

JOURNAL OF POLITICS

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- ☐ Terrorism in Its Place : Some Politico-Ethical Considerations
- ☐ Secularism : a strategy to promote national integration in India
A Historical Survey
- ☐ Dynamics of Caste Politics in West Bengal : A case study of
Jalpaiguri District
- ☐ Constraints of Agricultural Development in North-East-India
with special reference to Assam
- ☐ Role of North Eastern Council in manpower development in
NE-Region of India
- ☐ Rural development programmes and right to work
- ☐ Contribution of Biswanath Chariali towards the Freedom
Movement of India : A study
- ☐ Roychoudhury's ideas on nationalism and humanism
- ☐ Socio-economic & cultural life of the plains tribes in Assam :
a new approach for development
- ☐ Regionalism - A Theoretical Framework

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T. Lahon

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goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological (US Department of Defence).

(3) The use of threat for the purpose of advancing a political, religious

TERRORISM IN ITS PLACE: SOME POLITICO-ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

(4) The threat or use of violence for political purposes when (a) such

action is intended to influence the attitude and behaviour of a target group wider than its immediate victim, and (b) its ramifications transcend national boundaries.

M. Yasin

&

Pradip K. Sengupta

Thus viewed, terrorism appears to be fundamentally and inherently political - the pursuit of power, the acquisition of power and the use of power to achieve political change. supplementing this definition, it is said that terrorism is "the use of violence for purpose of political extortion, coercion, and publicity for a political cause". This definition suggests that terrorism entails a combination of at least three elements. First, terrorism ordinarily involves the threat of actual use of unconventional violence - violence that is spectacular, isolated, accepted social mores, and is designed to shock so as to gain publicity and instil fear. Terrorism generally observe no rules of conduct whatsoever and there are virtually no limits to the degree or type of violence they are prepared to utilize. Secondly, terrorism is characterized by the threatened or actual use of unconventional violence that is politically motivated. The political context of terrorism is from one extreme to the other and there is no middle ground.

In contemporary world today, terrorism has occupied a very important place not only in the vocabulary of words and concepts but also in the political process of every governmental system. It is, indeed, a widespread phenomenon as it transcends any geographical boundary of any country. It has assumed an international dimension and is an ever growing and pervading international concern that makes it incompatible with national solution.

Terrorism has been sought to be viewed and defined in many ways taking a particular position at a particular point of time. This makes the explication - both formal and operational - of terrorism as a concept and as an action complicated. The general definition provided by the Oxford English dictionary is that a terrorist is one who attempts to further his views by a system of coercive intimidation. This definition is too general and warrants further explication because the definition might lead to a fallacious logic blurring the distinction between a 'terrorist' and a 'freedom fighter'. Given this, some of the definitions, mostly representative in nature, may be outlined as follows:

Terrorism is: more ingredient of terrorism may be identified that is related to terrorism is an

(1) The unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives (FBI).

(2) The calculated use of violence or threat of violence to inculcate fear intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies so as to pursuit

goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological (US Department of Defence).

(3) The use of threat, for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause of action which involves serious violence against any person or property (United Kingdom Government)

(4) The threat or use of violence for political purposes when (a) such action is intended to influence the attitude and behaviour or a target group wider than its immediate victim, and (b) its ramifications transcend national boundaries.

Thus viewed, terrorism appears to be fundamentally and inherently political - the pursuit of power, the acquisition of power and the use of power to achieve political change. supplementing this definition, it is said that terrorism is "the use of violence for purpose of political extortion, coercion, and publicity for a political cause".¹ This definition suggests that terrorism entails a combination of at least three elements. First, terrorism ordinarily involves the threatened or actual use of unconventional violence - violence that is spectacular, violated accepted social mores, and is designed to shock so as to gain publicity and instill fear.² Terrorists generally observe no rules of conduct whatsoever and there are virtually no limits to the degree or type of violence they are prepared to utilize.³ Secondly, terrorism is characterized by the threatened or actual use of unconventional violence that is politically motivated. The political context of terrorism distinguishes it from mere criminal behaviour and thus a Mafia should not be called as a terrorist precisely because its existence and activities are not motivated by any recognizable political goals.⁴ The third element of terrorism that follows from the first two is the almost incidental nature of the targets against whom violence is committed. It implies that the immediate targets of terrorism - whether persons or property, civilian or military - usually bear only an indirect relation to the larger aims impelling the terrorist. In essence, the victims are merely pawns used in violence that is staged with the intent of reaching a much wider audience. Besides these three essential elements of terrorism, one more ingredient of terrorism may be identified that is related to the nature of the perpetrators of terrorist activities.⁵ It is argued that organized terrorism is an activity engaged in essentially by 'nonstate' actors, that is, it is mainly the tactic of "outgroups" denied legitimate status and of the politically weak and frustrated (for example PLO) who see terror as the best tool for contesting the vast armies and police forces possessed by the governments of nation-states.⁶ Related to this aspect of the 'nonstate' character of terrorists, a distinction needs to be made

between the groups that operate relatively openly as armed revolutionary or guerilla forces limiting their attacks primarily to military targets and those groups that operate in a highly 'clandestine and sporadic' fashion with random target. The latter groups are "clearly" terrorists.⁷ But, however, in practice, the distinction can often be blurred.⁸

Though 'terrorism' as a word was in vogue during the 'Reign of Terror' in the French Revolution of eighteenth century, as a concept it owes its origin to the anarchist trend of 19th century revolutionary movements. Philosophical foundation of terrorism may be traced to Michael Bakunin's fascinating radical document, the Revolutionary Catechism, published in 1869 in which he wrote : "Let us put our trust in the eternally creative source of life. The urge to destroy is also a creative urge This social world has become important and sterile.... We must purify our atmosphere and transform completely the milieu in which we live The social question takes the form, primarily of the overthrow of society".⁹ Bakunin was thus the first to provide theoretical foundation to terrorism. With this theoretical support, terrorism in modern times has become a more serious concern due to the increased vulnerability of modern industrial civilization, the existence of communications and travel technologies that permit terrorists to operate on a global scale, and the expanded ties among terrorist groups across natural boundaries.¹⁰

Terrorist organizations generally adopt different names for themselves to make their organizations easily acceptable to the society at large. Some of the examples are :

- (a) Freedom and Liberation like national Liberation Front, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine etc.
- (b) Armies or other military organizational structures, for example, National Military Organization, the Popular Liberation Army, the Fifth Battalion of the Liberation Army etc.
- (c) Self-defence movements, for example, the organization for the Defense of the People, the Jewish Defence Organization and the like.
- (d) Righteous vengeance like the organization for the oppressed on Earth, the Justice Commandos of the American Genocide, the Palestinian Revenge Organization etc.

It is widely accepted that terrorism is a *Pejorative* term with *intrinsically* negative connotations. Terrorism then, is :

- (a) ineluctably political in aims and motives;
- (b) violent - or equally important, threatens violence;
- (c) designed to have for reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target;
- (d) conducted by an organization with an identifiable chain of command;
- (e) perpetrated by the subnational group or non-state entity.

Terrorism is designed to create power where there is none or to consolidate where there is little or very little. Through the publicity generated by their violence, terrorists seek to obtain the leverage, influence and power they otherwise lack to effect political change on either local or an international scale.¹¹

II

Martha Crenshaw sought to identify the objective element in the definition of terrorism. To her, terrorism is highly *symbolic* and *perceptual*.¹² Scholars are of the opinion that there is the need to develop a bounded concept on which theoretical explanation can be built and the desire to avoid the appearance of taking sides in the political conflict that motivates the activity of terrorism.

It has been held that "terrorism is not a *neutral descriptive* term. Even scholarly definitions of terrorism are *subjective* because they must take into account ordinary language uses of the term which contain *value judgement*."¹³ Even if the term is used in political sense, "it is an organizing concept that both describes the phenomenon as it exists and offers a moral judgement".¹⁴

In common political parlance, the term terrorism is generally contested for a number of reasons. Politics is, after all, a game of competition for power : how far is achieved and how is to be retained. This entire game is played in the general backdrop of political process which confronts many situations which are not only unforeseen but also very challenging in nature. This competition for political power creates conditions where the principal actors try to project themselves as 'friendly' and other, *unfriendly*. Since these two terms appear to be less acceptable in common vocabulary, the current usage which has gained currency is political adversaries or terrorist. In other words, the debate centres

round the issue of conformism and anti-conformism. This position changes with the changes of circumstances. The best example one may draw is the case of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization). While at the initial phase, both the USA and Israel called PLO a terrorist organization, subsequently USA changed its stand but it is not the case with Israel which still holds PLO to be a terrorist organization. Similarly, in the 1930's and 1940's the Jews were hiding in secret dens and were called 'terrorists'. But by 1944-45, suddenly Zionist Palestinian were no longer terrorists but freedom fighters. Menahem Begin, who once had a £100,00 pound price tag on his head (the highest at the time) became a freedom fighter overnight and later Prime Minister of Israel, and went on to receive the Noble Peace Prize. Thus, the shifts of labels from conformism and anti-conformism has often more to do with political expediency than anything else.¹⁵

This probably may take a new definition. If in a situation, the regime in power feels that entire society is not extending support to it, it can label the society as a whole affected by the disease of terrorism. The same situation can be seen in case of the Argentine military rule. In a bid to make the society free from these vices, the government wanted to destroy *organized opposition*. Countries like Italy, Northern Ireland, West Germany, and Peru have had similar experiences in tackling terrorist activities.

An underground organization may define terrorism as a warfare in order to acquire political recognition and status that may bring legitimacy. It is often noticed that even small number of terrorist organization would prefer to call them an 'army' such as Red Army, Japanese Red Army and the like. In order to create an everlasting impact on the minds of the people. It has been very correctly observed : "Terrorism projects images, communicates messages and creates myths at transcend historical circumstances and motivate future generations It is easy for terrorism to become the cutting edge of a movement and to define an ideology. Undeniably it possesses an aura of perversely tragic glamour".¹⁶

III

In this general backdrop, the essential pre-conditions which augment terrorist activities may be discussed. It is generally believed that pre-conditions may be classified into *enabling* or *permissive* factors. The first one creates

conditions which may help terrorism to grow. The second one takes direct initiatives which may motivate terrorism or terrorist campaigns.

In this context, an attempt can be made to identify the causes of terrorism. Broadly speaking, terrorism may be the result of a number of factors - social, political and economic. In the first place, terrorism may be outcome of grievances among identifiable groups or sub-groups of a larger population. The domination by the majority over an ethnic minority may force the latter to adopt terrorist activities. In other words, social domination and discrimination may give birth to terrorist actions in a particular social system.

Closely following this, comes the issues involved in social movements. Here a line of caution needs to be mentioned. Not all the social movements cause terrorism but terrorist actions may be considered as specific response to long standing social discrimination. The emergence of 'separatist nationalism' can very well be related to terrorist activities in many western states. It is important to note that most of the nationalist movements in colonial periods all over the world saw the rise and growth of terrorism both in larger and smaller span.

The second condition which may give rise to terrorism is 'the lack of opportunities for political participation'. These types of conditions are essentially political in nature. There may be regimes which do not allow sufficient space for the people in the decision-making process. This type of governmental policy may not be directed towards any specific ethnic, religious or racial sub-groups of the population. In specific conditions where there is very little scope for legal expression of opposition and "where the regime's repression is inefficient, revolutionary terrorism is doubly likely, as permissive and direct causes coincide".¹⁷

A new kind of interpretation has been advanced where it is held that terrorism is the result of elite-dissatisfaction and not mass dissatisfaction as it is generally believed. The cases where student unrest gives birth to terrorist movements establish the fact that a small section of enlightened group takes recourse to terrorist path with a view to redressing its grievances. This elite dimension (by enlightened group) has been highlighted in the contemporary literature on terrorism. The examples of such terrorist movements can be found in the post-World War-II in West Germany, Italy, the USA, Japan and Uruguay;. Thus conceived, terrorism may be 'the sign of a *stable society* rather than a symptom of *fragility* and *impending collapses*'.

Another factor which may cause terrorism can be found in what is called '*action-reaction syndrome*'. It is a conflict of a structure between the regime and its challengers. The actions by the IRA in Northern Ireland or the RAF (Red Army Faction) against Shah of Iran during 1968 are best examples of this kind of development.

IV

This discussion leads one to examine the nature of motivation of terrorism. Generally speaking, terrorism may be motivated by political, religious or ideological objectives. To be more precise, terrorist motivation may be classified as *rational*, *psychological* and *cultural*. It has been noticed that rational motivation is based on, in one sense, cost-benefit analysis. Such terrorist activities are guided by one consideration : whether these are less costly and more effective to achieve the objective for which such activities are undertaken. The terrorist organization in such a case takes into account the defensive capabilities of the target and here a terrorist organization, in many cases, is guided by a rational analysis like a military commander or a business entrepreneur who judges the market before launching a new product. There are many examples in recent times when terrorist activities failed to have any impact because of miscalculations that may antagonize the whole society leading ultimately to a total rejection by the people as it happened in Uruguay and Argentina in early 1970s,

Psychological motivation for terrorism is a more complicated aspect as in most cases, it is guided by subjective rather than objective considerations. This kind of psychological position emerges from a polarized outlook like "we versus they". This psychological characterization helps a terrorist group to dehumanize their opponents by removing any kind of ambiguity from their minds. This brings within a terrorist group a kind of feeling of oneness which helps them intensify group dynamics. The terrorist groups move towards Maximalist positions by rejecting any kind of compromise. This position often leads to further fragmentation of a terrorist group and the elements of group dynamics may give rise to splinter groups of terrorist outfits which appear to be more violent than their parent bodies. There is a line of argument that such fragmentations generate a kind of fear of total extinction in the minds of the

splinter groups and this may compel them to broaden their objectives which may appear to be difficult to achieve.

Cultural dimension of terrorist motivation has occupied a very important place in the world of terrorist activities to-day. This aspect is closely related with the value system among a particular group of people. A major factor in cultural dimension of terrorist activities is the fear of total destruction of one culture by influence of 'outsiders'. Many other social factors like ethnic affinity, linguistic bondage or even religious belief may play very effective role in this aspect of terrorism.

V

Psychodynamic theories of terrorist motivation and behaviour have been explained in details by Jerrold H. Post (1998) in an article under the title "Terrorist psycho-logic : Terrorist Behaviour as a product of Psychological Forces."¹⁸ In this opinion, "Political terrorists are driven to commit acts of violence as a consequence of psychologically compelled to commit."¹⁹ One striking feature of all the terrorist groups, as has been revealed through different studies, is the attribute of normality in their group behaviour. There may be diverse personalities that are attracted to the path of terrorism. "An examination of memoirs, court records, and rare interviews suggests that people with particular personality traits and tendencies are drawn disproportionately to terrorist carriers."²⁰

It has been suggested that in every terrorist group there are two opposing forces which have been termed as 'the work group' and 'the basic assumption group'. While the work group acts in 'a goal directed manner', the basic assumption group proceeds to work in a condition which can sabotage their declared goals.²¹ On the basis of this generalization, the terrorist groups are further sub-divided as the fight-fight group, the dependency group and the pairing group.²²

In the works of Post :

(1) The fight-fight group defines itself in relation to the outside world, which both threatens and justifies its existence. It acts as if the only way it can preserve itself is by fighting against or fleeing from the perceived enemy.

(2) The dependency group turns to an omnipotent leader for direction.

Members who fall into this state subordinate their own judgement to that of the leader and act as if they do not have minds of their own.

(3) The pairing group acts as if the group will bring forth a messiah who will rescue them and create a better world.²³

Within this general framework, it has been argued that 'a terrorist group needs to commit acts of terrorism in order to justify its existence.'²⁴

The discussion made so far establishes the fact that terrorism is not only a group activity but also an organized activity. In other words, terrorist activity is the work of an ongoing group, sometimes simple, sometimes complex in nature. The following observations on terrorist organisation provide meaningful insights into any discussion on terrorism : :Organisation details (of terrorism) are situation-specific. There are, however, a few general organizational principles. Because terrorists must operate in a hostile environment, security is their primary concern. Security is best served by a cellular structure in which members do not know and cannot identify more than a few of their colleagues in the event of capture or defection."²⁵

An outline of typology that has been developed by Richard Schultz attempts to classify terrorism on the basis of its activities under specific socio-political conditions.²⁶ In his opinion, there are three generalized categories of political action by internal or external agents :

(1) Revolutionary terrorism - the threat or use of political violence aimed at effecting complete revolutionary change.

(2) Sub-revolutionary terrorism - the threat or use of political violence aimed at effecting various changes in a particular political system (but not to abolish it).

(3) Establishment terrorism - the threat or use of political violence by an established political system against internal or external opposition.

Seven possible variables in determining nature of terrorism are :

(1) Causes - any one or more observable economic, political, social, psychological factors (long term or short-term) underlying a decision to use violence.

(2) Environment - (internal) urban/rural movements within the nation-state, (external) global, other nation states.

(3) Goals - objectives as long range plans or short-term tactics.

(4) **Strategy** - overall plan with necessary policies, actions and instruments.

(5) **Means** - capabilities and techniques varying in destructive effort, cost, practically and frequency of use, propaganda.

(6) **Organisation** - structure, leadership, delegation, specific responsibilities, training, recruitment, logistic support, intelligence, funding.

(7) **Participation** - committed activists, full-time and part-time members, passive sympathizers.²⁷

Many options have been suggested as parts of an anti-terrorist campaign such as :

(1) Attempt to find long-term solutions to the underlying causes of terrorism. (This approach proceeds on the assumption that there are remedial inequalities in society that may provide objective causes of terrorism).

(2) Attempt to place legal limits on the ability of the media to report terrorist activities. (Such actions might call for policy changes relating to the freedom of the press and other issues which are considered vital in a democratic set up).

(3) Develop and depoly highly intrusive technologies as preemptive moves. (Such attempts might involve major policy decisions relating to civil rights, police powers and the acceptability of such measures by the society.²⁸

In a very comprehensive study, Boaz Ganor has analyzed a new phenomenon of terrorism, that is, state-sponsored terrorism.²⁹ He has identified four types of support that a state may provide to a terrorist group, namely, *ideological support, financial support, military support and operational support*. He has made a brief discussion of the utilitarian approaches of "Critical Dialogue" and "Buying Silence".

(a) The Critical Dialogue - a Utilitarian Argument :

Countries with extensive economic links with states involved in terrorism seek to justify their policy along utilitarian lines. These countries want to maintain the policy of 'Critical Dialogue' which will keep 'open channels' through which some corrective measures can be taken.

(b) Buying silence - The Security Argument :

The dialogue through 'Open Channel' may help the negotiator to silence

the terrorist organisation for a specific period. This period may be used for assessing the effectiveness of other means to counter terrorism.

This discussion has sought to highlight the issue involved in terrorism and the impact of terrorism on individual, state and society. Whatever might be the causes of the emergence and spread of terrorism, one cannot disagree with what Bruce Hoffman has observed when he says : "In sum, the emergence of this new breed of terrorist adversary means that nothing less than a sea-change in our thinking about terrorism and the policies to counter it will be required. Too often in the past we have lulled ourselves into believing that terrorism was among the least serious or complex of security issues. We cannot afford to go on making this mistake."³⁰

Sooner this mistake is corrected, better for the individual, state and society. A variety of approaches may be identified and utilized to combat terrorism ranging from unilateral national policies to global regime building, highly visible displays of force to move quiet-behind-the-scenes intelligence work, and actions directed at government sponsors of terrorism to actions directed at terrorist groups themselves.³¹ Equally important is the realization that if humanity hopes to achieve the goal of maintaining peace and reducing physical violence in the world - either traditional warfare or terrorism - it is unlikely that this can be done without also addressing concerns about justice and what has been called "structural" violence, that is, hunger, poor healthcare and other forms of economic, social and political deprivation.³² In fact, this will help in identifying and spotting terrorism properly so that United States and Israel are not to repeat their opposition to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution of 1987 that condemned terrorism with a saving clause that "nothing in the present Resolution could in any way prejudice the Rights of Self Determination, Freedom and Independence, as derived from the Charter of the United Nations, of people forcibly deprived of that right ... particularly people under colonial and racist regimes and foreign occupation or other forms of colonial domination, nor .. the rights of these people to struggle to this end and to seek and receive support in accordance with the Charter and other principles of international law"³³ Narrow ethno-cultural lenses are to be avoided in perceiving and viewing the problems of terrorism as one of Huntington's 'The Clash of Civilization' so that an objective global perspective emerges and is tried. Least, the entire human civilization would be at the mercy of the so-called terrorists in this nuclear age of possible annihilation.

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**SECULARISM : A STRATEGY TO PROMOTE
NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN INDIA
A HISTORICAL SURVEY**

S.H. Patil

This paper describes, in the part I, the nature of Indian society, lists the challenges in general and then highlights religious fundamentalism and ethnic nationalism as the major challenges to the national integration of India. Part II covers, in brief, the role played by early sages, thinkers, emperors, the national movement, legacy of national leaders, the present constitution and the political parties in the development of concept of one India from the ancient period to the modern period. Such historical legacy will serve both as a base and strategy to meet new challenges to the national integration. Part III lists the various strategies to bring about national integration. Among the various strategies, secularism as a comprehensive strategy has been examined in details. Part IV deals with a few conclusions.

