a different way. The female members of Northeastern societies are socialised in egalitarian societies where social assimilation with male friends is quite common. But in patriarchal societies, the aspect of free social assimilation is often misunderstood as an absence of moral value, which eventually leads to adverse social profiling and atrocities. Cultural differences between the metropolitan and Northeastern societies are another source of confrontation. It is considered that most of the Northeastern societies are largely community-based and equalitarian in its nature. Therefore the

members of these societies enjoy greater equality and freedom in their respective life regardless of their gender. But when these young migrants from Northeastern societies arrived in metropolitan cities like Delhi and behave in the manner as they practiced in their home states, they are often misunderstood and considered as immoral. Delhi is the place where social values are mainly shaped in the patriarchal pattern. Hence, it is the cultural and social differences of two different societies which provide the ground of generating faulty stereotypes in the minds of the local population which later reflects in their behaviour and actions. Northeast male members are also subject to some of the loose and immoral assumption such as heavy drinker and violent in nature.

In the last decade, Delhi has emerged as a preferred destination for migration from Northeastern states for seeking education, employment and as a place where the tool of Indian bureaucracy can be learned to fulfill social and economic aspirations. Along with this fact, it is also true that Delhi has also emerged as a crime capital especially racial attacks against the migrants from the Northeastern states of India. Article 15 of the Indian Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, sex, race, caste or place of birth. But despite this fact, discrimination in Indian society is not a new phenomenon; it is deeply rooted in the Indian caste system which reflects several times in the actions of an individual in their everyday social life. Therefore racial discrimination against the people from the Northeastern states in the major metropolitan cities is a reflection of the Indian caste system and derived attitude. But the problems arise when the legal authorities refuse to accept the existence of racism in India. Refusal of the presence of racism is in itself racism. In the case of India, racism is considered something that prevails in other countries, mainly western countries. But in an actual sense, this fact is not true.

In the post-liberalisation period, there are multiple incidents of racism against people belonging to Northeast India are registered. Even epithets like “Chinki” and “Momos” are visible manifestations of racism which reflect in the behaviour of mainland citizens against Northeast migrants. These racist remarks not only make them hurt but also create a sense of otherness in the mind of Northeast Indians. After the murder of Nido Tania in 2014, the issue of racism not only came at the forefront in media but also some concrete measures were taken by the Government of India (Ministry of Home Affairs) by appointing a Committee under the

chairmanship of M.P Bezbaruah to look into the concern of Northeastern Migrants in different parts of the country.

It was the first occasion when the issue of racism in India was recognised by the GOI by appointing a Committee. After the 11 months of its constitution, The Committee has submitted its 82-pages report. The report estimates that “over two lakh people from the Northeast have migrated to Delhi between 2005 and 2013 and that about 86 percent of them have faced discrimination”. It also finds that Delhi is the worst offender among the metropolitan cities when it comes to racial discrimination against people from the Northeast⁵². The Bezbaruah Committee has examined and made some short terms and long terms concrete recommendations to tackle the issue of discrimination against the Northeastern community. The major long terms recommendation (Priority basis) of The Committee includes:

- (a) The existence of clear and stringent law that make such acts/incident of varied nature punishable.
- (b) Strong and determined law enforcement agency which can prevent the occurrence of such incidents and when they occur investigate quickly and professionally to bring the culprits to book.
- (c) Adequate support system for the victims.
- (d) An efficient system for the delivery of justice fairly and quickly.
- (e) Socio–economic and cultural initiative to handle the wider issue of educating the people creating awareness and removing the wrong perception so that occurrence of such incidents is minimized.

As we look into the ground realities of the implementation of a strict anti-racial law and insertion of new section of 153(c) [imputations or assertions prejudicial to human dignity] and 159(a) [word, gesture or act intended to insult a member of a particular racial group] in the Indian Penal Code to strengthen the legal framework against racial discrimination as short term

⁵²Polanki, Pallavi, 2017, March 19, Bezbaruah report on North East community: Five key recommendations, *FirstPost*, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/bezbaruah-report-Northeast-community-five-key-recommendations-1678393.html> , accessed on 5 Apr 2019.

measures suggested by the Bezbaruah Committee. It is clear that the recommendations of the Committee were accepted by the Home ministry. But even after the five years (approximately) of recommendation, no implementation has taken place.

The lack of exposure of Northeast's rich culture and tradition in mainstream media and society not only created a sense of isolation but also provide the grounds for generating the faulty stereotypes in the minds of the general population. Terrorism and insurgency activities in the region are the only occasion when the region of Northeast India received little bit attention in Delhi based media. Therefore reporting only on negative aspect robust the stereotypes in the minds of general population about Northeast India.

Apart from these factors, there are multiple circumstances under which Northeast migrants in the metropolitan cities become the subject of racist attack and discrimination. A sense of minority community in the metropolitan cities is the major determinant which not only restricts them from retaliation but also generates a feeling of insecurity. Another important aspect which increases their vulnerability is the lack of legal backing. Even, till today, the accused person for 'racial remarks' is booked under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. However, in the present context, this Act is not able to protect even the interest of the person belonging to SC and ST social category. "This act was constituted to protect those who are the victim of India's deep-rooted caste system". Therefore, it is naturally inadequate, inefficient and obsolete to tackle the issue of racial discrimination which is continuously faced by the Northeast migrants in their everyday city life. Additional to this, the conviction rate in the SC/ST Act is alarmingly poor. Up to 2009, 80 percent of cases were pending under the SC/ST Act and the conviction rate is merely 30 percent while the conviction rate in another cognizable offense in the country is 42 percent⁵³.

Another major limitation of the SC/ST Act is that all the Northeast migrants do not belong to SC or ST. And lastly, the insensitive behaviour of police increases their vulnerabilities in the metropolitan city like Delhi. All these factors not only make them insecure in the metropolitan cities but also exclude them from participation in different societal and political activities.

⁵³Borah, Partha Jyoti (2017): Northeast folks: less Indian? *Northeast Today*, <https://www.northeasttoday.in/northeast-folks-less-indian/>, accessed on 7 April 2019.

To sum up, we can say that, there is a visible presence of racist attack and discrimination against the people from the Northern states of India. These racist attacks are the result of faulty stereotypes, lack of familiarity with ethical and moral values of Northeastern societies and their rich cultural as well as social traditions. Therefore, societal awareness about the rich culture and history of the Northeast region is a necessary tool to curb the evil of racism and discrimination from society. This awareness would not only curb the discrimination but also will help in establishing a just and equal social order which would be inclusive in its nature.

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