I

In order to build an integrated India, problems threatening national integration are to be identified.

The present nature of Indian society has given scope for structural challenges to the national integration. India is one of the world's most complex plural societies. Such complexity is the result of its long history, vast and varied population, existence of many religions and castes, various regions and sub-regions, baffling number of languages, bewildering number of ethnic groups, etc. In addition to these amazing diversities, there are built in paradoxes which also threaten national integration: (a) Tradition and modernity uneasily co-exist side by side. There are occasional conflicts between the two in different forms.

(b) India is a communal society with a secular state. There have been violent clashes between the communal and secular forces. (c) It is a casteless democratic state with caste representation at various levels. There have been violent clashes among these caste groups for socio-economic and political benefits.

Among the various challenges, the religious fundamentalism of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, and ethnic nationalism in some of the north-eastern states like Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Assam, etc., are the most serious challenges to the national integration.

Religious fundamentalism is concerned more with political power and political structure than with the fundamentals of religion and adopts violent means to achieve its objectives. It has sentimental appeal in a traditional society like India. With the communalisation of politics, there has been increase in the communal violence. The following table gives a picture of increasing communal violence in India between 1955-1985.¹

Communal Violence Between 1955-1985

Year	No. of Incidents	No. of Persons Killed	No. of Persons Injured
1955	75	24	457
1965	173	34	758
1975	205	33	890
1985	525	328	3665

(b) There has been no definite decline in the member of communal violence. The communal violence after the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992 was unimaginable and tarnished the secular image of India both within and outside the country. India's foreign policy had a setback in foreign countries in general and the middle east in particular.

(d) Communalism has given birth to twin devils - hatred and violence. These have been on increase even in independent India. It has become an enemy of secularism, national integration and hindrance to state-building, nation-building and citizenship building processes. It has become the single biggest subversive ideology in the present day India.

Religious fundamentalism is both all India and regional phenomenon. At all India level, it takes the form of Hindu-Muslim conflict, disrupts the flow of communal harmony, causes damages to public and private properties and results in loss of lives from both communities. At regional level, it has indulged in separate tendencies in certain peripheral states like Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir. Separatist forces have become dangerously violent in recent years due to external help and encouragement. Pakistan has been indoctrinating, training and equipping the militants from these two states with the latest weapons and has been pushing them back into these two states to carry on sabotage and other violent activities. It has been trying to internationalise disturbances in Jammu and Kashmir state through the General Assembly of U.N.O. and U.N. Commission on Human Rights in the name of violation of human rights. It seems that it is not interested in an integrated and united India.

Certain forces in Assam like the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) want independent state in the name of Assamese language and culture. There has been urge for separate identities among certain ethnic communities in north-east Indian states like Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Assam, etc. Ethnicity has a great organising force in the tribal community.² Some external forces have directly and indirectly encouraged these ethnic communities to secede from the Indian union.

Thus among the various forces, religious fundamentalism of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, and ethnic nationalism of some groups have organised themselves into militant unions and have grown beyond the imagination of secular men. They have been trying to acquire legitimacy and popular support through various struggles, means and symbols. Never since independence, integration of India has been so seriously challenged as it is today.

II

The concept of one India entertained and developed in the past provides base and encouragement to face the present challenges to the national integration. Positive side of history has to be re-emphasised and is to be popularised. Therefore one need not be disheartened by the challenges to the national integration.

The concept of one India was entertained by the saints, sages and intellectuals in the ancient and medieval India. Though India was divided into

numerous political entities, these men had a geographical and cultural picture of one India. There are descriptions about various places of worship and pilgrimages, rivers, mountains, geographical size and boundaries of one cultural India in epics, poetries, dramas and other literary works. Further various royal dynasties like Maurya, Gupta, Vijayanagar, Maratha, Moghul, etc., had made serious attempts to bring India under one rule. It is the British who added geographical and administrative unity to the cultural concept of one India.

During the British rule various socio-cultural organisations came into existence with all India perspectives and plans. Among these the Indian national Congress was the most important. The Congress came to play a dominant role in shaping the destiny of modern India.

However the British did not like the rise of such organisations in India and followed the policy of divide and rule. It encouraged both the conservative forces like the Indian princes and the communal forces like the Muslim League and the Hindu Maha Sabha. With the good will of the British, the Indian princes formed an all India organisation, the Indian Chamber of Princes, to protect their interests. The Chamber of Princes came into existence in February 1920.³ The British indirectly helped in the establishment of Muslim League in 1906, and paved the way for separatism in Indian politics. The Hindu Maha Sabha was established in 1913 to protect the interests of Hindus only.

In order to counteract the Chamber of princes, the Muslim League and the Hindu Maha Sabha, the Indian national Congress had to build nationalism on the basis of democracy, federalism and secularism. In this connection, it encouraged the establishment of Praja Mandals and the struggle for responsible governments in princely states. Politically awakened people in princely states brought pressure on their princes to join the Indian union in 1947. Under the dynamic leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, out of 562 princely states, 557 princely states joined the Indian union.⁴ Only three states - Kalat, Bahawalpur and Khairpur - joined Pakistan and remaining two states - Bhutan and Sikkim remained independent. Later on Sikkim joined the Indian union. The story of integration of princely states with the Indian union is to be retold in the nationalist spirit to the young children in order to strengthen their resolve to retain historical union and legacy.

Since 1885 the Congress has been trying to bring all Indians belonging to different races, religious, languages and regions on a common platform. Dadabhai Nauroji, one of the founders of the Indian national Congress, gave a

call for union of all creeds and classes at the Calcutta session in 1906 : "for a through political union among Indian people of all creeds and classes."⁵ In its long course of history, the Congress had tried to neutralise the communal forces like the Muslim League and the Hindu Maha Sabha. Earlier it wanted to take the Muslim League into fold in its fight against the British and such attempt was Khilafat movement. Later in 1928 it took the League into confidence through all party conference whose report visualised united democratic secular India. In 1937 the Congress adopted a lengthy document on the rights of minorities which was in continuation of the Karachi resolution on Fundamental Rights. Free India was to observe "neutrality in regard to all religions."

During the freedom movement, the Indian nationalism developed twin character : Pan Indian and Regional. The freedom movement developed all India nationalism while linguistic and ethnic groups developed regional nationalism. During freedom movement both types of nationalism worked against the British imperialism. But after independence, some regional loyalties are trying convert themselves into independent states.

The national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Abul Kalam Azad, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, etc., have immensely contributed to the national integration through secularism. Legacy of these leaders has been influencing the forces of national integration. It deserves to be continued.

Gandhiji believed that national integration can be brought about in India by establishing Hindu-Muslim unity. He preached and practised Hindu-Muslim unity and put it as one of the important items in the constructive programmes for restructuring India on new socio-economic and political bases. The Hindu-Muslim unity was meant to consolidate national strength for constructive purpose. Without it there can be no social stability and harmony in India. According to Gandhiji, the Hindu-Muslim unity is like a daily growing plant which requires special care and attention by the two communities. He suggested the following measures to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity which forms the basis of national integration :⁶ (i) The Hindus and the Muslims should develop a charitable disposition towards each other and should cultivate the spirit of compromise and accommodation. (ii) The members of both communities should be educated in the common citizenship and should enjoy equal rights and duties. (iii) The Hindus should not play music when they pass through the Masjids where the Muslims offer prayers in solemn silence. They should respect the

sentiments of the Muslims in this respect, (iv) Similarly the Muslims should not slaughter the cows which the Hindus consider as sacred animals. They should voluntarily respect the sentiments of the Hindus in this respect.

Gandhiji also suggested other non-violent measures to resolve all disputes between the Hindus and Muslims :⁷ (i) As the leaders play an important role in resolving the disputes and in bring harmony between these two communities, they must set an example of communal harmony to others. (ii) They must refer the unresolved disputes to the panchayat consisting of men with unimpeachable integrity from both the communities. Decisions of such panchayat should be binding on both the communities. The leaders should develop public opinion in favour of such decisions.

Thus Gandhiji suggested various measures to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity which can be a strong and wide base for national integration. The measures suggested by Gandhiji are valid even today. Dispute regarding Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid can be resolved without illwill towards any community in the light of measures suggested by Gandhiji.

According to Gandhiji, India belongs to all those who are born in it. Swaraj state belongs to neither to the Hindus nor to the Muslims but to all. In his prayer meetings he used to emphasize religious tolerance and religious unity.⁸ He died in the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity and of national integration.

As early as 1922, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru wanted Hindu-Muslim unity at grass root level and desired that the village Congress committees should work for promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity.⁹ Even today there is need for all party committee for each village and city to maintain communal harmony. It is an important strategy at grass root level.

Pt. Nehru advocated and practised secularism to bring about national integration. He was very symbol of secularism and national integration. He brought Shri Sheikh Abdullah and Jammu and Kashmir princely state to the main national stream through the All India States' Peoples' Conference which was an umbrella organisation to the Praja Mandals and people's organisations in princely states. He was a president of the All India States' Peoples' Conference and Shri Sheikh Abdulla was its vice president for sometime and the latter become the president of AISPC in 1947. Pt. Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan were closely associated with the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference established by Shri Sheikh Abdullah for securing

responsible government in Jammu and Kashmir. The All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference continues to be secular organisation even today under the leadership of Shri Farooq Abdullah, son of Sheikh Abdullah. Secular forces can be strengthened in Jammu and Kashmir only thorough Farook Abdullah and his National Conference and the Congress party. Secular legacy of Shri Sheikh Abdullah and Pt. Nehru is to be developed and strengthened in Jammu and Kashmir. Only such reinforced legacy has legitimacy to retain Jammu and Kashmir state in India. Jammu and Kashmir is the secular face of India.

Pt. Nehru built his concept of secularism on the basis of rationality and humanism. He wanted to keep religion away from state and politics. Consequently he did not participate in religious functions nor did he tolerate the politicians participating in religious functions. His legacy of rational secularism is to be propagated and practised both by the politicians and the people in order to strengthen secular dimensions of national integration.

The Forward Bloc of Shri Subhas Chandra Bose which worked as a radical group within the Congress party before independence advocated religious freedom to all and opposed communalism. The Indian National Army (INA) of Subhas Chandra Bose was organised on secular basis. He too wanted to bring national integration through secularism, nationalism ad socialism. His concept of secularism is to be re-emphasized to strengthen national integration.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was an apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity. He did not find any conflict in being a good Muslim and also a good Indian nationalist.¹⁰ He was in favour of undivided India and fought for it all along and was unhappy with partition of the country in 1947.¹¹ Legacy of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad will inspire both the Hindus and the muslims to promote national integration. In this connection, his relevant writings are to be popularised.

Some of the provisions in the Indian constitution can be used to promote national integration through secularism. Preamble to the constitution as amended in 1976 through 42nd amendment declares India to be secular state. Articles 25, 26, 27 and 28 deal with freedom of religion. Articles 29 and 30 give cultural freedom to the cultural and linguistic minorities. In terms of constitutional provisions, every religious, cultural and linguistic group has no reason to feel isolated and discriminated and need not dream of independent state to preserve its special cultural identity. In these matters minorities have full freedom to preserve their cultural identity and to promote their linguistic interests. If they feel that they are discriminated, they have the constitutional rights under articles

32 and 226 to move to the Supreme Court and high court respectively by appropriate proceedings for the enforcement of these rights. Thus the constitutional provisions and judicial pronouncements must be highlighted to dispel the fears of religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities.

III

In India national integration process has to go through three stages - state-building, nation-building and citizenship building.¹² National integration which is outcome of state-building and citizenship-building can be achieved by even economic development of all regions, by ensuring fair standard of living to all citizens, by establishing socially equalitarian society, by modernising education system, by bringing harmony among the various religious and ethnic groups, by encouraging only national and secular parties and leadership, by secularizing political process, etc. Among these several strategies to secure national integration, secularism is an important strategy in the Indian context. As India is a plural society, national integration cannot be achieved through cultural nationalism and can be achieved through territorial nationalism. Secularism is well suited to territorial nationalism in a multi-religious society like India. India has taken and should take "pride in its plural society with its cultural diversity and religious tolerance."¹³ Further Paul Wallace also forms similar opinion. He says, "Ethnic, (and) religious sub-political systems can exist side by side with the secular systems and can compete constructively within the geographical area."¹⁴

Secularism is not only national strategy for national integration, it is also a strategy to solve many socio-economic problems. Survival of united and integrated India depends on it. After demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in December 1992, the Congress re-emphasized multi-dimension of concept of secularism in the Indian context : "(The) Congress had from the very first day of its coming into being realised that without secularism no national objective would ever be achieved, be it our national independence, social advancement or economic progress. In fact, even our survival as a nation and a nation state is linked with the secular character of our society."¹⁵

The following measures may be adopted to strengthen national integration :

1. Communalisation of Indian society has taken place for nearly a hundred years. In course of time it has become an ideology or belief system through which Indian polity is viewed. Therefore attempts should be made to separate religion from politics not only in theory but also in practice. National integration has been threatened by certain communal groups and leaders who are **integrated** interested in capturing power at any cost and justify their actions in the name of religion which has an emotional appeal to the people. Political actions should not be allowed in the name of religion.

Addressing the Indian Council of World Affairs in December 1993, Justice Muhammad Said al-Ashmawy, Chief Justice of the Higher State Security and Criminal Court of Egypt, said, "When religion is meshed with politics, it transforms into an ideology, not a religion, its followers become politicians or party members, not spiritual being at all."¹⁶ Further he said that religio-political factors distort faiths, hinder people from being united in one humanity and propagate misconstrued ideas through the strong pull of a blind faith and distorted feelings. He opined that religion should return to its base. The statement of the learned judge is very appropriate to the present Indian conditions.

Four important sub-systems of the Indian political system - the party system, the parliamentary system, the administrative system and the electoral system - should be secularised and directed to achieve national integration.

2. All out war should be declared against communalism which has threatened the national integration. Communalism has two dimensions - communal ideology and communal violence. Communal ideology is concerned with belief system and strengthens communal feelings, attitudes and modes of thought. It survives on fear, suspicion and hatred. When it spreads on a large scale, it acquires a life and force of its own. Then it cannot be managed by those who had fathered it. It leads to polarisation of people into hostile groups. It can go on spreading and acquiring strength for years before it manifests itself in communal violence.

Communal ideology is to be eliminated by counter ideology, secularism. Secularism is to be developed over the years. In this struggle against communal ideology, educationists, journalists,

political parties, political leaders, mass media, and professional associations have to educate the people of India about negative side of communal ideology and positive side of secular ideology. It is a long term public education.

Communal violence is to be curbed immediately and firmly by the state. As it weakens national economy, destabilises political system, hastens the process of disintegration of the country, causes untold human sufferings, etc., it is to be put down with heavy hand without delay of fraction of a minute.

3. National integration can be strengthened by secular nationalism. Nationalism in India should not be based on Hinduism or Islam or Sikhism or Buddhism. Promotion of nationalism in the name of religion will have counter productive effect in a multi religious country like India. Secular national identity can be fostered only when communal, ethnic and caste identities are eliminated in the political field. Only modernisation and secularisation can weaken the communal and caste bonds.¹⁷
4. There is need for reorganising the educational system on national and secular lines. In order to develop national and secular outlook among the students, all educational institutions should be run by government autonomous boards. The teachers should be recruited on the basis of secular considerations. The text books should give importance to national integration and secularism. When the educational institutions produce students with national and secular outlook, emotional integration can be achieved without much difficulty. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders.
5. Political parties based on religion, ethnicity and caste should be banned once for all. The laws should recognise only secular political parties. Enrolment of members by each party should be open to all men and women irrespective of race, religion, region and caste. Communal activities of any party in any form should be banned. In other words, the political parties should be secular and national in their organisation, ideology, programmes and functioning both in theory and practice. Only such parties will definitely promote secularism and national integration.

6. People's movements should be periodically organised to create awareness among the people about relevance of secularism and national integration. Ordinary people and various voluntary organisations should be involved in building secular and united India.
7. Common civil code for all communities should be evolved in order to strengthen common citizenship. India has already common criminal code applicable to all communities. Now there is need for common civil code based not on any religion but on rationality, humanity and modernity. Such civil laws promote common citizenship, secularism and national integration.
8. Mass media like T.V., Radio and newspapers should promote secularism and national integration. As T.V. and Radio are owned by the state, they can play a constructive role in this respect. As newspapers are owned by the private individuals and institutions, there is need for control over them. No communal organisation should be allowed to own and operate newspapers. Only secular organisations should be allowed to own and operate newspapers. Only secular organisations should be allowed to own and operate newspapers. A newspaper which promotes communalism and disintegrative forces should be banned permanently.
9. India should evolve certain common goals like secularism, democracy, social justice, economic development, etc., which can bring all communities together. The people of India can work together to achieve such secular goals which can cement their relationship.
10. The National Integration Council should be strengthened both in terms of its composition and functioning. It should consist of leaders who matter in shaping public opinion on secular lines in the country. Its composition and functioning should be such that it should command national confidence and respect.

IV

Secularism, one of the important strategies to secure national integration, has to be strengthened. Spirit of secularism has to pervade every family, village, and town in India. Only secularising process can save India

from disintegration in view of rise of communal forces within country and hostile and imperialist forces outside.

Emotional integration of Sikhs in Punjab, Muslims in Kashmir valley and Christians and other tribal people in Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, etc., in the north-east, and of Hindus and Muslims in the rest of India can alone be the solid foundation for national integration. Only united and integrated India can be a model to the rest of world in the lessons of secularism, pluralism, democracy, development and peaceful co-existence.

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DYNAMICS OF CASTE POLITICS IN WEST BENGAL : A CASE STUDY OF JALPAIGURI DISTRICT

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Caste is a part of Hindu society. Its meaning as a social institution is found in the values of Hindu culture. In this sense, all castes share a common culture, purpose and identity.¹ Some sociologists maintain that caste system is peculiar to Indian civilization.²

According to Maxweber 'Caste is doubtlessly a close status group' and castes are communities as distinct from classes which are categories.³ The caste system is a particular type of social system in which ascriptive status of the individual determines his life's course. Caste membership is immutable and there appears to be no sanctioned mode of mobility.⁴

Caste is a peculiar and complex matter. Different writers and scholars have defined it from different angles. But it can be said that caste has changed its primitive and old ideas simultaneously. Caste has shown a remarkable capacity to adjust to a new condition and situation.⁵ It is so, because their self consciousness has increased. In fact, caste organise themselves in order to further the interests of their members.⁶ E.R. Leach's view that whenever caste groups are seen to be acting as corporations in competition against like groups of different caste, they are acting in defiance of caste principles, is not in keeping with reality.⁷ In Indian society, as in other 'traditional' societies, an important place is held by groups based on what have been called 'primordial loyalties'.⁸ Caste constitutes, in this sense, a psychological root to support or provide loyalties, to keen groups.

"Politics is the competitive enterprise, its purpose is the acquisition of power for the realization fo certain goals, and its process is one of identifying

and manipulating existing and emerging allegiance in order to mobilize and consolidate position"⁹ Srinivas was the first to indicate a great congruence between caste, class and power in his concept of the dominant caste.

'A caste is dominant' writes Srinivas, when it preponderates numerically over the other-Castes and when it also wields preponderate economic and political power. A large and powerful caste group can be more dominant if its position in the local caste hierarchy is not too low."¹⁰

Everyone recognizes that the traditional social system in India was organised around caste structure and caste identities.¹¹ The caste structure is the main mass based organisation in which politics strive to organise this system in a definite structure for their purpose. According to Beteille, caste may enter into the political process in a number of ways. Firstly, appeals may be made to caste loyalties, secondly interpersonal relations are activated both during election and at other times for mobilising support along caste lines. Thirdly, caste associations seek to articulate caste interests in an organised manner. Politics monitors and emphasise on these caste feelings to achieve goals. On the other hand, caste group use politics to assert their identity,. There is a dialectical relations between caste and politics. It is assumed that caste and politics are interactive and interpenetrative.

It is indisputable that the caste system has been changing. Change has always been present, though its rate in different aspects of the system has not been uniform.¹² Western education, developing programmes for modernization have brought the new technology and "concepts like freedom, equality, secularism and democracy."¹³ "These ideas accelerated the tempo of social change in India. In India the most important result of the caste politics inter action is the idea of 'quality of status and opportunity'. Accordingly, some special provisions particularly in favour of members of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes were considered desirable and the principle of positive discrimination was given an important position in the constitution."¹⁴

At present the old-aged caste system has undergone change. In recent times caste system is organised on the basis of scheduled caste, tribes and general. The present paper tries to find out the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe politics in the district of Jalpaiguri.

It may be pointed out that the term 'Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribes' are only constitutional myth.¹⁵ A variety of programmes were initiated

soon after Independence for the welfare and advancement of members of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes. For Indian Policy makers, it poses increasingly thorny and pressing political issues.¹⁶ Reservation has been made by the framers of the constitution to uplift the weaker sections of society and to bring them into the mainstream of development at par with others.¹⁷ Reservation policy is one of the devices to tackle the problems of social, political and economical backwardness.

Objectives of the study :

The objectives of this study is to find out the pattern and dimension of caste politics interaction and how politics as a means ameliorate social condition in the district of Jalpaiguri. This study also attempts to find out the attitude of individual's behaviour and perception in the political process.

Justification of the study :

This district of Jalpaiguri has been selected as an unit of study for the following reasons :

1. Jalpaiguri is the second largest district in West Bengal which contains the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population. It contains the largest concentration and the widest mixture of Scheduled Tribes.

2. Jalpaiguri is named after the principal town Jalpaiguri. The name is derived from 'jalpai' or olive tree' and 'guri' or 'place' meaning thereby the place of olive trees, which once abounded in the town of Jalpaiguri. It enjoys a special feature in geographical location and demographic structure.

The population of Jalpaiguri as per provisional census Report of 1991 is 2,78,827 out of which 10,57,207 i.e. 37.17% belong to Scheduled Caste and 97,161 i.e. 21.40% are Scheduled Tribes. In other words about 58.60 of the district comes from these communities.

Methodology :

The required data for the present paper have been collected through survey method with the help of a questionnaire used as a pilot survey. The findings of the study are strictly limited to the sources taken from Jalpaiguri. Respondents have been selected with the help of sampling. Interviews were conducted with a sample of 9 scheduled Caste and 2 Scheduled Tribe leaders belonging to both rural and urban settings. Data have been analysed manually.

Analysis :

Table I shows that respondents have been chosen from different categories like state level politics, party leaders and Panchayats - 18.18 per cent from state level politics, 63.64 per cent from Panchayats and 18.18 per cent from party leaders. This table clearly defines that maximum numbers have been taken from panchayat level. This demographic picture have been seen after 73rd Constitutional amendment Act, 1992. By this amendment, reservation of seats for (I) Scheduled caste (II) Scheduled tribes have been allotted.

The density of population determine the size and variations of Gram Panchayat. Presently their position is much better than before. Politically they have enriched higher ranking of position in this district. It is often seen that a particular caste, i.e., Scheduled Caste is highly represented in the Village Panchayat or the Panchayat Samiti or the Zilla Parishad. This high representation may at times be due to the fact that the caste in question numerically preponderant and highly represented in the population as a whole.

Table II shows that 81 per cent of respondents have been selected from Scheduled Caste communities and 18.18 per cent from Scheduled Tribe communities. But it should be mentioned hat 21.40% of total population of this major communities among the Tribes are the Oraon, Munda, Santhal, Mech and Rava. The smallest group among the Tribals is the toto's', only 175 families with a total population of 980 are living at Totoparas.' The AREA DEVELOPMENT APPROACH' is adopted in areas with more than 50% Tribal population under sub-plan. They are primarily cultivators. Besides, the Totos thrive on collection and selling of oranges, bamboos, fowls, Ginger etc. But with the help of governmental developing programmes and panchayati raj they have become socially and politically conscious.

On the other hand, amongst the Scheduled castes, the Rajbanshi is the largest community closely followed by Namasudra. Both the castes are pre-eminently agriculturists. Their percentage of literacy is much higher than Tribes. In this district, Scheduled Castes plays a better dominating role than tribes.

Table III reveals the education of respondents. This table shows that 45.45 per cent did not complete schooling and remaining 18.18 per cent did not complete college education. For agricultural background only 18.18 per cent of respondents got a chance for higher education. And another 18.18 per cent dropped their education after finishing S.F. On investigation it was found that

for poor economic background they could not get higher education. On the one side, they provide labour in their agriculture for the family at day time. Hence the picture shows that the respondents are too much interested to learn but due to a lot of misfortune, they don't get it. In case educational facilities were available, many of them could have better education.

Table IV reveals the age group of respondents. This table shows that 36.36 per cent of total respondents belong under the age group of 36-45, 27.28 per cent under 25-35, 18.18 percent under group of 45-55 and 18.18 per cent belong to the age group of 55 and above. It is clear from this picture that leadership here is organised by middle aged group of people.

Table V shows that leadership in this area are organised by the educated persons. Among all respondents, 54.55 per cent are teachers, 36.36 per cent are agriculturists. Only 0.09 per cent are Businessman. The respondents who are in leading position, are comparatively educated. All the teachers are the product of the agriculturists family. So they try to lead political activities and political affiliation. But the most important factor is that there is no conflict between two types of leaders. They cooperate each other for their better performance.

Table VI shows the paternal occupation. This Table clearly shows that among all the respondents 81.82 per cent are agriculturists, and remaining 18.18 per cent are employees. Most of the caste leaders are the product of Agricultural background and agriculture as the main source of subsistence. In new fields of activity to various changing condition of rural economy they feel that there is some gap between sources of production - and relations of production. So they try to find out this gap by involving in politics. All the families never denied their agricultural background and they wish to retain it as their parents. It is mingled with their blood and soul. But different picture can be seen in the city. They try to mix with mainstream to go far. Politics have acted as a media to fulfil their suppressed demands and interests.

Table VII reveals the behaviour of caste. This paper explores the attitudes of caste leaders about the voting behaviour during election and after election. In this regard, respondents were presented three statements related to the role of caste in election. This Table shows that with the first statement, 63.64 per cent respondents agreed that caste determine the nature of voting during election on which 36.36 per cent respondents were against it. On the second, 63.64 per cent respondents agreed in favour of the concentration of caste problems after the election and remaining 45.45 per cent respondents have

responded against it. With regard of the third statement, 18.18 per cent respondents agreed that election should be fought on the basis of caste while 81.82 per cent respondents expressed their opinion against it. It is clear from this table that majority of the total respondents expressed their views in favour of caste consideration and caste feeling in the matter of voting. It can be said that caste is an important factor in electoral behaviour. But it is remarkable that on the ethical point of view, leaders did not like to make only caste affiliation as the issue in the election. This findings clearly shows that no only caste feelings but also other factors i.e. part (81.82 per cent) are responsible for electoral behaviour. In this are except caste, political party plays a dominant role and in this regard caste interest is being over-looked.

This study also attempted to examine the attitude of caste on sociopolitical field. Table VIII shows that 63.64 per cent respondents agreed to depend on for anything whether it is social political and economical field. Remaining 36.36 per cent respondents did not favour to depend on caste. It is clear from this table that caste is an important issue which can never be denied. It is a 'contagious' disease and spread out very easily.

To conclude, it can be said that 'caste' is a great political issue at villages in the district of Jalpaiguri. The findings of the present paper shows that caste and politics are inter-related to each other. Caste, that is scheduled castes and scheduled tribes played a dominating role in Panchayat election. Before 1993, caste naturally played a role for attaining the majority in this district. But after 73rd Amendment, they enthusiastically participated in politics. Leadership have emerged from the middle aged educated and on-educated influential. Most important factor is that leaders are product of agriculturalists family.

But it must be said that their education led to a new trend of leadership. Whereas 36.36 per cent respondents are engaged in agriculture, but on paternal side, it is 81.82 percent. It may be concluded that their self-consciousness increased and they try to educate their children heart and soul. But the foregoing analysis of caste status of leader, occupational attainment, father's occupation and political contact clearly shows that leaders are the product of the agriculturists family and systematic exploitation of the old age caste system. So far, they involved themselves in politics to fulfil their demands and for developing their social status. Village politics have been very sensitive in this regard. Caste feelings give a sense of security and emotional attachment. It does not mean national

identity or separate political aspiration but also ;fulfil their demands and interests with the help of governmental programmes and plans.

Caste and political party are the two main factors which influence politics. Caste leaders support any political party and maintain faith on political ideology. When caste leaders keep in touch with political party, casteism or caste feelings automatically is suppressed by their party politics. For power they come over from their limited interests involved in broader political culture. This one of the significant dimensions of caste and politics in the district of Jalpaiguri. It can therefore be said that the leaders are the brokers of politics and for power they create conflict among their communities. But it is to be pointed out that they try for the best performances in political field by involving in broader political affiliation.

Though the process of Westernization, Industrilization and Modernization in Indian rural communities, the impact of the changes increased self consciousness of caste member and they depend on caste for anything. They enjoy governmental facilities to uplift their position and demand for maximum representation in the legislature, parliament and higher rank of occupation. Caste leaders did not deny their caste identity. In politics, casteism is less important than their party ideology. The whole politics of this region is going on through party culture. Lastly, it may said that the leaders never ignore the party's whip even for their own caste interests.

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Table - I**Selected Respondents**

Sources	No. Respondents	Percentage
M.L.A.	2	18.18
Panchayat	7	63.64
Party leaders	2	18.18
Total Number	N -11	100.00

Table - II**Caste groups of Respondents.**

Caste Group	No. Respondents	Percentage
Scheduled caste	9	81.82
Scheduled tribes	2	18.18
Total Numbers	N =11	100.00

Table - III**Education of Respondents**

Education	No. Respondents	Percentage
School Incomplete	5	46.46
College Incomplete	2	18.18
S.F. and H.S.	2	18.18
Degree and above	2	18.18
Total Numbers	N =11	100.00

Table - IV
Age group of Respondents

Age	No. Respondents	Percentage
25-33	3	27.28
36-45	4	36.36
45-55	2	18.18
55+	2	18.18
Total Numbers	N =11	100.00

Table - V
Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	No. Respondents	Percentage
Business	1	0.09
Agriculture	4	36.36
Teacher	6	54.55
Clerk	Nil	00.00
Others	Nil	00.00
Total Numbers	N =11	100.00

Table - VI
Father's Occupation

Occupation	No. Respondents	Percentage
Business	Nil	00.00
Agriculture	9	81.92
Others	2	18.18
Teacher	Nil	00.00
Total Numbers	N =11	100.00

Table - VII
Role of Caste in Electoral Behaviour

Statement	No. of Respondents				Total
	YES	Percent	NO	Percent	
1. Caste consideration Determine the electoral Behaviour during election	7	63.64	4	36.36	100.00
2. Caste political leaders Concentrate on caste Problems after the Election.	6	54.55	5	45.45	100.00
3. Caste should be only during election	2	18.18	9	81.82	100.00

Table - VIII
Respondents depends on caste

Statement	No. Respondents				Total
	Yes	%	No	%	
1. Respondents depends Caste for anything	7	63.64	4	36.36	100

CONSTRAINTS OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH-EAST-INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM

N. L. Dutta

Development potential of any area depends upon the interactions of other potentials like geographical potential, resource potential and infrastructural potential. The resource potential is the most important among all the potentials which can be measured in terms of forest resources, mineral resources, land resources and water resources. North East India though rich in all the resources, these are not utilized effectively and as a result the region is lagging behind in development.

The whole of North East India comprising Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura has a geographical area of 225,387 sq. km. And has a population of 20 million which is about 8% of the total area and about 4% of the total population of the country. However, a substantial portion of the area is covered by forests i.e. about 60% in the States namely Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura and about 1/3 of the total area in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram and only 17.4% in Nagaland as against 22.8% for all India. The region is basically divided into hills and plains. Almost 70% of the land area is hilly and rest 30% under plains comprising mainly the Assam Valley, Manipur Valley and parts of Tripura. Further, in the plains settled cultivation is in practices while in the hills shifting cultivation is usually practised. The region is endowed with a variety of important natural resources including minerals and also blessed with water and forest resources. However, the region is full of diversities with regard to demography, topography, socio-economic and cultural conditions. No where in the world there is so much of diversity as exists in this part of the region. There are a large number of tribes inhabiting this region and the density of population varies greatly within the region - the highest being 286 in Assam and lowest being 10 in Arunachal Pradesh.

In spite of the diversities, the region has certain common features like - agrarian economy, communication difficulty, economic backwardness, lack of industrial growth, low per capita income, distance from the seat of power at New Delhi and above all a sense of neglect and deprivation at the hands of the Central Government. The region has strategic importance, being surrounded by international boundaries.

As the economy of the region is based on agriculture and as the development centres round on development of agriculture, in the present paper an attempt has been made to examine the pace of agricultural development and the constraints involved in the process in the region as a whole with special reference to the state of Assam.

In Assam agriculture is contributing about 35 percent to states' Domestic Production (SDP) and engaging more than three fourth (64%) of the States' working force as per 1991 Census. Thus agriculture become significant for the over all economic development of the State. Although the various five year plans National/States have from time to time, emphasizing on agricultural development, yet the development has taken place over the years at a very slow speed. In the North Eastern Region also all the states are now facing a food deficit.

The slow pace of agricultural development of Assam can be substantiated with the help of certain indicators of development, such as, total cropped area under production, crop intensity, per capita income from agricultural sector, use of high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizer, total irrigated area and in terms of basic infrastructural facilities needed for agricultural development.

Total cropped area :

In the North Eastern Region as a whole the net area under cultivation is very small. As regards land utilisation, the total geographical area is 25,505.000 hectares, the reporting area being 22,710.000 hectares. Out of this 11,680.000 hectares are covered by forest, 6,183.000 hectares are not available for cultivation. 3.25 hectares permanent pastures and only 4,052.000 hectares are cropped area. Of this 7,87,000 hectares is irrigated area.

In Assam roughly 42 percent of the total geographical area is used for cultivation as against all India coverage of about 50 percent. During 1970-71 the state had a gross cropped area of 27.9 lakh hectares which increased to 31.8 hectares in 1975-76 and then to 33.7 lakh hectares in 1980-81. In the year

1994-95 and 1995-96, the State had a gross irrigated area of 57.2 thousand hectares.

Thus although the gross cropped area in the State is steadily increasing yet a large part still remain unutilised. Tripura, though the smallest unit occupies the second position regarding holding of gross cropped area which is about 23 percent. Arunachal Pradesh being the largest area has a small percentage of 1.4 percent. For other states of the region the percentage figures vary from 3 to 8 percent in 1976-77.

Crop intensity and percapita income :

The increase of total cropped area however, will not signify development if there is no increase of crop intensity. The intensity of cropping pattern is very low in Assam. It was 115.65 in 1951-52 and at present the crop intensity in the state is 125 percent. Moreover, agricultural sector generates only Rs. 423 per capita income in Assam. The per capita income of the region at current prices is Rs. 850.5.

High yielding varieties of seeds coverage :

The expansion of High yielding varieties of seeds has been given much emphasis under the new strategy for agricultural development. In Assam the area under High Yielding varieties of seeds coverage is increased from 5 lakh hectare in 1977-78 to more than 6 lakh in 1979-80.

The use of HYV of seeds in case of paddy increased from 5.5 lakh hectares in 1980-81 to 9.5 lakh in 1984-85 and then to 10.4 lakh in 1985-86 and then to 11.5 lakh hectares in 1993-94. A little more than 40% of the total area under paddy in the state have been brought under HYV coverage till 1985-86. It is also reported that the entire wheat area have been covered highest in Nowgaon district followed by Kamrup and Nalbari districts.

In Arunachal Pradesh the area under HYV coverage gone up from 5,900 hectares in 1977-78 to 7,692 hectares in 1980-81. In Manipur the HYV programme increased from 19 thousand hectares in 1973-74 to 59 thousand hectares in 1980-81. In Meghalaya it is expected to cover 36 thousand hectares by 1983-84 as against 7.5 hectares in 1973-74. In Mizoram the area under HYV was 2.8 thousand hectares under paddy and 6.5 thousand hectares under maize on 1980-81. In Nagaland the area under HYV coverage was 17.5 thousand hectares in 1980-81. In Tripura the area under HYV coverage of wheat and paddy were 1.32 hectares and 5.16 hectares respectively in 1980-81.

It thus appears that although the efforts have been made to bring more and more farm land under HYV programme yet the progress is very slow.

Fertilizer :

Fertilizer is the key input in increasing agricultural production. Other things remaining equal, every ton of nutrient increases the yield by upto 10 tonnes of foodgrains. The annual consumption of fertilizer per hectares of land is thus a good indicator in crop production. However, in Assam the consumption of fertilizer is still at a very low level. In fact, consumption of fertilizer per hectares of cropped area in the state has been found to be one of the lowest in the country. For example during 1983-84, while the consumption of fertilizer reported to be highest in Punjab i.e. 162 kgs. Followed by Tamil Nadu 73 kgs. Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh 69 kgs and Haryana 50 kgs. The consumption of fertilizer per hectare of land in Assam increased to 14.5 kg in 1995-96 in comparison to All India 73.7 kg.

In the region as a whole there is wide difference in per hectare consumption of fertilizer ranging from 0.20 kgs. In Arunachal Pradesh, 14.60 kgs. In Manipur, 8.30 kgs. In Meghalaya, 0.70 kgs. In Mizoram, 0.50 kgs. In Nagaland 5.50 kgs. In Tripura with the average for the country being 30.5 kgs. In 1979-80. As a whole the use of fertilizers per hectare of gross cropped area is very low.

Irrigation :

Assumed irrigation facilities are *sin qua non* for success of modern agriculture specially increasing the cropping intensity leading to higher per hectare yield in any area. In Assam it is only a recent years that due emphasis has been given for development and exploitation of vast irrigation potential of the state. In the last three years (1982-83 to 1984-85) as much as 1.16 lakh hectares of additional irrigational potential has been created in the state. Still the state remains far behind the average all India level of irrigation development. So far as district-wise achievements are concerned, Nowgaon district occupies the most creditable position with the creation of 8544 hectares of additional potential during 1984-85 followed by Sonitpur district i.e. 6303 hectares. In other states of this region the net irrigated area constitutes 20 percent in Arunachal Pradesh, 46.4 percent in Manipur, 26.4 in Meghalaya, 10.4 in Mizoram, 29.7 in Nagaland, 11.8 in Tripura and 22.1 for the region as a whole against 25.8% percent of all India average.

Infrastructural element :

Provision of adequate infrastructural facilities is a pre-requisite for development of an area. But the region as a whole is lagging behind in terms of basic infrastructural element needed for agriculture development like - transport and communication, rural electricity, water supply, market facilities, co-operative credit societies etc. The poor road and rail communication adversely affects the timely supply of high yielding varieties of seeds and marketing of goods. Besides, not even 2 percent of the electricity is utilized for agriculture and irrigation out of the total electricity generated in this region. Moreover, there is absence of effective agricultural markets and of those that exist they too are not within the approachable limits of the farmers. Again, the co-operatives, which provide incentives for agricultural development by supplying input are not able to cover all the rural families. The active primary credit societies cover 29 percent of the villages in Assam, 14 percent in Manipur, 100 percent in Meghalaya, 50 percent in Nagaland and 70 percent in Tripura. In Assam as per available information out of the total societies of 9143 in 1984-85 as many as 3628 societies were non-functioning during the year.

The constraints of agricultural development in Assam can be classified under several headings such as, environmental, production, socio-economic, infrastructural and institutional.

Environmental :

The region as a whole is known as heavy rainfall area but heavy rains during monsoon cause floods while precipitation during the remaining period of the year often prove insufficient to meet the requirements of rabi crops. In Assam about 90% of the total rainfall occurs in the Monsoon months and the annual rainfall varies from 3071.60 mm to 1225.32 mm. The average humidity ranges from 77.7% to 86% and the temperature from maximum 39°C to minimum 70°C. High humidity and heavy rain have adverse effect on crop production. Again the maximum duration of cloudy coverage throughout the year makes the sunshine scarce which becomes an important constraint in the growth of plant and in the photosynthetic activities.

Further, the heavy rain in monsoon leads to recurrence of floods and this became a major problem in the Brahmaputra and Barak Valley. Very often the damages caused by flood assume such staggering proportions that it exerts considerable strains on the economy of Assam.

Beside flood in some areas, natural reasons like induction of oil and coal mining also cause damage to the production of crops. Moreover deforestation too has been causing damage to agricultural production in certain areas.

Production :

The most important production constraint is the inadequate supply of HYP of seeds to the cultivators in time. In Assam there is no HYP rice suitable for the traditional Sali paddy season nor are there any reliable varieties which can resist or escape from flood and draught. Besides, linking up fertilizer use with the specific soil fertility status is more propounded in theory than in practice. Irrigation facilities too are inadequate. The region as a whole is lagging behind in case of development of modern seed, fertilizer and post harvest technology, soil testing/soil conservation etc. etc. Added to these in the region insect pests are limiting the increases of production which varies from 20 - 60 percent. In Assam the percentage of destruction of crops are i.e. wildgrass 33%, diseases 26% insects 20%, rat 68%, birds 12% and others 1.3%. so urgent steps should be taken to find out ways of pest control which is ecologically and economically sound, feasible and viable.

Socio-economic :

The most significant socio-economic constraint is the existing inequality regarding land ownership pattern. Moreover there is population pressure on one hand and decline of agricultural growth on the other hand. At present the rate of population growth in Assam is 3.5 as against all India growth of 2.5. Beside, illiteracy, ignorance and poverty are the common pictures of Indian peasantry. The villagers are still traditional in their outlook and adhering to traditional methods of cultivation. Besides, in the state out of the 80% cultivators 72% belong to the small and marginal farmers group and as a result there is lack of risk bearing tendency to introduce new technology. Moreover, land fragmentation and scattered nature of land too prevent the use of improved technology. The rural credit system is so cumbersome that the farmers as a routine used to come to the money lenders and fall in the vicious circle of poverty. Again it is not only through production of goods but by distribution of goods that the society reaps the benefits of production. But absence of effective agricultural markets deprive the farmers from his due profit.

Infrastructure :

Assam is backward in terms of basic infrastructural facilities needed

for agricultural development such as, insufficient transport, irrigational and credit facilities, inadequate utilization of rural electricity, absence of effective agricultural markets etc. etc.

Institutional :

The institutions operating at the grass root level can also help in accelerating the rate of agricultural development. But in Assam, some grass root institutions are existing only on paper i.e. the village panchayats are virtually nonexistent which are entrusted with a number of activities for agricultural development. It may be noted that the Panchayat election in the State was held in 2001 after a gap of 12 years. Although the co-operative societies are existing, they are suffering from various other constraints and are not able to help the villages by providing short and medium term loan. The various studies on IRDP in Assam and also in other states pointed out that the village surveys are not done while providing benefits under the scheme. Extension services too are very rarely provided by the block officials. There is lack of co-ordination between the elected leaders and government officials. It adversely effect the all round development of the village community.

Last but not the least important constraint in any development of an area is the frequent political interference and political instability. Very often the politicians interfere in the policy of distribution and help the political workers, depriving the needy villagers of their dues. Again, Assam was the glaring example of political instability from 1978-1985 i.e. till the formation of AGP government which retarded the state's overall growth including agricultural. The present political developments in some of the hill states of North East India are not favourable for smooth functioning of their political system. As a whole the political parties in the region whether Regional/National have failed to satisfy the true aspirations of the people.

While concluding it can be mentioned hat the region as a whole is facing some common constraints in agricultural development, such as, environmental/climatic, production/technical, socio-economic, infrastructural, institutional and political. However, keeping in mind the wide diversities within the region, while finding out solutions, one should not ignore the peculiar features of each area. Moreover, there is the need for sincere will, effort and co-operation on the part of the villagers, planners, politicians, government officials and academicians in finding out solutions for removal of constraints in agricultural development of the region.

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ROLE OF NORTH EASTERN COUNCIL IN MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT IN NE-REGION OF INDIA

Manjula Dowerah-Bhuyan

This paper examines the role of North Eastern Council (NEC) in Manpower development and Social Sector development in North Eastern Region (NER) of India. The paper is divided into three parts, part I deals with the manpower development in North Eastern Region with an introductory discussion about the need of a planned manpower for the purpose of economic development, Part II covers entrepreneur development in the region and Part III deals with social and health sector development in the region.

I

Manpower development programme in NER

Economic backwardness of an economy or a region is characterised by the existence of unutilized or underutilized manpower on the one hand and unexploited natural resources on the other hand. Economic development essentially means a process of upward change whereby the real per capita income of an economy increases over a period of time. Then a simple but meaningful question arises : What causes economic development? Or What makes a country developed ? This question has absorbed the attention of scholars for socio-economic change for decades. Going through the economic history of developed countries like America, Russia and Japan, man is essentially found as pivotal in the process of economic development. Japan, whose economy was badly damaged from the ravages of Second World War, is the clearest example of our time to validate the mans kingpin role in economic development.

Who is this man ? He is an entrepreneur who has an urge to do or create something new, organise production, undertake risks and handle the

economic uncertainty involved in running an enterprise. The set of such attributes the entrepreneur possesses is called entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship plays a premium mobile role in promoting industrial development of an economy. Hence, it is said that an economy is an effect for which entrepreneurship is the cause. In any way, differences in the levels of economic development across the countries and among regions within the country are attributed to differences in their levels of entrepreneurship development. To promote and foster industrial and economic development particularly in backward areas has become a subject of great concern and serious discussion in the recent times.

Planning for development aims at maximum utilisation of the country's resources of which the human resources is of supreme importance. The experience of the past few decades of planning after World War II has brought about the thinking of the planners all over the world an increasing shift of emphasis from physical capital to human capital¹. This trend is also evident in our country from the special emphasis laid on manpower and employment in our successive Five Year Plans.

The basic objectives in our development policy have been articulated differently in different plans but in essence they boil down to four core items (i) rapid economic development, (ii) modernisation of structural transformation of the economy, (iii) attainment of self reliance, and (iv) removal of poverty and inequality. However, provision of more employment opportunities, better employment and reduction in unemployment has been the principal hiding component in each of the four core items of the development plans in the country.² The manpower planning has, therefore assumed a significant role for carrying out the programme of economic development and in view of this the two factors viz, manpower planning and economic planning have become inseparable parts and are complementary to each other.³

The economic development of a nation depends upon its skilled and efficient manpower. Hence in this respect the importance of technical manpower as a catalyst for economic development needs no special emphasis. Manpower planning has assumed a significant role for carrying out the programme of economic development all over the world. It has been realised that economic development cannot take place without proper planning for manpower development, as suitably qualified people are required to carry out these programmes. The inadequacy of technically qualified people has been one of the most important factors for the backwardness of the region. The programmes

of development, envisaged in the State plans, require various categories of trained personnel like scientific, technological, managerial etc. to implement such programmes. There is an overall dearth of trained people in the fields of agriculture, horticulture, fisheries, animal husbandry, sericulture industries, herbal medicine, irrigation, power generation, miner exploration etc.

The North Eastern Council (NEC) realising the inadequacy of trained people in the region, organised many training programmes to built up expertise within the region in different fields. This has been possible under the dynamic leadership of Late L.P. Singh, chairman of the NEC and K.M. Mirahi, its secretary. A directorate of manpower Development was established in the council to chalk out schemes for carrying out developmental activities of the constituent states of the region.

The inadequacy of trained manpower both technical and non-technical, has been considered as one of the important impediments to the rapid development of the region. Further, in view of such inadequacies of manpower, various sectoral development programmes as well as large number of projects have been facing serious manpower constraints. The National committee on Development of Backward Areas - in its report on the north eastern region as, "The development programmes taken up in NER will run a ground of lack of technical personnel if suitable programmes of manpower development are not taken up".⁴ Manpower planning thus, based on realistic estimates of present and perspective manpower requirements, is essential for the success of development planning in this region.

Manpower planning efforts in the country in the past, were mainly directed towards identifying global shortages and surpluses in respect of selected groups of manpower categories. The structure of the economic activity is not uniform among the regions and thus, any observed global manpower shortages and surpluses may not reflect the manpower situation as it obtains at the regional levels. It is also well recognised that even in labour surplus economics, shortages of manpower in some areas and in some sectors are not uncommon. Hence, global shortages and surpluses, though useful at a point of time do not provide comprehensive insights into manpower situation at the regional, state or local, area levels which is required today, if planning including employment planning is to be meaningful.⁵

Recognising the crucial role of manpower as an essential input in development planning also the practical constraints in developing both technical and non-technical manpower in the region, the NEC has been making concerted

efforts in this area, since its inception. It was NEC who took initiative in 1973 to commission the Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR) to make a first ever study of the North Eastern region both for the short term and long range perspective planning of educational and training facilities to be developed in the region. Keeping in view the recommendations of this study and in appreciation of the fact that development of the region would call for a great deal of improvement in the agricultural and allied sciences outside the region followed by short term courses organised for professionals to expose them to modern developments in agriculture and related fields.⁶

During the Sixth Five year Plan, the NEC re-modelled its manpower development programmes in a more effective way in order to supplement substantially the activities undertaken by the States of the region, for accelerating manpower development in the region. The planning policies/programmes being pursued by the NEC since the Sixth Five Year Plan in the sphere of manpower development essentially have the following four major elements:⁷

(A) Sponsoring of students from this region for various undergraduates, post graduates and Ph.D studies in Agriculture and Allied subjects (with an agreed arrangement with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research) being the core area of development, and granting financial assistance in the form of fellowship/stipends to the students studying in specialised courses of engineering and technology having gaps in manpower:

(B) Sponsoring of in-service personnel for short duration specialised courses for development of their skills in their respective fields of specialisation besides organising Entrepreneurial Development Programmes (EDP) with the help of National Institute of Small industries Extension and Training (NISIET), Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI), North-Eastern institute of Bank Management (NEIBM), National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) etc.

(C) Expansion, strengthening and modernisation of institutions already in existence in the region, and

(D) Setting up of new institutions in the region.

As agriculture is the main support of the people of the region, NEC started training people in agriculture and allied subjects as first step in manpower development programmes. The scheme of Fellowship and Academic programmes in Agriculture & Allied subjects were started in 1975-76, NEC started sponsoring candidates from this region for undergraduate and post-graduate studies in these

fields in the different Universities of the country., The council also gave scholarships/stipends to the candidates selected to pursue these courses. The scheme has been a big success and the states are asking for more and more seats every year.

Apart from sponsoring candidates for undergraduate and post-graduate courses, the council also sponsor in-service candidates for various specialised short-term training programmes which are being conducted by well recognised Institutes/Universities of the country in various fields like soil conservation, watershed management, seed production, cultivation of fruit and food crops, plant protection, plantation of coffee, rubber, swine husbandry, fisheries etc. The scheme has served vital purpose for which it was intended viz., augmentation of trained manpower resources in various fields in the states of this region. Since its inception till date, it is estimated that about 3000 fresh students and 1500 in-service personnel had been benefited under the scheme⁸. Besides extending facilities for getting the manpower trained outside the region, NEC has taken a number of initiatives to get adequate number of training facilities created within the region by strengthening some of the existing technical and educational institutions and by setting up of new institutions for training of manpower in various branches of science and technology. The existing institutions which have been helped to expand their facilities for training and studies are, -

1. Assam Agriculture University, Jorhat (Assam)
2. Veterinary science campus in Lakhimpur district, Assam.
3. School of Veterinary sciences, Ghungeor.
4. Fishery Training Institute, Joysagar.
5. Sericulture Training Institute, Titabor.
6. Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi Institute of Mental hospital, Tezpur.
7. Assam Textile Institute, Guwahati.
8. Tripura Engineering college, Agartala.
9. Institute of cooperative Management, Imphal.
10. Assam Administrative Training Institute, Guwahati.
11. Pasteur Institute, Shillong.
12. Support to St. Anthony's College for Department of mass communication, Shillong.

In the area of manpower development, the following new Training institute were set up with NEC's initiative in the region :

(1) Regional Institute of Medical Sciences, (RIMS) Imphal

RIMS was originally established in the year 1972 as a joint venture of the northeastern states viz., Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura, The Ministry of Home and health, Government of India. It became a project of the NEC in 1995. The Institute had been giving immense services to the region. Steps have also been taken to upgrade some of the existing departments of the Institute and to modernise the infrastructure with a view to providing better facilities for both medical education and health care. This Institute has HIV/AIDS Reference center attached to the Microbiology departments is one of the nine Reference centre in India. This center is meant for the whole of NER.

(2) The North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology (NERIST) Itanagar

It was set up by the Government of India initially as a pilot project of NEC in 1983 for providing an efficient system of education and to meet the requirements of technical manpower for the development of NER. The aims and objectives of NERIST are :

- (a) to promote suitable and adequate educational facilities for training of technical and scientific manpower in different discipline, with particular reference to the special needs of seven NE states to help them in proper exploitation of the natural potentials for economic development,
- (b) to provide manpower at different levels,
- (c) technicians through certificate courses,
- (d) junior level supervisory personnel through diploma course,
- (e) specialised skilled manpower through degree course,
- (f) highly specialised post-graduate courses, and
- (g) conduct research and provide industrial consultancy. Certain unique features of the institute are :
 - (h) students can join the institute after class ten (X)
 - (i) manpower is trained at three different levels like diploma, certificate,

- and degree courses,
- (j) reservation policy for NE states,
- (k) In-service candidates can improve their qualifications as the institute allows entries at base, diploma and degree levels,
- (l) Its location in Arunachal Pradesh has a positive contribution to its economy,
- (m) NERIST plays an important role in NER because except the state of Assam and Tripura, no other NE states has an engineering college.

Even though relatively a new entrant in the field of engineering education, NERIST has earned its name as a seat of learning not only in the NER, but in the whole country as well. At present, its graduate are well accepted by various industries, governments and various institutes in India and abroad.⁹ It has a great promise in the future as a most modern institution of technical education.

(3) North Eastern Police Academy (NEPA), Shillong

It was established in 1978 on the recommendation of the Gore committee with limited objective of training of police personnel of NE States police organisations. Today, the Academy is being looked upon as a nodal agency for all purposes of police training by the beneficiary states. The basic objectives of the project was to provide basic training facilities to the police personnel of the region. As the governor of Meghalaya, Shri Madhukar Dighe said,¹⁰ 'that the police forces have a very constructive and positive role in society for preservation of peace and amity besides maintenance of law and order, and they are no longer a mere armed organ of government'. Shri Dighe also appreciated the role of NEPA as an ideal and effective police training institute and observed that this institute had brought cohesion among the police forces in the NER. He said the NEPA had been acting as a catalyst in the region in cementing the links among the police forces in the region. He underlined the need to ensure professionalism in the police especially in view of the prevailing law and order situation in the entire region. He also said that the peoples expectations from the police forces had increased. It is therefore, necessary that the police forces should develop high degree of professionalism. NEPA also offered a number of innovative courses to equip the officers with modern skills to combat new problems like drugs, smuggling, insurgency etc.

(4) The North Eastern Regional Institute of Water and Land Management (NERIWALM) Tezpur

The NER is unique in India for its physiographical features, socio-economic conditions, prevalence of shifting cultivation and rainfed agriculture, the NER has peculiar land and water management problems. It is, therefore, imperative that water and land are to be scientifically managed to achieve all round development of NE. It is in the realisation of the above fact that led to the establishment of the NERIWALM under the aegis of the NEC. The institute is situated on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra at Tezpur. This institute deals with rainfed system, watershed management, catchment protection, soil and water conservation, water resources development and renewable energy including hydropower in addition to irrigation management.

Since inception and till the date the total number of professionals trained in the field of water resources, agriculture and related departments of NE states is 1155 through 53 number of training programme. Apart from regular in-service training programmes, this institute also provided training to the farmers based on practical problems faced by them in their day-to-day activities.

(5) Regional Dental College, Guwahati

It is the only Dental science educational institute in the entire NER. It was started in 1982 as a Dental wing of Guwahati Medical College (GMC) under NEC's scheme in the 6th plan. In 1985 it transformed into a Regional Dental College. This institution is shared by all NE states and it is designed initially to provide dental education to young man and women of this region. It is financed by both Assam Government and NEC. The college aims at building up a fullfledged dental hospital covering all the specialities of Dentistry for imparting training to the students and to arrange all forms of Dental health services to people at large, in the whole of backward NER. Moreover, it has been able to create a great deal of awareness among the people regarding Dental health care. People now feel that Dental health care is equally important like that of other systemic diseases.

(6) Regional College of Nursing, Guwahati

In the field of the training to nurses, it was observed that the standard of teaching leaves much to be desired often due to lack of trained teaching staff etc. To make good this deficiency of trained teaching staff NEC started and funded a Regional College of Nursing at Guwahati, where graduate nurses are

being trained for the entire region. NEC also set up a Regional para-medical Nursing Training Institute in Aizawl (Mizoram)

(7) Regional Institute of Pharmacy, Agartala

Similarly to overcome the shortage of qualified Pharmacists in the region the council set up a Regional Institute of Pharmacy at Agartala (Tripura) and in 6th plan of NEC, it provides for starting a B. Pharm. Course in Dibrugarh University.

Almost all these institutions and the following institutions are set up by NEC for manpower development in NER are the only one's of their kind in the region.

(8) Regional Survey Training Institute, in Agartala set up by NEC.

(9) North Eastern Judicial officers Training Institute, Guwahati set up by NEC.

(10) Regional Centre for Trainers in Farm Management at Rani, Assam.

(11) Regional College of Physical Education, Panisagar (Agartala) set up by NEC.

(12) Introduction of Computer Education at the School level in NER.

This is an on-going scheme with along term objective of promoting computer education and computer manpower in the NER. The scheme was started during 8th plan periods with an outlay of Rs. 250 lakhs. The scheme is well received by the states of this region, who have taken full advantage of it.

(13) Development of Sports & Youth Activities in NER.

Under this scheme financial assistance are given to the states and to the registered sports club/NGO's within this region for improvement of playgrounds, purchase of sports equipment, organising coaching camps, improvement of other critical areas of infrastructure and for organising of regional and national level tournaments. This scheme was started during the 8th plan and the cumulative expenditure under the scheme upto the 31st March, 2000 was Rs. 802.55 lakhs. The following types of activities are supported under the programme. ---

- (a) improvement of provision of equipment, kits etc. of various sports and adventure activities,
- (b) improvement in critical areas of infrastructure for sports and youth activities,
- (c) assistance for training and other promotional inputs for improving the performance of players of exceptional qualities,
- (d) organisation of Regional and National level sports and youth activities,
- (e) organisation of adventure activities like Mountaineering and expedition etc.
- (f) youth exchange programme,
- (g) sponsorship of outstanding sports persons for participation in coaching and championship outside the country.

(14) Support for Mountaineering & other Adventure activities including development of infrastructure in NER.

This is a new scheme of the 9th plan and the approved outlay is Rs. 200 lakhs for the 9th plan. The scheme was conceived out of the fact that this region of the country offers tremendous scope and opportunities for the development of mountaineering and other adventure sports. Rs. 52 lakhs have been spent upto March 2000.

(15) North East Space Application Centre (NE-SAC)

This is an important steps taken by NEC towards development of Space technology in the region. The centre is being established jointly by the NEC and Department of Space (DOS) government of India at an estimated cost of Rs. 30 crores. NEC and DOS joint task team has detailed discussion and worked out for establishing the Remote Sensing in the NER. DOS suggested for expanding the scope of the centre to include satellite communication and space science research. Keeping in view the overall developmental needs of the region and also as an initiative for establishing an institution of high - technology application in the region. The centre's main activities will be to worked out with NE states towards establishing :

- (i) an operational remote sensing based natural resources information generation facility to assist management activity
- (ii) an operational satellite communications applications segments for the region,

- (iii) promote space science research activities in the region and network with the academic institutions in the region.

(16) Forest and Environment sector

The aim of forest sector is to conserve the forest and wild life of the region, while at the same time ensuring sustainable utilization of the forest wealth for the economic development of the local people. The present schemes of NEC can be broadly classified under the heads of training, research and encouraging community involvement in the conservation of forest as well as protection of wild life in the region. The following schemes are funded by NEC in this area :

(a) North East Forest Rangers College, Jalukbari (Assam) - under the training scheme of the NEC, it is funding the North East Forest Rangers College which trains forest rangers from all the states of NER as well as district councils under the sixth schedule. The plan outlay for this scheme, Rs. 180 lakhs and Rs. 91 lakhs has been released upto March, 2000. (b) North East Bio-diversity Research centre, NEHU - under research scheme NEC encouraged for research in bio-diversity conservation and medicinal plants by setting up of the NE Bio-diversity Research cell in North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) in Shillong at a total cost of Rs. 150 lakhs. (c) State Forest Research Institute, Itanagar (SFRI) research in certain economic species of plants and trees is also being funded at the SFRI, Itanagar with the objectives of utilising forest species as a tool for the economic development for the region. The total plan outlay of Rs. 100 lakhs for the scheme. (d) Community Bio-diversity conservation Project in NER. --To encourage involvement of the community in the conservation of bio-diversity the NEC is running a scheme as community conservation of bio-diversity project with a plan outlay of Rs. 200 lakhs.

Although the task of manpower development is colossal, it is hoped that the efforts which are being put in by the NEC as a regional planning body, will go a long way in providing technically qualified personnel to man the jobs in the region. The following paras are devoted on the entrepreneur development programme in NER.

II

Entrepreneur development programme in ner

Entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in economic development in general and industrial development in particular, Mere availability of natural

resources does not help in economic development of a region unless the physical resources, can be exploited. The exploitation of physical resources, however, depends on the availability of high level manpower, which of course, includes entrepreneurs.

The NEC was setup with the objectives of accelerated and balanced socio-economic development of the NER and it has specifically recognised the crucial role of entrepreneurship development for the growth of industries in the region. In 1976, NEC with the concurrence of the planning commission requested SIET Institute, Hyderabad to make a study on entrepreneurial and managerial needs of the region. The report was completed in 1978. The study has made the following recommendations :

- (a) The whole effort of entrepreneurship development consist of three groups of activities, which are not mutually exclusive but complementary. These are simulatory, supporting and sustaining. These combines to develop entrepreneurs, allow them to establish industries and provide facility to expand.
- (b) NE region suffers from imbalance of the above groups of activities necessitating comprehensive programme development through collaboration efforts.
- (c) Industrial policies often stand as hurdles in the development of entrepreneurship in the region. These may be modified to permit outsiders to invest and establish their own units with their experiences. The financial benefit of tax relief, capital subsidy etc. should however be restricted to the local entrepreneurs. This will improve industrial climate of the area.
- (d) NE should develop an integrated model of entrepreneurship development by grouping of the activities noted in 'a' above. It should also have a local level agency like the entrepreneurship motivation training centre for continuous monitoring and follow-up work.
- (e) Due to the absence of industrial infrastructure, the region should start with smaller industrial activities with definite programmes of assistance with a scope to expand in future.
- (f) Industries related to local skills and materials should be encouraged.
- (g) Promotion of industrial activities may be augmented by having an

organised collective marketing cum-input supply corporation for handloom and handicrafts manufacture.

- (h) In order to have a macro-level picture of industrial opportunities in the region, it is necessary to conduct a complete survey of industrial potential supplemented by a market survey.
- (i) To avoid failure, dropouts and sick units, methods of selection and training of entrepreneurs should be adopted besides providing overall support to entrepreneurs.
- (j) Financing through banks to the entrepreneurs has not been proper and experiences of bankers in this is not encouraging. It is necessary to develop more workable financing system in the region.
- (k) Due attention should be paid to the development of basic industrial infrastructure in the areas bordering two states.
- (l) In order to promote development of entrepreneurship in the area, an entrepreneurship development advisory cell should be set up for the region.

This study was the first major steps taken by the NEC towards planned efforts for developing entrepreneurship in the region. Based on its recommendations, the NEC has initiated the following major steps towards development of entrepreneur skill in the entire region :

- (a) The manpower development sector of the council secretariat was reoriented to co-ordinate various entrepreneurship development activities of the region.
- (b) Expert organisation/consultants were engaged to carry out techno-economic surveys for optimum exploitations of locally available resources including handloom and handicrafts.
- (c) Comprehensive entrepreneurship development programmes were planned for incorporating components of identification of achievements, project preparation, impart training etc. to be executed through expert agencies.
- (d) An effective catalytic role was played by the NEC is bringing various national agencies to the north-east. These agencies opened regional centres for the benefit of the region.

These systematic efforts created definite awareness in the states of the region in respect of developing entrepreneurship as a tool of industrial development of the region. It was evident from the entrepreneurship development activities initiated by the state of Assam, Mizoram and Manipur during the sixth plan period.

Since 1985, NEC has taken up a comprehensive entrepreneurial development in collaboration with the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) and has set up a target of training 1000 entrepreneurs per year in the seventh plan period. The Expert agencies which helped achieving their objectives are :

- (a) The National Institute of Small Industries Extension Training. (NISIET)
- (b) North Eastern Industrial and Technical Consultancy Organisation. (NEITCO)
- (c) North Eastern Industrial Consultancy Organisation. (NECON)
- (d) Entrepreneurial Development Institute of India (EDII), Hyderabad.
- (e) Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE).

During the seventh plan NEC has sponsored 152 Entrepreneur Development Programme (EDP) benefiting about 3609 entrepreneurs in the region. Out of the total NEC sponsored EDPs, NISIET conducted 30.9%, NEITCO 54.6%, NECON 13.2% and EDII 1.3%. The gradual increase in the number of EDPs from 19 in 1985-86 to 38 in 1989-90 signifies the success of the efforts taken by the NEC in this respect for industrial development in the region. Though the target of 1000 could not be achieved mainly due to the shortage of implementing agencies. The success can be very well termed as good performance. But now with the establishment of NECON it is expected that the target of 1000 will be achieved in near future.

Conducting the EDPs alone is not the end of the effort by the NEC in industrial development for the region. In developing a comprehensive package, NEC mainly concentrated on developing potential of entrepreneurs, enabling and equipping them not only to establish their new ventures but also to manage them successfully. The basis of development of the comprehensive package consisted of:

- (a) To motivate and uniform entrepreneurial traits and abilities,

- (b) Guidance in proper selection of business followed by project formulation and help in establishing new venture,
- (c) To create confidence to enable the potential entrepreneur to overcome fear of failure and plan their ventures with better assured prospects to success,
- (d) To develop managerial skill and competence for successful operation of the new projects.

A crude index of evaluation of EDP's is the "success rate" in the percentage of successful trainees who have put up enterprises/industries. On analysis of the data pertaining to NEITCO, NISIET for the NEC sponsored EDP's in the region during the 7th plan, the overall success rate is found to be 20.88% which is rather low. Further analysis revealed the following certain details -

- (1) Only one third of the trainees of 1985-86 EDP's could put up enterprises even after lapse of about 5 years, which indicates a considerable time lag between training and setting up of industries.
- (2) Hardly any enterprise could be set up by an entrepreneur within one year of training. These areas need some rectification. The state wise success rate calculated are as follows : Manipur - 28.42%, Mizoram 26.32%, Assam 21.94%, Arunachal Pradesh 20.95%, Meghalaya 15.94%, Nagaland 15.53%, and Tripura 11.54%.

In the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura success rates are found to be low in comparison to other three states in the region. Industrial, fiscal and administrative policies of the states are to be modified to improve the success rates specifically in the states having both industrial infrastructure and entrepreneurs.

Principal characteristics of Enterprises set up by the Entrepreneurs

The primary objectives of the strategy of industrial development in the NE region by optimum utilisation of local resources to maximise benefit to the local people as envisaged in the Sivaraman Commission of 1980 was followed in planning the EDP's sponsored by the NEC. It is considered the core sectors of economy which are likely to absorb entrepreneur as out lined in the Economic Census of 1980.

The industries set up by the entrepreneurs trained in EDP's sponsored by the NEC have been classified by 18 major industry groups and also according to the size of the enterprises. The following details have been observed :

Category	Percentage of total industry set up by entrepreneur
1. Textile, Handloom, Handicrafts, Wollens, Leather ---	31
2. Agrobased and Food products ---	23
3. General Engineering, Automobile, Electronics, Electrical ---	10
4. Servicing ---	12
5. Plastics, Chemical, Pharmaceutical ---	3
6. Hotel/Resturants ---	3
7. Road and Building material ---	3
8. Printing Stationery, Bookbinding ---	6
9. Others including trade ---	9
Employment capacity	percentage of total
1---2 Persons	15%
3---4 Persons	59%
5---6 Persons	17%
7 or more persons	9%

Thus, the spread of industries set up by the entrepreneurs vis-à-vis the employment generated by them can be considered fairly reasonable and encouraging. It is, however felt that category 5 and 6 of the industries which cater mainly to the local consumer demand should be given due emphasis in future EDP's.

From the above studies by NISIET it was found that 57.76% of the entrepreneurs has set up industries/enterprises from their own resources. It can be rationally concluded that 'finance' is the major bottleneck in establishing the enterprises. This factor of availability of finance in time is considered the highest success factor. Financial institutions particularly IDBI, Nationalised Banks and the State Governments must modify policies to make finance easily available in time.

Observation by entrepreneurs and EDP conducting Agencies :

Some of the views of the entrepreneurs and EDP conducting agencies relating to success or otherwise of the EDP's are noted below :

- (a) absence of promoter's contribution due to paucity of funds with the entrepreneurs desist to take up non-traditional products,
- (b) conditions for guarantor stipulated by banks/finance corporations are always difficult for entrepreneurs to satisfy,
- (c) discontinuation of subsidy by the government of India retarded the whole process of development. In addition, the incentives announced by state governments do not reach entrepreneurs due to cumbersome and time consuming procedure involved,
- (d) the number of documents to be submitted at District Industries Centres (DIC) is very cumbersome. The process of submission of documents is very time consuming.
- (e) delay in issuing of provisional certificates, loan forms and absence of joint appraisal mechanism have caused loss of interest and disappointment to entrepreneurs,
- (f) the average investment by entrepreneurs is in order of Rs. 50,000 or above. The state government or financial institutions should work out their plans so that at least Rs. 50,000 is available with the entrepreneurs.

NIETCO analyses enterprises from the consideration of annual turnover rates. It was observed that -

74.60% of the enterprise have annual turnover of Rs. 1 Lakhs or less

15.2% of the enterprise have annual turnover of Rs. 1-2 Lakhs.

5.3% of the enterprise have annual turnover of Rs. 2-3 Lakhs

4.8% of the enterprise have annual turnover of Rs. 4 Lakhs or more

Women Entrepreneurs :

The NEC has laid the emphasis on training of women entrepreneurs under NEC sponsored programmes since 1986-87. Women in India have made a comparatively late entry into the business scenario mainly due to orthodox and traditional socio-cultural environment. In the last decade economic compulsion has led more and more women to take employment as entrepreneur

in small scale industry in the region. In the NE region due matrileanial system prevailing in states like Meghalaya and due to higher women labour participation and better social status of women, the entrepreneurship development programmes conducted exclusively for women showed tangible results. The women entrepreneurs trained under NEC sponsored EDP's showed a success rate of 63.4% which is almost thrice the overall success rate of EDP's. These included all types of industries in the region. Decision has therefore been taken to give greater emphasis to women EDP's by the NEC in 8th plan. The enterprises set up mainly fall under these categories.

- ❖ Textile, Handloom, Handicrafts, Wollen products.
- ❖ Agrobased industries including food products.
- ❖ Servicing enterprises.

The women enterprises also succeeded in Automobile industries, Hotel/Resturants, Pharmaceuticals and other industries and trade. This is a significant achievement in industrial development in the region.

Status of trained Entrepreneurs :

Trained entrepreneurs, before they start the actual enterprise have to observe various technical, administrative and financial formalities. These are preparation of detailed project report, registration with appropriate agency, obtaining loan from financial institutions etc. These causes delay in starting enterprises. The status of 1835 entrepreneurs trained at NISIET, NEITCO and NECON is summerised below :

EDP Conducting Agencies	Total trained person	Trained persons who have put up enterprises	Those in pipeline for putting up enterprises	Trainees without status
NISIET	1049	161	767	121
NEITCO	2007	561	665	781
NECON	503	21	403	79
Total	3559	743	1835	981

Organisations with better post-training follow-up one likely to have better ultimate success rate and weak follow-up always means lower success

rate. EDP conducting agencies should keep it in mind for post training follow-up to increase the success rate in the region.

At the time of taking up the EDP's in the 7th plan a standing guidance-cum monitoring committee was set up to co-ordinate the entrepreneurship development programme activities and guide the conducting agencies in all respects. A sub committee was later formed under the chairmanship of general manager of IDBI to review progress for sanctioning loan to entrepreneurs. It was observed later that the guidance cum monitoring committee could not meet regularly and the resulting process is inadequate in post training follow-up. This resulted in ----

- ❖ delays in sanction of loans to prospective entrepreneurs from financial institution
- ❖ longer time lag in setting up of enterprises inappropriate remedial measures.

The post training follow-up was identified as a major weakness of the EDP programmes. This calls for more frequent meeting of guidance cell to sort out problems. The initiative started by the NEC during the 7th plan still continues. In its efforts there are now four partners. Earlier EDP's were co-sponsored by IDBI and its sister organisation, IFCI and ICICI. Now along with IDBI, SIDBI have also come forward to participate in the efforts to promote entrepreneurs and specially women entrepreneurs in the region. During 1990-91 to 1995-96 the NEC along with IDBI, SIDBI together sponsored 207 EDP's in the region. These EDP's were organised by NISIET, IIE, NEITCO, NECON and NSIC. The type and number of programmes organised by these agencies along with number of participants trained by them during the period are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1

No of EDP's organised and participants trained (1990-91 to 1995-96)

Organisation/ Type of programmes	No of programmes	No of participants
NEITCO		
General EDP	41	1033
Women EDP	12	316

Rural EDP	13	385
NISIET		
General EDP	34	850
Women EDP	8	200
Rural EDP	20	508
NECON		
General EDP	30	750
Women EDP	7	175
Rural EDP	22	680
NSIC		
General EDP	17	357
Women EDP	3	71
Rural EDP	---	---
<hr/>		
Total	207	5327

Source : Study on Effectiveness of EDP's Interim Report, 1997.

In the 207 training programmes organised by the four agencies a total of 5327 participants participated in the entire NE region. IIE study on effectiveness of EDP's (Interim Report, May 1997) from the table 1 revealed that 33.3% of the entrepreneurs trained were set up their own enterprises. Many of them have gone for ready made garments, weaving, handicrafts, food products, etc. It is revealed that 58.7% of the participants started industrial ventures, 32% business ventures and 9.3% are in farming. Among the successful trainees around 39.6% were women participants.

The efforts to promote and develop entrepreneurship during the last more than a decade have resulted in some changes in the entrepreneurial scenario in the NE region. The change is slow but gradual and perceptible. The response to EDP is an indication of the changes that are emerging in the region and awareness that has been created about the importance and need for taking up an entrepreneurial career as a means for economic development in the region. The number of youth willing to take up entrepreneurial career deliberately has been increasing in the region. This is seen from the fact that the youth are now prepared

to pay for participation in training programme in entrepreneur development programmes.

Another emerging trend is that more and more women are taking up entrepreneurial career which was not found earlier in the region. This trend is definitely a positive trend which will help in the emergence of entrepreneurship as a career in the region among the youths which will definitely help in eradicating the insurgency problem from the region in the long run.

The above discussion shows that there has been efforts for the promotion and development of entrepreneurship in the region. Initially EDP's were organised in state capitals and then in district headquarters. Now EDP's are organised even in rural areas. During April 1990 to March 1996 EDP's were organised in as many as 193 different places of the region. Earlier NISIET and NEITCO organised EDP's in the region. When NECON was set up in June 1987, it also began to organise EDP's sponsored by NEC and IDBI. Now there are four agencies, viz. NEITCO, NECON, NSIC and IIE who organise NEC/IDBI/SIDBI sponsored EDP's in the entire NE region.

Like other backward areas, the factors responsible for industrial backwardness of the NE region are lack of necessary infrastructural facilities, problems of finance, problems of raw materials, suitable marketing facilities and management personnel. Besides the entire NE region is plagued by insurgency problem.

Added to these problems is the inadequacy of highly motivated entrepreneurs in the region. Generally speaking, the entrepreneurial career in the NE region is chosen by chance not by choice. No doubt, there are constraints of industrial developments, but some of the constraints like geographical isolation could have been converted into opportunities, had there been an adequate supply of true entrepreneurs in the region. Therefore, the primary concern should be the development of entrepreneurship in each of the states in the region in a planned and systematic manner.

Last but not means the least, entrepreneurship development is not necessarily an individualistic effort. It is a collective endeavour of various groups working together for a common purpose. Yes, invention is often the result of an individual effort, but business or industry not in fact can succeed unless it is able to weave together diverse support, promotion and protection from various endeavour. In order to make the EDP's successful there should be coordinated

efforts from all concerns : entrepreneurs, training agencies, District Industry Centre (DIC), Banks and financial institutions and promotional and developmental organisations.

It is necessary to involve the Banks in EDP's from the planning stage itself towards the setting up of new industry. Unless the Banks are involved, institutional finance will remain a major bottlenecks for the entrepreneurs in setting up new industry in the region. Therefore, we should make a concerted effort to make EDP's an important instrument for promoting entrepreneurship in the region. Collaborative and co-ordinated efforts alone can make the EDP's successful. For effective collaboration it may be necessary that the Directorate of Industries of the state act as a nodal agency and at the district level the DIC may act as a nodal agency. At the regional level the NEC may set as a co-ordinating agency. If there is coordinated efforts, the success rate of EDP will increase and there will be greater supply of first generation entrepreneurs in the NE region and this is the need of the present time.

III

Social service and health sector development in NER

A number of institutions in the social service sector have also been supported by the NEC. These include the Pasteur Institute, Shillong for production of vaccines, artificial limb fitting centres in various states, food and drug laboratories in Shillong, Agartala and Guwahati, Regional Dialysis Centre, Agartala and Regional Blood Bank, Shillong.

During the last two decades, the NEC has transformed the primitive health care system into all advanced one, by setting up modern health care facilities at several places in NE region according to a NEC press release.¹¹ The NEC has taken up the following schemes viz.,

1. Regional Dental College, Guwahati.
2. Regional College of Nursing, Guwahati, Regional Pharmaceutical Sciences and Technology, Agartala.

During the 6th plan period onwards, the main objectives of the development of the above schemes were for the growth of skilled manpower in health sector which has a real deficiency in the region.

Again during the 8th plan some other new schemes came into being by NEC's initiative in the region. They are namely, ----

1. Support to Guwahati Medical College (GMC) during 8th plan periods. An amount of Rs. 293 Lakhs was provided towards this scheme for purchase equipment, construction of buildings for departments like Neurology, Cardiology, Nephrology, Surgery etc.
2. Support to Dr. B. Baruah Cancer Institute, Guwahati - It was set up in 1974 as a private institute by voluntary organisation for the treatment of cancer patient. It was the first and only institute of its kind in the entire NE region. It was recognised by the central government as a Regional Institute of Cancer treatment and Research in 1980 and taken over by the government of Assam in 1986. In August 1989, the state government of Assam entered into an agreement with NEC and the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) a tripartite agreement with the objective of mobilising resources for the development of the institute. The funding pattern of recurring expenditure is 33.33% each amongst NEC, DAE and the Assam government. The NEC's share for the recurring expenditure of the institute is Rs. 4.46 crores for four years of the 9th plan from 1998-99 to 2000-2002.
3. Support for the creation of infrastructure for additional facilities at three medical colleges of Assam, in Guwahati, Dibrugarh and Silchar.

In addition to the above ongoing schemes, during 9th plan, the following schemes have been included viz.,

1. Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) Imphal.
2. Regional para-medical & Nursing Training institute, Aizawal. - The institute was started in 1995 to provide training in para - medical and nursing course with the objectives of bringing out para - medical staff and nurses for efficient health care delivery system in NE region.
3. Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi regional institute of mental Health, Tezpur. (Assam) --- It was taken over by the NEC on 17th February 1999 in pursuance of the order of the Supreme Court and the Guwahati High Court. This institute will be upgraded as Regional Institute of Mental Health in the pattern of National Institute of mental health and Allied Sciences, Bangalore as per the directive of the Supreme Court.

4. Establishment of a Regional Communicable Diseases centre of Assam Medical college (AMC), Dibrugarh. - Due to frequent outbreak of vector borne disease like malaria, cholera, and gastroenteritis etc.
5. Establishment of a Regional TB and Respiratory diseases centre at AMC, Dibrugarh.
6. Infrastructure support to Dr. J.K. Saikia Homeopathy Government College, Jorhat (ASSAM) — This is the only college imparting training in homeopathy medicine in the entire region.
7. Support to development of infrastructure of Ayurvedic college, Guwahati - This is the only college available in the entire NE region and almost all the NE states have introduced Ayurvedic medicine in different health institutions but there is still lack of Ayurvedic doctors in the region.
8. Upgradation of orthopaedic and Rehabilitation centre at civil hospital, Shillong.
9. Strengthening of R.K. Mission Hospital, Itanagar. - This is the only referral hospital available in the entire Arunachal Pradesh.
10. Support to KJP Synod, regional hospital, Shillong through infrastructural development and procurement of essential modern equipment.
11. Sankardeva Netralaya, Guwahati - This institute is providing humanitarian service to the population of the entire region including the neighbouring states. For its infrastructure development and procurement of modern equipment, the scheme was approved with Rs. 270 lakhs during 9th plan.

The NE region suffers from disadvantage due to lack of up-to-date comprehensive data. NEC supported the following schemes in General sector towards preservation and documentation of traditional art, culture and crafts of the people of the region.

1. Regional Documentation & Information centre --- The NEC established a regional documentation & information centre (Library) in its secretariat and around 30,000 volumes of books and journals are kept and maintained for use by policy makers, administrators, teachers, researchers and students. This is one of the best libraries in

the NE region and have served very useful purpose for the target group.

2. Documentation and preservation of socio-cultural heritage of NE region --- The indigenous people of NE region have a very rich cultural heritage. The exposure of the society to modern conditions had a perceptible influence on the society and cultures. Over a period of time the rich traditional cultures of NE region may get diluted and start losing its original character. While the programmes for economic development are taken up in different fronts it is equally important to take certain positive measures for documenting as well as preserving the cultural identities of the various indigenous groups inhabiting the NE region. Moreover, an awareness is required to be created among the young generation of the richness and strengths of the indigenous traditions and cultures manifested in dances, music, dramas etc. of the people of this region.

In view of the above, a scheme for preservation and documentation of socio-cultural heritage of the people of NE region has been included in the NE plan. In view of keeping this basic objectives, the scheme of NEC's financial assistance is to be extended for such activities as cultural and anthropological surveys and studies, documentation of traditional dances, customs and practices through various methods including visual, audio visual documentation and publication of literature etc. Besides, provision has been made for traditional cultural exchange programmes between the different states of the NE region and with other states of the country, assistance has also been provided for building up different cultural dance equipment etc.

3. Regional survey, investigation studies etc. - Under this scheme NEC supports surveys, investigates and conduct seminars etc. on important issues relevant for the socio-economic development of the NE region.

The above discussion shows the catalytic role of NEC in manpower development initiative and social sector development initiative is helping towards the development of skilled manpower and entrepreneur to shoulder economic development in the entire region in future.

The area in which the region seems to have done better than the nation in the recent past is the social sector and more particularly in the spread of

literacy. In 1971 the region lagged behind the nation in literacy rate, but in 1991 census the literacy rate in the region came higher than the national literacy rate. The female literacy rate is significantly higher in the region than in the country as a whole. In 1991 only two of the seven states of the region namely Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya remained behind the nation in literacy rate. But considering that Arunachal Pradesh had a literacy rate of only 11.30% in 1971, the attainment of literacy rate of 41.59% in 1991 constitutes a huge progress in just two decades time. Sustenance of these trends in the spread of literacy will stand in good stead for furthering the process of socio-economic development of the region.

As Dr. Verrier Elwin¹² in his delightful book "A philosophy for NEFA" has very aptly said in referring to the preservation of the beauty and grandeur of the hill folk culture of the North East.

"if we are to work for a revival of tribal culture, we must know what it is, if the approach to the people is to be correct, it cannot depend on sentiments. There must a deep understanding of tribal psychology, beliefs and customs." The NE region of our country constitutes a rich part of the cultural mosaic and all honest efforts made by NEC to preserve it and to expose it to the rest of the country is an important steps towards a social integration in India. Culture is an effective integrating force and only through cultural links the North East can come closer to the Indian mainstream.

Summary

The above discussion shows tat the NEC's catalytic role in manpower development programmes has been continually expanding since its inception till 8th plan periods and at present span is almost the entire spectrum of manpower development in the domain of engineering, technology, medicine, agricultural sciences, computer education and entrepreneur development. The increased importance given to programmes for manpower planning and development is clear from the fact that as against the total expenditure of Rs. 6.33 crores invested in these programmes till 1980, the provision for manpower development and allied programmes have been raised to Rs. 20 crores during the sixth plan periods and the total amount invested till 8th plan is Rs. 189.26 crores.

As the development process unfolds itself and makes its full impact on various parts of the region, newer and challenging tasks in regard to human resources development will have to be tackled by the council with great care.

With the experience of 28 years behind it, the council is poised for playing a major role in meeting the manpower requirement of the region over different time horizons. At present it is engaged in getting necessary perspective plans of manpower needs and manpower development and these will be implemented on priority basis so that the economic development of the region is not hindered for want of trained manpower. The development of 'human capital' incommensurate with development of 'physical capital' as the process of economic development of the region proceeds along and will gather momentum along with time. Many innovations relevant to the requirements of the region have been and are being introduced to subserve the needs of trained and skilled manpower required for the region's development potential. The utility of infrastructure so created would depend how best it is used in improving the skill, capability, competence and even the quality of life.

Members in their interviews¹³, emphasized that at present the NEC is involved in entrepreneurship development programmes. These training programmes are held in various parts of the region with a view to identifying potential entrepreneurs. Assistance is also given in finding appropriate contacts for providing professional guidance and tapping sources for financial support. The constraints of restrictive laws, policies and security scenario are all within the purview of the State governments to address. The NEC can only assist in impressing upon the state governments the need for taking measures to open up their economy and provide avenues of employment to the population. In this respect, it has certain institutions under its control which provide important manpower and certain services e.g. Regional Institute of medical Sciences (RIMS), North Eastern Regional Institute of water and Land Management (NERIWALM), Regional Paramedical and Nursing Training Institute (RP & NTI) etc. NEC has taken over or created a number of Institutions for development of manpower in the Health sector mainly. The NEC is also taking up a projects to bring about computer awareness among the school going youth by providing computers in schools in the NE region. It is hoped that this will create a good base for skilled manpower in information technology in the long run. However, the cooperation of the states will be necessary. The NEC has been developing regional plans in the form of five year plans of the Council covering building institutions of excellence as well as taking up of projects of regional significance. To improve the matter further it will be necessary to prepare a long term perspective plan for the region of about 20-25 years and dovetail the

five year plans into this perspective. This perspective should cover areas of manpower development according to the projected needs of the region as well as for possible export.

Above all, the growth of regional economy has to be supported by a well-developed enlightened manpower, which would shoulder economic development programme. But the need for a skilled manpower with entrepreneurial capability has to be met by strengthening the technical institutions and by imparting entrepreneurial and managerial training. The NEC will have to play a major role in this aspect in manpower planning and social sector development in NER.

In areas of allocation of funds it would be improper to lay too much stress on regional imbalance. Allocation of funds should be need based in the interest of the region. However, it can not be denied that any kind of economic development has to be started at central focal point from the locational, geographical and logistical view point. The fruits of developments will percolate to the periphery over a period of time. This may not be immediately acceptable especially to these States in the periphery but it is unavoidable as members observed. As members also suggested that areas which need to be addressed in the region are :

(i) improvement in the security situation in the region and (ii) better performance by the implementing agencies. Both the areas are largely related to the state government activities. It is well known that the financial situation of almost all the NE States is precarious. There has been delay in implementation of schemes by these governments in order to avail of the advantage of parking of funds released by the NEC to improve their financial position. There is scope for improvement in the quality of implementation as well. These matters relate to the State governments.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND RIGHT TO WORK

A.B. Deb

Socio-economic security to the poor, including tribals, forms an important component of human rights in the third World countries including India. It encompasses right to work, right to livelihood, right to food, right to resources, right to health, right to education, right to information, right to live, etc. Human Rights in their broader application cover not only these factors, but embrace a wide spectrum of human life. Their overall thrust is to create a social order where not only human dignity is guaranteed but the necessary socio-economic conditions are created for fuller development of every individual and thereby entire population.¹ This demands not only freedom but also launching of socio-economic development programmes for emancipation of the poor including tribals. The poverty alleviation programmes in India since 1970s are one of the attempts made in this direction- particularly to ensure right to work to the poor and backward classes living in the rural areas. Right to work involves not only the provision of employment to every person able and willing to work; but also that the employment provided is a gainful employment which provides a level of earning adequate to maintain worker and his/her family in adequate circumstances. The policies relating to right to work should also aim at ensuring : the work provided as productive as possible safeguarding fundamental economic and political freedoms of the individuals; these should be freedom of choice of employment and fullest possible opportunity for each worker to qualify for, and to use his skilled and endowments, in a job for which he is well suited, irrespective of race, colour sex, religion, political opinion, social origin etc; and the said policies should take into account of the stage and level of economic development and the mutual relationships between employment objectives and other economic and social objectives and pursued by methods that are appropriate to national conditions and practice.²

Insight into Right to Work :

The right to work is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of human Rights adopted unanimously in 1948 by the General assembly of the United Nations. Article 23(I) of this declaration lays down that : Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and, to protection against unemployment. India not only voted for the declaration, but took an active part in its formulation and actually provided the chairperson for the session of the General Assembly. Subsequently, the right to work has been incorporated in the covenants of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations, and later elaborated in a series of covenants and recommendations on unemployment, employment policy and full productive and freely chosen employment adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on the implementation of the Right. India is, therefore, morally, bound to incorporate the right to work in its constitution and laws.³

In order to salute and implement the right to work, Government of India and State Governments have undertaken a plethora of Rural development Programme especially poverty-alleviation programmes-both asset and wage oriented programmes.

Linkage of Rural Development programmes with the Right to Work :

There has been controversy on whether or not Rural development Programmes especially poverty-alleviation programmes have ensured socio-economic security to the poor people. There have been many studies relating to human rights. But very few studies throwing light on relationship between poverty-alleviation programmes and right to work in India are available. For North East India in general and Assam in particular, the question of relationship between poverty alleviation programmes and right to work has not yet been examined and addressed to. In this Article an attempt is made to analyse the performance of asset and wage-oriented programmes at the district level of Assam and to gain deeper insights into the phenomena the author has relied mostly on tribal people of Cachar district of Assam.

Poverty in Rural Sector :

In the rural sector of India, the worst economic group is that of Scheduled Tribes. With the category of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes recording higher extent and severity to poverty than the general rural population.

In fact, Scheduled Tribes groups are worse-off than Scheduled Castes on any average, and tend to be the most economically destitute of all the rural population.⁴

There are several studies which examined the extent of poverty adopting different methodologies. The World Bank study (poverty estimated from 1951 to 1994) point out that there was not much improvement in the level of poverty from 1950-51 to 1973-74 but there after there was a sharp decline in poverty till 1986-87. After 1986-87, the decline continued at a slower pace till 1989-90 when it was reversed, with a particularly sharp increase in poverty in 1992. Poverty declined again in 1993-94 so that rural poverty in 1993-94, although higher than that in 1989-90 or 1990-91 i.e. just before reforms, was of the same level as in 1986-87. Another study (Chandra Sekhar and Sen) observed that given the marked downward shift in the trend of growth rate of the economy over the last four years, and the rise in the rate of inflation which erodes the real incomes of the unorganised labour force, not surprisingly the incidence of poverty has risen quite sharply.⁵ The findings of Gupta (1956)* and Tendulkar and Jain (1995)**,. Confirmed in the case of comparison between 1990 and 1992. Both showed substantial rise in poverty incidence. @ The incidence of rural poverty in India, Assam and other North Eastern States is tabulated in Table - 1.

Table - 1 : Incidence of Rural Poverty (in Percentage)

State	1973-74	1977-78	1983	1987-88	1993-94	1999-2000
Arunachal Pradesh	52.7	59.8	42.6	39.4	45.1	NA
Assam	52.7	59.8	42.6	39.4	45.1	NA
Manipur	52.7	59.8	42.6	39.4	45.1	NA
Meghalaya	52.7	59.8	42.6	39.4	45.1	NA
Mizoram	52.7	59.8	42.6	39.4	45.1	NA
Nagaland	52.7	59.8	42.6	39.4	45.1	NA
Tripura	52.7	59.8	42.6	39.4	45.1	NA
India	56.4	53.1	45.6	39.1	37.27	27.1

Source : (i) Rural Development statistics, 1998, NIRD Hyderabad, pp. 61,62
(ii) Govt. of India : economic survey, 2002-2003, p-213

* S.P. Gupta, " Recent Economic Reforms and their insurgent on the poor and vulnerable sections of the society," IDPAD seminar in structural Adjustment and Poverty in

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** S. D. Tendulkar and L.R. Jain, "Economic Reforms and Rural Poverty", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXX, No. 23, June 10, 1995.

@ There are several studies which examined the extent of poverty. But no uniform Methodology is adopted in estimating the magnitude of poverty. However, the above studies do indicate the magnitude of poverty in the rural areas.

It reveals from the Table - 1 that the incidence of rural poverty in all the North Eastern States are same. It is also seen that at all India level the incidence of Rural Poverty is decreasing but in North eastern States it is increasing since 1988. The following table gives the estimates of number of poor in India.

Table - 2 : Number of poor (million) in India

Year	Rural	Urban	Combined
1973-78	261.3	60.0	321.3
1977-78	264.3	64.6	328.9
1983	252.0	70.9	322.9
1987-88	231.9	75.2	307.1
1993-94	244.0	76.3	320.3
1999-2000	193.2	67.1	260.3
2007*	170.5	49.6	220.1

**Poverty projection for 2007*

Source : Govt. of India, Economic Survey, 2002-2003.

From the above Table it reveals that number of poor is declining in slower pace in India which poses serious problem to Indian economy.

Unemployment :

The serious crisis of Indian economy is its mounting unemployment. Many studies revealed that unemployment rose sharply from 11 million in 1990-91 to 17 million in 1992 and to 21 million in 1993-94. The rate of unemployment shot up to 5.5 percent in 1993-94 from 3.1 percent in 1990-91.6 The growth of rural unemployed in India from 1993-94 to 1999-2000 is 5.26 percent.⁷ At present, the country is generating only six million jobs (2.3%) against the demand of 9-10 million jobs. In spite of massive public investments, the goal of productive

and freely chosen employment by 2002 was no where in sight.⁸ The percentage of unemployment rate of India is 5.99 in 1993-94 and 7.32 in 1999-2000. Since this paper is mainly based on the district of Assam it is worthwhile to have a picture of unemployment scenario of Assam in the absence of data at the district level. The following table gives the picture of the unemployment scenario of Assam from 1997-2001.

Table - 3 : Unemployment Scenario of Assam

Year	Total number of job seekers	Number of educated job seekers
1997	1495729	985117
1998	1619046	1217276
1999	1635454	1239781
2000	1572412	1102857
2001	1524616	1058836

Source : Government of Assam : Economic Survey, assam 2002-2003

From Table - 3, it reveals that employment situation in Assam is not satisfactory.

It is worthwhile to note in this context that government economic strategy since 1991 involved a continued stagnation in employment generation in the organised sector both public and private. The government economic strategy of 1991 promote an open and a market oriented economy. The state is rolling back from several areas which hitherto benefitted the poor.*

The forgoing discussion indicates increasing trends in the incidence of rural poverty and unemployment in India and Assam is not exception to it. This trend will have serious implications on human rights particularly right to work.

Strategy of Rural development Programmes :

In the above backdrop, it is debatable whether rural development programmes especially poverty-alleviation programmes would be able to ensure right to work to the poor and thereby promote or guarantee human rights. In this context it is pertinent to discuss India's developmental strategy.

Indian constitution provides adequate safeguards for poor, depressed

and other backward classes. The directive principles envisage banishment of poverty by the multiplication of the national wealth and resources and an equitable distribution thereof amongst all those who contribute towards its production. Article 38(2) state that the state shall, in particular, strive to minimise the inequalities in income, and endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities, not only amongst individuals but also amongst groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations.⁹ Article 39 categorically stated that the state shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing - (a) that the citizen, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood; (b) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good; (C) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment.¹⁰ Article 41 states that the state shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.¹¹ It is for the government to make effective provision to ensure right to work to every citizen of our country.

For the past many years, several political parties, Trade Union leaders, Non governmental organisations and others have been demanding the right to work as a Fundamental Right. On several occasions in the past, Bill by private members (on August 5, 1971 by A.K. Gopalan; on December 2, 1977 by Yamuna Prasad Shastri; on March 29, 1985 by G.N. Banatwala; and on February 26, 1988 by Shri Thampan Thomas) have been introduced in the Lok Sabha seeking to amend the Constitution of India to make it as a Fundamental Right.¹²

On October, 21, 1989, the National Front, releasing its election manifesto on the eve of General Election to the Ninth Lok Sabha, declared that the right to work will be included in the Fundamental Rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

Launching of Rural Development Programmes on Poverty Eradication and Employment Generation :

Keeping in view of the above situation, the Government of India and State Governments have launched a plethora of Rural Development Programmes to eradicate poverty and unemployment particularly in the rural areas. Organisationally speaking, though Community Development in the early 1950s and through Panchayati Raj in the 1960s, an attempt was made to elicit peoples

participation. Along with these institutional devices, there was emphasis on modernising agriculture through technology developments. These attempts did not produce the desired results. The Green Revolution of mid-1960s disturbed the scales of economy of farming. On account of these changes, along with other category of people tribals also suffered. This also resulted in widening the gulf between the poor and the better off in the rural society.¹³

The main emphasis of the various Five Years Plans was on growth with social justice and poverty-alleviation strategy. The State policies in the area of poverty-alleviation have been characterised by recourse to right to work whether through self-employment programmes under SFDA, IRDP, TRYSEM, ITDP, SGSY programmes or through employment generation/guarantee programmes, like rural works programmes, food for works programmes, NREP, RLEGP, JRY, EAS, JGSY etc. But most of the provisions in these programmes are not supported by any legislative framework. The programmes remain wholly dependent on executive intent and expediency.¹⁴ These programmes cover different clientele groups and different income groups among the poor including tribals. The experience with these programmes extends to more than five decades and it is time to evaluate the performance of these programmes and judge whether the poverty-alleviation strategy will hold good in future for ensuring socio-economic security and human rights to the poor. Here, an attempt is being made to analyse the performance of these important programmes of poverty-alleviation strategies, viz., asset and wage oriented strategies for the tribals, in the context of Cachar district of Assam. This micro study of Cachar district might perhaps reflect the overall condition of the Tribal poor of the rural areas in Assam.

Success of Asset-oriented programmes in ensuring Right to Work:

The rationale behind the asset oriented approach is to provide an asset which could generate employment and income on continuous basis to the poor people. (Asset-oriented programmes included Small Farmer Development Agency (SFDA), IRDP, DWCRA, ITDA etc.)

An evaluation of asset oriented programmes indicates that the per year coverage of beneficiaries works out 23 lakhs. Given the magnitude of the problem and taking into account the increase in the population of poor families, the coverage does not look impressive. In this context, it is important to note that the average coverage of beneficiaries is much less than the net addition to the poor families in rural India every year which is growing at the rate of five million persons per year.¹⁵ Studies on asset-oriented policies reveal that the

expectations of this approach have not come true.¹⁶ The studies in the context of tribals of Cachar district of Assam have observed that this approach has not contributed much to the eradication of poverty.¹⁷

The implementation of these programmes suffers from several weaknesses in the tribal areas of the Cachar district, viz.

- i) The rural poor are not properly motivated as a result they are not able to take the benefits of the programmes.
- ii) The shortcomings are generally attributed to administrative failures like wrong identification of beneficiaries and the wrong selection of schemes.
- iii) Lack of proper infrastructure in the area under study for providing the necessary supply of inputs for the schemes and adequate marketing outlets etc.
- iv) Failure to carry out proper survey of poor households of the rural area. Incorrect assessment of incomes had led to many underserving households managing to corner the benefits meant for genuinely poor.
- v) Serious problems have also been encountered in the flow of credit. Poor staffing in Bank branches of the rural areas resulted in delay in the disposal of loan applications. Insistence on security by the Bank has also affected the credit flow. The position of the recovery of loans by the tribal people is very deplorable. Almost all the tribal beneficiaries treat developmental loans as the gift of the Government of India.
- vi) Gaon Sabha has been reduced to a mere ritual. The poor people are allowed to take active participation neither in the affairs of Gaon Sabha nor in the selection of the target group for availing development programmes. If serious effort is not made to strengthen the Gaon Sabha, it only indicates that the State lacks the commitment to implement the RDPs meant for the poor. A vibrant Gaon Sabha can not only strengthen democratic culture but also promote human rights and provide a fuller content to their meaning.
- vii) The field experience reveals that majority of rural poor wanted schemes or loans for purchasing a piece of land. They expressed that if the government is interested in developing the poor, it should give them lands. Any other programmes without land, according to them, is not beneficial and viable.

- viii) The efforts to develop infrastructural facilities and optimum utilisation, of physical resources is also not achieved due to the meagre financial allocations to the beneficiaries. The average financial assistance to the beneficiary is ranging between Rs. 2000 and 10,000 (including ST). This amount is not sufficient to purchase or create viable asset which can generate productive employment and sufficient income on a continuous basis.
- ix) As developmental programmes are meant for the people, it is primarily the people's concern to make the best use out of these programmes, which in turn, demands a high degree of people's awareness and utilize these opportunities in the best possible way. In course of enquiry, it is observed that entire situation is characterised by lack of adequate understanding on the part of the implementing machineries on the one hand and lack of awareness and the consequent apathy or timidity on the part of the majority of the target population, created a fertile ground for those who are relatively better off in the rural society either in terms of proximity to administrators or leaders of the higher level. These better off people are emerging as powerful leaders and who are often better positioned to capture the lion share of the fruits of developmental programmes. These better off people can be better termed as the 'fixer' in rural India.

Thus, from the above mentioned observations one can say that the asset-oriented approach, instead of improving the living conditions of the poor, made them poorer.

Success of wage-oriented programmes in securing Right to Work:

The wage-oriented approach is to provide livelihood to the rural poor and unemployed in India. The objectives of wage-oriented programmes are : (i) Generation of additional gainful employment for the unemployed and underemployed persons both man and women in the rural areas, (ii) Creation of sustained employment by the strengthening rural economic infrastructure, (iii) Creation of community and social assets, (iv) Creation of assets in favour of rural poor particularly the SCs and STs for their direct and continuing benefits, (v) Improvement in the overall quality of life in the rural areas.¹⁸ Keeping these goals in view, the central and state govts. Of India have launched a number of special rural employment programmes (RWP, FFWP, NREP, RLEGP, JRY, EAS, JGSY) and have allocated resources in various plan periods.

The studies on wage-oriented policies reveal that the goal of full, productive and freely chosen employment to the unemployed persons remains a distant dream under rural employment programmes in the country. The average annual expenditure on these programmes (1961-1962) comes to Rs.578.34 crore in the country. This has defected the very purpose of wage-oriented policies, i.e. ensuring right to work to the poor and unemployment in the rural areas. Further, the studies point out that the average employment generated for all the agricultural labourers in the country is less than a month (26.31 days) in 31 years which means less than a day per year.¹⁹ It is also pertinent to mention that in the year 1990-2000, number of unemployed is 19.50 in rural India and the following year i.e. 2000-2001, mandays generated is 478.68 million. Thus, it reveals that the employment generated per unemployed is less than 1 (one) month (24.54 days) per year.²⁰ It is desirable to mention that in 2000, number of unemployed is 1572412 persons in Assam in 2000-2001, mandays generated under HGSY and EAS programmes is 100.42 lakhs which indicate that the employment generated per unemployed is only 6.38 days in assam.²¹ It is also not irrelevant to point out that as per 1991 census, number of unemployed is 1070 persons in the highest ST populated village of Cachar district of Assam, namely, Joypur Pt.-III and in 1999-2000, mandays generated, under JRY programme, is only 40 under ST category and 173 under general category in the village.²² Thus it reveals that the employment generated per unemployed is only 0.03 mandays under ST category and 0.19 mandays under general category in the said village and it also poses a question how can there be a majority of mandays generated under general category in a tribal village i.e. Joypur-III, and that too in the highest populated ST village.

The evaluation study on rural employment programmes, at micro level, identified the following reasons for this lack of manpower planning, undertaking non-productive works, selection of schemes without proper examination, lack of supervision, erratic distribution of foodgrains, supply of poor quality of foodgrains, undertaking the works on political consideration and on adhoc basis, undertaking expenditure-oriented programmes, lack of serious efforts to provide continuous employment to the beneficiaries, undertaking the schemes near the residence of the rich farmer, frequent changes in the guideline, lack of provision for the maintenance of assets, delay in undertaking the schemes and consequent non-completion of works, payment of low wages to the beneficiaries, employing the labourers from outside the village concerned, lack of administrative officers,

corruption, wastage of money and resources, interference of political parties, lack of political will, etc.

These factors combine rendered the Rural Employment programmes ineffective. These programmes were not able to fulfil the promise to ensuring Right to work to the poor, increase their institutional levels and create durable assets in the rural areas. Our field level observations further confirm the fact that the Rural Employment Programmes (REP) could not make any positive headway on the living conditions of the tribal. The schemes under REPs were launched without sufficiently educating the beneficiaries. While undertaking the schemes, neither the Gaon Sabha, nor the poor tribals in particular, and the people's representative, in general, in manpower planning or development of human resources, the REPs are bound to fail. Ironically, the benefits of these policies are cornered by the contractors, rich farmers and bureaucratic agencies.²³

Conclusion :

The factors outlined above have serious implications for socio-economic security and also human rights of the poor including tribals in the country. Our analysis reveals that democratisation of grass-root institutions, positive attitude of elite and bureaucracy towards tribals and the poor providing viable schemes to the rural poor, giving freedom to the poor which include tribal also in selecting the schemes, improving the administrative and bank delivering system, assigning land to the poor and organising the poor would not only make the tribals and other poor cross the poverty line but also help to generate gainful employment and income on continuous basis for them. Moreover, making the Right to work as a fundamental right and ensuring it to the poor will promote the human rights in the country. In this connection, our Parliamentarians should take necessary steps to amend the constitution and also prepare grounds to ensure Right to work to every citizen of the country.

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CONTRIBUTION OF BISWANATH CHARIALI TOWARDS THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT OF INDIA : A STUDY

Raja Bala Das

The name Biswanath is derived from the Biswanath Temple.¹ It is an ancient temple located on the bank of the river Brahmaputra. According to historians it existed here before two or three century B.C.² The area was ruled by so many dynasties like the Koches, the Pauls, the Bhuyans and the Ahoms in the past. In the past the temple area was a vast one. Its another name is 'Gupta Kashi'.³ As a holy shrine it attracts large number of pilgrims who come for darshana. It is shaivite shrine even though all sects of Hindu religions come to pray here. There are other temples like Ganesh, Chandi, Basudeva etc, surrounding it. A scenic beauty can be enjoyed of the Kaziranga National Park sitting close to the Temple. It has been an important place politically, economically and from the view point of navigation from ancient period. Communication and water transportation was very easy in the past to establish relation with other parts of the country. After the introduction of locomotive steamer engine the locality was raised into a big commercial area. After the tactful complete annexion of Assam by the British like other parts of India in 1836 some districts were created for the suitable administration of Assam. The District of Darrang is created in 1836. Biswanath was included within Darrang District. Mangaldoi was district H.Q. But later on it was transferred to Tezpur. In Biswanath there was Assam light infantry H.Q. as a result a small township developed here. It was also later on shifted to Tezpur. During this period Biswanath Ghat became an important place, commercial and as a place of communication and transportation through steam engine boats.

The authority of British paramountly appointed Maniram Dewan, the revenue collector of upper Assam. He had to visit Naduar to meet British authority stationed at Biswanath. So he built up a house at Biswanath for his better convenience rather than frequent visit from Jorhat. These duars were liking

routes between plains and hills. There were so many Duars from duars area of Bengal to Chaiduar. Maniram Dewan stayed at Biswanath for nearly seven years as a revenue collector of East India Company. He married his third wife from Biswanath. She was of Koliabar of Nagaon. He had some friends at Biswanath.⁴ But Maniram could not remain as faithful person to East India Company for a long period. He was dissatisfied with company govt. and sided with the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. He supported the Mutiny and he was captured by East India Company Govt. on his return from Calcutta (Kolkata). As a result he was convicted and death penalty was declared by an inferior court. His trial was carried by a junior officer. Even he was not allowed to appeal. Great injustice was done to Maniram Dewan and punishment was given by hanging at Jorhat Jail. In these activities maximum probability was that some citizens of Biswanath might have sided with Maniram Dewan in the Mutiny.⁵ Again, one of the causes of Mutiny in Assam was stoppage of financial aid given to temples and shrines. Biswanath might have had the same fate of stoppage of financial aid and consequently people might be antagonistic against the Company Govt. during the Mutiny.⁶ Maniram Dewan's punishments and stoppage of aid compelled the people to lodge protest against the East India Company govt. They expressed solidarity, sorrow and sympathy towards Heroes of the Sepoy Mutiny.

The failure of mutiny brought a change. East India Company's govt was replaced by the British Govt. The whole of the Indian territory was included into the British Empire. Queen Victoria became the Empress of India. A post of Cabinet Minister was created in British Council of Ministers to look to the Indian affairs. Religious rights among other rights granted to Indian citizens according to Act 1858.

From the period of individual early resistance to collective Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 Indian people fought against the company govt. with arms and ammunitions. But after the apparent failure of the Sepoy Mutiny the strategy of fighting against the British got changed among the Indian nationals. Dharma Melas, specially in Bengal, were held in various religious festivals. These were not mere spiritual gatherings of people from different places. In these Melas the nationalists conveyed the various social, economic and political informations to the people gathering there from different places. The evils of the British administration were the subject matter of their exchange of views. Biswanath played a vital role in organising Melas on various occasions like Ashokastami,

Ramnabami and Bihu. People assembled there from different places. It can, therefore, be reasonably assumed that Melas of Biswanath might have played the same role like the Dharma Melas of Bengal. But the strategy of these Melas to fight against the British Govt. was peaceful ----- a passive resistance.⁷

Dharma Melas were followed by Santhas in India. So, many Santhas were organised in India. The Asiatic society, the Indian association, the Theological society, Shillong Club, the Ryot Sabha, the Assam Association, the Assam Student Conference, Asomiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha were prominent among others. Sahitya Sabha was established in 1917 and it has still been pioneer national literacy organisation. All these santhas or organisations paid impetus to Indian national congress to come up popular among the people. Late Laxmi Kanta Barkakati attended the first congress session in 1885 from this area as an audience representative. The first session was held at Tezpal Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya in Bombay. The Ryot sabha was another organisation which was devoted to launch protest against the evils of British Govt. So many sessions were held in the then Darrang district. Tezpur, Nagsankar, Biswanath and Gamiri are the important places where annual sessions of Ryot Sabha were held. The Biswanath session of the ryot Sabha was held in Biswanathghat. It organised sessions at the meeting place of the Brahmaputra and the Burigang(a). The pendal was decorated with national tri colour. It was like mini-congress organisation. Almost every thing imitative of the national congress, singing of National Anthem, organising volunteers peace-keeping methods were after the congress organisation. Late Laxmidhar Sarmah was the chairman and the Late Jyoti Pd. Agarwala was in charges of culture and direction. Dr. Harekrishnan Das stayed in Ram Pd. Agarwala's house. They were charged by the govt. for their anti govt. speeches and activities. A large number of delegates attended the session. The great person of Sonitpur like late Lambodar Bora, late Haribelesh Agarwala, Raibahadur Bhabani Chandra Bhatta, Laxmi Kanta Borkakati, Jaya Kanta Sarmah were prominent. Ryot Sabha was represented by people from Tezpur, Naduar, Jamiguri, Sootea, Nagasankar. Financial help was offered by the villagers.⁸

Next session was held at Gamiri. Local people contributed and co-operated the session. Satradhikar of Garmur presided over the session. Late Jyoti Pd. Agarwala displayed the lady cavalry here. Female group separately organised the meeting here. Late Laxmidhar Sarmah, Mahim Sing and others attended it.⁹

The Assam association was organised in 1903. Alike the Ryot Sabha it was a reformist organisation. Peacefully they tried to focus various problems of the Assamese people. Prohibition of opium, Ganja, country liquor and other social evils fostered economic reforms. To make people economically sound some economic compulsions were imposed by these organisations. Assam Association became defunct after Tezpur session in 1920. As a result, the Assam Association merged with Indian national congress and new branch of Assam Congress committee was born in the same year. Gandhiji was authorised by the congress to handle its various activities. Gandhiji started his Non-Co-operation movement in 1920-21 as an after-effect of so many evil activities of British govt. like Jaliwana massacre, Rawlate Act, hartal of Mills worker in Gujarat etc. The Assam congress also co-operated with all India Congress committee. Non-co-operation started in Assam also. Late Hem Hazarika, Hem Baruah, Laxmidhar Sarma, Hemchandra Baruah, Bogiram Saikia, Tilak Chandra Sarmah were prominent student leaders who boycotted their studies. Late Chabilal Upadhyaya of nearby area also suffered in the Non-co-operation movement. Late Chandra Nath Sarmah, Omeo Kr. Das, Hemchandra Baruah, Jyoti Pd. Agarwala, Mahikanta Das came to this locality and organised the non-cooperation movement. A larger section of student boycotted their classes and joined the movement as the outstanding congress leader late Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati puts it.¹⁰

The non-co-operation movement was called off by Gandhi; subsequent to the violent activities of people in U.P. and Kerala. In the meant time so many political parties were born. Local organisations also developed. So some confusion got developed. But even though the people of this area supported the civil disobedience movement, the youths were inspired of the slogans like, 'Long live Revolution', 'Up the national Flag' and 'Down with union Jack'. At Biswanath a young man said in a youth conference "we are now following the policy of non-violence in obedience to the mandate of the congress, but a day may come when we may not support this policy". As Laxmidhar Sarmah said in Gamiri Ryot Sabha that before the exposition of the creed of non-violence by Mahatma Gandhi violence was accepted of all slave nations in their struggle for independence, but owing to failure of non-violent methods the emancipation of India was delayed he was prepared to recommend even violence if that could achieve the purpose. Late Mahadev Sarmah also spoke on the occasion in the same line. Late Shiva Pd. Agarwala, late Nabin Chandra Bhattacharjya, Late

Cheniram Das and Late Hara Hazarika were involved in the movement and organised it. They spoke and expressed in their speech regarding the importance of the movement. More than 50 people of Biswanath attended the Pandu Congress session of 1926.¹¹

The movement in 1930 became very strong and enthusiastic. The govt. tried its best to suppress the movement rigidly. Imprisonment, fines and other means were applied to suppress the movement. The govt. employees also left their services and joined hands with the supporters of the movement on being inspired by precious speech of late Hem Hazarika and Late Laxmidhar Sarmah. Mahatma Gandhi received this news and honoured Late Phanidhar Baruah, Lalik Bhuyan, Narayan Dadhara, Juti Dadhara and others by placing Gandhi cap on their heads at Jyoti Pd. Agarwala's house at Tezpur. Phanidhar Baruah and Lalit Bhuyan were imprisoned for 13 months and Rupees 500/- was fined each. They were sent to Jorhat Jail. The govt declared movements as illegal. So, the Ryot Sabha was organised strongly. The people who took initiative in prohibition of opium were Late Nahar Pandit, Jati Dadhara, Narayan Dadhara, Budhi Borthakur, Ganga Barkataki, Jajaram, Manuram, Bhudhar Phuka, Tilak Borah, Digen Bora, Bagi, Somnath Borah, Bikodar Bayon, Lambodor Khound, Bhogram Hazarika, Ghanashyam Hazarika and so many had to suffer imprisonment and torture.¹²

In 1932 students were taught nationalism in the 'Bandarsena' organisation initiated by late Jyoti Prasad Agarwala and Gahan Chandra Goswami. The movement again became strong and popular from 1939 onwards. On 8th August 1942 the great 'Quit India' slogan was declared. As a result leaders were arrested. A situation of lawlessness cropped up. The police tortured and physically punished the general people. They tried to suppress the movement. The village heads were made village police to provide information. Notwithstanding the repressive measures adopted by the British Govt in every village, organisation grew very strong. Redcross Society, Lady Redcross society, village defence peace-keeping organisations etc. were formed. Village panchayats were there in every village. Training were imparted to people to fight like soldiers.¹³ Secrecy was maintained by any means. Bipin Hazarika, Binit Baruah, Bhadra Hazarika, Kamala Bhuyan, Hemadhar Phukan and Bhadra Saikia trained the people in every locality of Biswanath. These fighters wrote with blood in front of late Gahan Chandra Goswami, Jyotiprasad Agarwala and Kamakhya Tripathy and joined the suicide squad. People in groups joined the movement

singing the patriotic and inspiring song of Jyoti Pd. Agarwala. In every village there was a camp. In every camp a office was there for well-management of the affairs. Bipin Hazarika was entrusted with the post of C.O. in central office. The officers of the office were Premanand Borah and Kumud chandra Baruah. Towards the later part of the movement the district H.Q. was also opened here. The plan of the proposed police stations capturing on 20th Sept, 1942 was secretly informed. Leaflets were distributed tactfully. The in-charge of this department were Shiva sarmah and Lila Sarmah. Security gates were placed on the main Road. Even at the stake of an advance arrest order being passed on to Nabin chandra Bhattacharjy and Cheniram Das the other supporters of the movement did not at all get disheartened. All sections of people were involved in the movement. Jiban Chandra Baruah, Shesadhar Hazarika and Shiva Borthakur and others were entrusted the leadership. Even a blind man Gobarkana (Late Nandi Saikia) by name took part conveying letters among the freedom fighters. The date of Thana-capturing arrived. Gangaram Saikia and Sonaram Bhuyan were in the front line. Tri-color was in their hand. Their heart was full of courage to face any kind of danger.¹⁴

The Govt. started to suppress the movement. Large sections of citizens were arrested. The strategy of Non-violence and Satya Grah turned into violent activities. The Govt. offices were destroyed and the fighters of the movement applied so many methods. All political groups got involved in 1942 movement and got mobilised according to their principles and ideology. 'Do or die' was the directive of Gandhiji. Post and Telegraph offices and other offices were destroyed by fire or by other means. Army and Police forces started torturing the people. Some people escaped so far were captured and brutally tortured. Fine was imposed on them. Houses of these people were destroyed and looted. The first object of attack was Bhirgaon camp office. Loknath Sarma was victimised. He was arrested and physically tortured to reveal the whereabouts of 'Binit-Bhadra' by pushing niddle in his fingers. The house of Jiban Boruah also gheraod by the police in-search of 'Binit-Bhadra'. Cheniram Das's house was also destroyed; Ganesh Koch was made life-long invalid.¹⁵

The other citizens of this locality who participated in the freedom movement of 1942 and suffered a lot are - late Jajneswar Borah, Galok Das, Chandu Saikia, Bhuban Sarmah, Tirtheswar Sarmah, Nomal Borah, Gangaram Saikia, Durgeswar Hazarika, Haribilash Hazarika, Nur Masstar, Molan Hazarika, Chhabilal Gajural, Mahendra Kafle, Tikaram Upadhya, Kashinath

Porajuli, Dinnath Gautam, Olalit Saikia, Padma Baruah, Kirti Katakya, Thanu Saikia, Haren Sarmah, Bipin Chandra Hazarika, Ram Chandra Goswami, Jaganath Chetri, Lokeswar Gosdwami, Girish Baruah, Kaminath Saikia, Dr. Amritlal Baruah, Subodh Das, Kanak Borthakur, Nabin Boruah, Jiuram Baruah, chenaram Bora, Bhola Das, Basanta Baruah, Haliram Hazarika, Somor Gowala, Padma Pati Barah, Bimal Borah, Bimala Devi, Kanuram Borah, Bolaram Borah, Mano Rajkhowa, Ganesh Hazarika, Hiteswar Hazarika, Damodar Koch, Baloram Borah, Nityananda Saikia, Chandra Kanta Baruah, Laxminath Borah, Uma Kasti Devi, Tulsi Devi, Dadhi Borah, Hem Phukan, Kanak Ozah, Laxmi Dadhara, Bhadra Bora, Nandeswar Hazarika, Nina Borah, Sarulara Bora, Uma Borah, Minaram Borah, Dibakar Sut, Dolan Neog, Dayaram Ozah, Sahadev Kurmi, Budheswar Bora, Thuleswar, Khadananda Parajuli, Rudralal, Gorkha bhadur, Haren Boruah, Purna sarmah, Lalit Boruah, Ramji Gowala, Tularam Gaon Bura, Hari Pd. Upadhyaya, Nava Hazarika, Monmohan Bora, Phanidhar Hazarika, Jageswar Hazarika, Mahendra Borthakur, Thaneswar Hazarika, Komal Borah, Mukheswari Hazarika, Dahiram Borkataky, Haren Borkataky, Kusha Barhoi, Kameswar Bhagawati, Durga Rajkhowa, Rasai Rajkhowa, Tara Rajkhowa, Thaneswar Hazarika, Golok Hazarika, Joychandra Bhotra, Thaneswar Bhagawati, Jagat Ch. Boruah, Shiva Pd. Agarwala, Ram Pd. Agarwala, Kumud borthakur Budhi Kt. Borthakur, Ghanakanti Devi, Dimbeswari Devi, Ganga Borkataky, Jajaram Mahanta, Tulsi Kurmi, Durjan Kurmi, Punu Ram Orang, Lavan Kurmi, Rati Ram Mahanta, Bamiya Telenga, Kapil Kerwar, Som Lohar, Nandalal Bongilal Kurmi, Thaneswari Borah, Tileswari Bora, Padmapoti Borah, Chandrabala Hazarika, Shaiba Bora, Hem Chandra Bora, Nabin Bora and the living persons are - Suchan Bora, Bhadra Saikia and Goloi Hazasrika.¹⁶

One of the most significant activities of this area was that a 'Mritu Bahini' comprising nine persons of Biswanath chariali area was sent to North Lakhimpur district for organisational purpose of the freedom movement. They had to go on foot. They spent there about 6 months in various parts of North Lakhimpur District.¹⁷

Late Kamala Kanta Bhattacharjya was great anti-British personality of Biswanath. He is great for his writings to inspire the Assamese people to fight against the imperialist power. He was a great nationalist and patriot. He devoted his entire life to the cause of the country.

Late Laxidhar Sarmah was a great laurate, freedom fighter and

dynamic secularist. He also worked for the cause of the country. As a brilliant student leader he gave shape to the different organizations in Assam.¹⁸ Both are the noble sons from Biswanath area. The great leaders of the period who inspired the people from outside were- Gandhiji and his colleagues. They inspired the delegates who went to meet him as delegates at Tezpur. Omio Kr. Das, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Mahikanta Das, Bishnu Pr. Rabha, Harakanta Das, Chhabilal Upadhaya, Bijay Ch. Bhagabati, Bishnulal Upadhaya, Late Tilak Ch. Sarmah, Bagiram Saikia, Chandra nath Sarmah and so many others came to Biswanath area for organisational purposes and so Biswanath played a vital role in response.

Again, on the eve of attainment of freedom, the question of grouping-politics figured prominent. The people of this area stood by the great leaders like G.N. Bordaloi, Mahendra Mohan Chaudhury and Bijay Chandra Bhagawati so as to accelerate the process of securing Independence for India. All India Gorkha league also organised their annual Session at Tezpur in 1946 under Gorkha leaders of the area to oppose the grouping-politics, and in this process the people of Biswanath area took active part irrespective of caste, community and creed. This Fostered the spirit of assimilation and mutual co-operation among all.¹⁹

Thus, it can reasonably be asserted that the Temple-dominated Biswanath remains never a mere mute spectator of the happenings of the land, She has instead been playing a positive and substantial role in giving shape to modern Assam and it is this aspect of the place that has enabled her to earn for her the name and fame of being termed as 'a place of historical importance' so as to attract the attention of the scholars to come forward during the days to come.

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ROYCHOUDHURY'S IDEAS ON NATIONALISM AND HUMANISM

Shanti Bora

To discuss Ambikagiri Roychoudhury's concept of nationalism and Humanism it would be advantageous to discuss the growth of nationalism in Assam during nineteenth century.

During the first half of the nineteenth century the concept of Assamese nationality based on the separate identity of its language and culture prior to the advent of the British power, under the umbrella of Ahom King the people of Assam irrespective of their caste, creed and religion were united in the political interest of the country. The repeated attacks of the Mughals made this unification stronger and made the people of themselves as votaries of one nationality. The modern concept of nationality was unknown in Assam prior to the coming of the British Power. The modern concept of nationality is an European invention.¹

In Assam, the swift growing middle class became less interested in the loss of political independence but they found their linguistic and cultural identity being threatened by the Bengali language, literature and culture. Those who did not come into contact with the Missionaries and their literary activities, they cant be said to have that consciousness into Baptism of Assamese nationalism². During the nineteenth century the spirit of Assamese nationality found its manifestation in defence of identity of language and culture rather than in promoting a political sentiment that urge for freedom from alien rule. So from Anandaram Dhekial Phukan to Manik chandra Baruah all the Assamese elites expressed their desire to develop in all respects under the governance of the British Power. The Assamese nationalism which grew up at the attempt of the educated middle class tried to make people conscious of their own language and culture and of their future economic and political opportunities³. This small nationalism made way for the Pan-Indian nationalism to innundate the feelings of Assam and Assamese.

The spirit of nationalism inspired at first to establish the Assamese language on a firm and equal footing alongside other languages of India, and then to develop the modern literary trends in the language so as to make it capable of competing with other developed literatures of the country.

The concept of nationalism during the first half of the twentieth century took a different shape. During this period Ambikagiri Roychoudhury conceptualised 'nationality' and 'Assamese nationality' of his own. Roychoudhury (1885-1967) was one of the major figures in the history of the Assamese renaissance and Assamese nationalism. His moral, intellectual and spiritual accomplishments have cast a deep influence over the mind of the Assamese intelligentsia since the publication of his 'Songs of the cell' (1942) and 'Final Goal of Man and Lasting peace' (1960). Tagor, who was greatly impressed by the luminous personality of Roychoudhury, stated that through his India in general and Assam in particular would express message to the world. Roychoudhury was indeed a genius poet, Metaphysician, patriot, nationalist and a lover of humanity. His works attempt to represent the crystallization of the new spiritual message for humanity⁴.

Roychoudhury belonged to the extremist of nationalist. The Political career of Ambikagiri associated with the anarchist movement during the period of partition movement of Bengal in 1905⁵. The partition movement immediately took a turn of Swadeshi Movement against British atrocities. In the same spirit he later on established the 'Swadeshi Kinak Sangh' in Assam⁶. He came into close contact with Khudiram Bose, Barindra Ghose, Ullaskar Dutta and many other revolutionaries of Bengal. All of them belonged to the extremist group. Roychoudhury started organizing extremist organization in Assam. He wrote 'Bandeenee Bharat' a drama through which the feeling of Roychoudhury against the British Government was projected. For this the British Government banned the drama and he was kept in house arrest in Borpeta on suspicion⁷. He himself was trained up to use all the weapons like revolver, pistol, gun, dagger, arrow, spear with the volunteer's of the extremist organization. He continued his struggle with the British but after 1905 he disassociated from Bengal extremist group. The critics of Roychoudhury commented that at this stage Roychoudhury's leftist ideology was also turned into Rightist left ideology.

During the first two decades of the present century, he contributed through his writings a lot for the preservation of separate identity of Assamese language from Bengalee. It is Ambikagiri Roychoudhury and his labour for

which Bengali dram were replaced by the Assamese dramas⁸.

Roychoudhury tried to awake the sleeping Assamese people and to activize them. He sang song for the future golden days of the Assamese. He also thought that national feeling and nationalism can be developed through cultural revolution.

Roychoudhury's literary activities not only enrich the Assamese language and literature but also contributed a lot towards national awakening. He published three books on poem 'Jumi', 'Beena', and 'Benu' which still occupied a prestigious position in Assamese literature.

He was also associated with various literary organization of Assam. In 1919 he established the Aruna Press at Gauhati and Published a monthly journal named 'chetana'⁹. 'Chetana' like newspaper and journal of the province of Indian contributed a lot in the freedom movement. The literary meaning of 'Chetana' (consciousness) created the people of Assam to get themselves prepared - 'to do or to die' the slogan raised during 1942 movements. He gave a call to all the people of India irrespective of their religion to get united and fight for freedom of India.

In the national freedom struggle Roychoudhury was greatly involved in non co-operation movement, civil-disobedience and Quit-India Movement. He was active member of the Asom Association. The Socio-Political consiousness found its expression through the Asom association. He became an active member of the Indian national congress (INC).

Roychoudhury joined the non co-operation movement in 1920 at the call of Mahatma Gandhi. The association with Mahatma Gandhi created a great impact on his thinking and became a true volunteer in the non co-operation Movement¹⁰. After non co-operation Movement one can notice another turning point of Roychoudhury's ideology. Though he remained with the Rightist yet his leftist feeling over-powered him. Consequently he went nearer to the rightist left camp and ultimately his activities also changed.

Most of his activities was organized through the 'Asom Samrakshini Sabha'. The Asom Samrakshini Sabha as a parallel organization of Assam Pradesh Congress Committee became popular among the revolutionary minded people of Assam. As a result, in 1935 the Asom Samrakshini Sabha was renamed as Asom Jatiya Mahasabha (AJM). It raised strong protest against the atrocities and exploitation of the British ruler. The AJM not only dealt with Assam problems

but also the national problems. Though Roychoudhury fought for Assam and to the Assamese people he was not a regional leader. He was a national leader. To him, Assam is a part of India and to work for Assam is to work for India. He worked for the interest of Assam always keeping in mind the interest of India as a whole. His attempt to establish a separate identity of nationalism as a part of Indian nationalism and his love for his Assamese language is a love for any other Indian language. Regionalism had no place in his thinking¹¹. During freedom movement he stood as a national leader and advocated for the cause of Assam. Roychoudhury made an appeal to the people coming from different parts of India to Assam to assimilate themselves with Assamese culture. At this, the Bengal press misinterpreted Roychoudhury and call him a leader of 'Benal Kheda Andolon'¹².

Roychoudhury raised his voice when he found that the interest of Assam was affected badly. He believed India's unity as unity in diversity. To him, if all the regions of India worked to safeguard their respective culture and interest, the composite culture of India would surely flourish. To preserve India's integrity within the framework of Indian polity and to preserve local interest by different localities to enrich India's unity was the primary thread of his concept of nationalism. From the above account of Roychoudhury's concept of nationalism, Assamese nationalism and love of Assam are the keys of Indian nationalism and love of India. This in brief, as a background would help us to conceptualize his idea on nationalism and humanism.

The success attained by Roychoudhury in the traditional social problem of Assam was phenomenal and continued to be so still his death. He took the reading public of Assam 'by storm' by his realistic and powerful writings. He had a sincere sympathy for the unfortunate, the poor and the downtrodden. He protested against the old order existing in the sphere of economics. His writings displayed the consequences of the crumbling rural people leading to the growth of a new political consciousness to them and struggled for their rights and privileges with all India nationalist movement for the liberation of the nation.

Roychoudhury was the builder of nationalism in Assam not because he acted as a spokesman of the economically downtroddens but also he openly advocated patriotism. Through his writings he evolved a philosophy of Assamese nationalism not separated from Indian nationalism¹³. He pleaded for distinct identity of Assamese language, literature and culture and their respective position at all India level. His literary works helped towards the development of Assamese

literature in one hand and exhort his countrymen to imbibe the spirit of nationalism. His writing exalted a new concept of nationalism i.e. love of Assam is the love of Mother-India and development of Assam is the development of India. Likewise all parts of India should work for their respective progress which ultimately means the progress of India. This new idea of nationalism got its expression through his writings.

Roychoudhury was very much worried at the continuous flow of immigrants from West-Bengal which stood as a threat to Assamese language and culture. The Bengali immigrants coming in large number started inhabiting in different places Assam by forming small villages with their own culture, tradition and speaking own language. Roychoudhury warned the people of Assam openly not to loose their identity and started creating public opinion against the immigrants. For taking such a step by Roychoudhury, the Bengal Press called him 'Bengal Khedea Neta'¹⁴. But the Bengal press misunderstood and misinterpreted Roychoudhury. He did not organize the Assamese people to deport the Bengalis instead he requested the immigrants to get themselves assimilated on Assam's soil, culture and language and to work for the development of Assam not with separate identity but with Assamese identity.

Another issue that cropped up in the development of Assamese nationality and Assamese nationalism is the attempt of Roychoudhury to bring the different hill-tribes and sub-tribes of Assam under the fold of Assamese nationality. He established branches of 'Samrakshini Sobha' at different places of the Hills and the plains. Roychoudhury was successful in bringing the people of the different tribes and sub-tribes under the common umbrella of Assamese nationality. This in affect, helped in the development of Assamese nationality and Assamese nationalism.

Roychoudhury was an active member of the Assam Association. The Assam Association was replaced by APCC in 1920 and Roychoudhury became an active member of the INC. He organized 'Asom Samrakshini Sobha' in 1926 to ventilate the socio-economic grievances of the people of Assam. He established Asom Jatiya Mahasabha in 1935. The main aim of Jatiya Mahasabha was to solve various socio-economic and political problems of Assam. The Mahasabha made a strong plea for introduction of assamese as official language and medium of instruction in schools and colleges, to provide land to landless Assamese people, introduction of dual citizenship in the federal polity of India., development of cottage industry, establishment of Assamese medium schools, protection of

peasants interest, to provide equal status to Assamese nationality to sanction grant for the development of industry etc.¹⁵

The above issues that are discussed in brief and the views expressed by Roychoudhury aimed at the development of national feeling among the minds of the people of Assam. He always spoke for the interest of Assam keeping in mind the over all interest of India.

Like the other nationalist leaders Roychoudhury was also a humanist 'Love of human' was the basic philosophy of Roychoudhury¹⁶. Through his life he worked for the downtrodden class of the society. The suffering, grievances, miseries of the people badly affect his heart.

To Roychoudhury, all men are equal by birth. But the present socio-economic and political System are responsible in creating differences among the people of the society. He advocated for establishment of equality in the society. Roychoudhury was very much concerned for individual freedom. The promotion of individual freedom was dear to Roychoudhury. He did not want to reduce the individual to a lower position in the society. To Roychoudhury men are by nature equal and free. Like M.N. Roy, he also agreed that the individual are rational and have 'will' of their own. But his philosophy was not 'individualistic' like Kant. His individual liberty not only for the individual concern but for the common good of the society¹⁷.

During the day of world war I and world war II the very existence of humanity seems to very much in doubt. But Roychoudhury was always ready to inspire humanity by his hopeful message 'Bichya Shani Sthapanar Sekh upaya'. He encouraged every man even of ordinary to contribute his share in defence of humanity.

To Roychoudhury, the great enemies of mankind are fanaticism, dogmatism, intolerance and slavery. They have to overcome. Humanism must provide the criteria of decency, of bread & health for the masses progress of wider life more apt for the heritage of civilization.

Rationalism is the very core of Roychoudhury's thought. He contemplated a society based on rationalism. Which would really be a comfortable one for human beings. It will be inspired by love and guided by knowledge. Roychoudhury's concept of Indian nationalism is a part of universal humanism. To him, to attain the goal of universal one must have understood and congenial economic and culture climate condition around him. He believed that only in

such an atmosphere the qualities and the merits of human being can attain healthy growth and development. Through his writings Roychoudhury became an exponent of 'Universal humanism'¹⁸.

Roychoudhury pleads for universal humanism based upon natural reason and secular conscience. To Roychoudhury, humanity is passing through a period of crisis. The greatest crisis is being not only political or economic but moral and spiritual. To Roychoudhury, man is a product of the physical universe. Man is an integral part of this universe. Man is rational. Reason is man's being and personality is 'an echo' of universal harmony and universal peace. He further states that man is an organic integral part of the universe¹⁹. To Roychoudhury in place of nationalism, world brotherhood is needed. He also believed in the co-operative fellowship of man. His humanism is pledged to the ideal of a common wealth and fraternity of free man. He also advocated a world state. His world state is a further manifestation of his universal humanism.

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SOCIO-ECONOMIC & CULTURAL LIFE OF THE PLAINS TRIBES IN ASSAM : A NEW APPROACH FOR DEVELOPMENT

Pinky Das

I

The Tribes of Assam residing both in the Plains and Hills belong essentially to the Mongoloid race. The majority of the tribal groups belong to the Tibeto-Burman family, such as Bodo-Kacharis, the Rabhas, the Misings, the Sonowal-Kacharis, the Deoris, the Tiwas etc. The tribal residing areas of Assam at present are stretching from Dhubri in the west to Sadiya in the east. At present, a very large proportion of assamese speaking population of Assam are tribal stock. The scheduled tribes who usually live in eight plains districts of Assam are termed as the Scheduled Tribes (Plains) or the Plains tribes as distinct from the scheduled Tribes (Hills) who usually live in the two Hills districts of Assam. The Plains Tribals belong to 9 Sub-Tribes, Barmans in Cachar district, Bodo, (Bodo-Kachari) Deori, Hojai, Sonowal-Kachari sub-tribes account for the largest proportion of the Plains Tribals followed by the Misings and Rabhas while the sub-tribes Hojai and Mech constitute the smallest living in scattered areas.

Social Structure :

The Bodo social structure is primarily patriarchal with a few elements of matriachal characteristics. The Misings social structure is patriarchal. The Rabha society is patrilineal with some matrilineal element. Sonowal Kachari descent is matrilineal. In the past, the Tiwas followed the matrilineal system. But now-a-days efforts have been made to find out compromise between the matrilineal and patrilineal system.

The Bodos have definite regulations as to their house-building and maintaining of their homestead. The main house of the Bodos is built on the northern side of the homestead. The main house stretches from west to east. There are three divisions of the main house with the provision of a door facing to the south. The easternmost portion of the main house is meant for cooking and worship. The countryared provides the alter of **Kamakhya** (Kamakhya, the mother Goddess) **Maynaw** (the goddess of Fortune or Lakshmi) and **Bathow** (great Father) are placed inside the easternmost portion of the main house. The Mising houses are built on the platforms. The platform is raised about above the ground. A Mising house is generally 40 yards in length. The Mising house has no compartments. It looks like a great hall. The length and breadth of an average Mising house is about 60'X20'. The walls of the house are made of reeds or bamboos. The roof is thatched. To entertain the guests there is a separate place in the front portion of the house. There is a covered portico. Access to the portico can be made with the help of a ladder. Like Misings, the Deoris are also reverie tribe. Most of their settlers are found along the banks of river. The floors of the houses which are made of flattened bamboos or timbers are raised about 150 cm. from the ground on wooden posts. The house are constructed in a single form with only two main doors., one is in the front and the other in the back. The front portion of the house is called '**Miso**' which is kept open on three sides. Visitors, particularly the non-Deoris are seated and entertained in the open portion of the house. Inside the house fireplaces are constructed for each single family. The fireplace is considered as secured and visitors are not allowed to enter into this room. Looking to the living conditions of the Sonowal Kacharis, it is difficult to find out any differences in their type of house, set up of the villages etc. from the Assamese people. All the houses of the Barmans are of same pattern, although they vary in length according to the size of the family. Barman house resembles the house of the Bengalis. The most important fireplace where cooking is done is found at the extreme end of the house. The house of the Tiwas are almost similar to those of the Kacharis. The houses are constructed on ground plinth. Their housing materials are bamboos, wood and thaches. The houses are portioned into several rooms for bed room, kitchen and drawing room. There is also a courtyard in front of the Tiwa house which is used for drying and threshing paddy and similar other purposes. From this, it is seen that the plains tribes have their own definite regulations as to their house building and maintaining of their homestead.

An outstanding feature of the Bodos society is that it is remarkably free from the scourge of virulent casteism that afflicts Hindu society in most other parts of India. The woman appears to be the nucleus of the Bodo homestead. The family burden of children care, agriculture, spinning, weaving and fishing etc. is being taken up by the womenfolk very eagerly and easily. Most of the plains tribes woman play more or less the same responsibilities as Bodo women. The freedom of girls as well as women in the field and social matters is admitted by the customs and regulations of all the Plains Tribes. A family of most of the Plains Tribes consists of a nucleus of father and mother with separable units in sons and daughters. Both primary and joint family system are prevalent among them. The headman of each of the families runs the house. All the plains tribes have their own social customs and traditions and they strictly follow their customs and traditions. The tribal society is governed mostly by customary laws.

Food & Drink :

The food and drink habit of all the Plains Tribes of Assam is more or less similar. The articles of food include rice, vegetables, fish and meat. **Rice-beer** is used as their national drink in different ceremonies and worships. The preparation of rice-beer with special ingredients is an interesting technique essential to their domestic life. Most of them are fond of dried fish and dried meat. Rice is the staple food of the plains tribes. Generally the meal consists of rice, green vegetables, dry and wet fish, eggs, meat etc.

Village Administration :

The Plains Tribes have their own village administration. The headman of the village though known variously among the different tribes, possesses the higher integrity and other qualities of leadership is selected to maintain the affairs of community interest or welfare, the village elders hold meeting which is presided by the Headman. The Headman of the village is also known as **Gaon Bura**. The decisions are arrived at unanimously after deliberations. The **Gaon Bura** is the Keyman of the village. The elders of the village under the chairmanship of the Gaon Bura also decide all cases of disputes of the village. Complaints regarding anything social or religious are brought before the village elders who deliver judgement and punish the offenders. The tribes have their traditional institutions to govern the village administration. These are time honoured institutions deriving its authority from age-old traditions. In fact, these institutions function as village panchayat giving expression to the will and power of all the member of the society constituting them. A tribal traditional village institution is the pivot round

which the tribal corporate life moves. These are the democratic institutions in the most modern sense. Besides there are sets of customary laws of the tribes which are based on some definite codes of conduct. These codes are accepted and abided by all the members of the society without reservation. This willful acceptance precludes the necessity of any concern for this enforcement of law by the traditional institutions.

Dress & ornaments :

Most of the plains tribes have their traditional dress and ornaments. But now-a-days the young girls outside their home wear Saree, Blouse etc. The young boys are much more inclined to shirt and trousers. But they retain their traditional dress also. They wear different kinds of ornaments eg. '**Keru**', '**Jangpahi**', '**Thuria**', '**Kharu**' etc. In the ceremonies and festivals most of the tribes use their traditional dress and ornaments.

Marriage :

The marriage system of the different types tribes differ each other. The Sonowal Kachari's recognise marriage as a social norm that permits a couple of male and female to live together as husband and wife. Marriage among the Sonowal-Kacharis is of two types - elopement and negotiation. Elopement marriage is held on mutual consent of both spouses. Negotiated marriage is generally held when parents take initiative in arranging marriage. Marriage in the same clan is strictly prohibited. Monogamy is the general rules, divorce and widow marriage are not breach of social law. On the other hand, the marriage system of the Rabhas is very simple. Payment of the bride price is still prevalent in the Rabha society. With regard to the clan the Rabhas are endogamous. Marriage within the clan is strictly prohibited. As a rule the Rabhas are monogamous but polygamy is not unknown. Widow marriage and divorce are also prevalent. The Deoris are monogamous. Widow marriage is permissible. The Deori marriage is base on the principle of patriarchy, as such, the bride goes to the bridegrooms family and starts living there as a member of her husband's parent's family. The Deoris have three different forms of marriage **Bor Biya**, **Maju-Biya** and **soru-Biya**. The practice of demanding and payment of bride price is also prevalent among the Deoris. The Misings have two form of marriage. One form of marriage is known as **Midang** and the other is **Dugalanam**. **Midong** is a expansure form of marriage and arrange by parents. Dugalalanam marriage is not formal as **Midang**. It is arranged by the friends of the bride where bride price is to be paid. The Mising are endogamous with regard to clan

and exogamous with regard to sub-clan. The Mising are Monogamous. Cross-cousin marriage is also prevalent in the Mising society. Divorce is also permissible. Monogamy is the predominating form of marriage among the Tiwas although polygamy cannot be ruled out. They do not practice levirate but sororate is permissible among them. Widow marriage is also permissible. From this, it is seen that the marriage system of the Plains Tribes differ from one tribe to another. But there are also similar features like payment of bride price, widow marriage and divorce.

Religious beliefs & Practices :

The religious beliefs and practices of the plains tribes have both similarities in general and differences in particular. The Bodos are not animists or the worshippers of ghosts and spirits only. They have the conception of the supreme God or the Goddess or the both. The primitive beliefs of Bathow and Bathow-bari in some forms or other Hinduistic relating to Vaisnava, Siva, Sakta, Brahma and others. The Sakti-cult of the Bodos is an important contribution to the Hinduism. The bodo '**Deuri**' (priest) who performs sacrifices and oblations to deities gave rise to Deuri of followers of Mahapurushia Vaisnava Dharma. In most of the Bodo villages there are Namghars. Sacrifices and oblations to deities, puja performances in different times of the year are common to the Bodos. It is very interesting to note that the Bodo conception of Gods and Goddess falls in line with the Hindu cult of beliefs. The Barmans embraced Hinduism as their religion. From the middle of the 18th century onwards Hinduism ingratiated the Barmans. The Barmans are worshippers of different Gods and Goddess. They perform some pujas like Bengali Hindus. They perform Saraswati Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Kali Puja etc. They perform their religious rites in the Brahmanical ways. Their traditional deities are **Sibrai** as 'Siva' and **Gamadi** as 'Durga'. Like Barmans and other tribes, the thoughts and beliefs of the Misings have been largely influenced by the Hinduism. But Mising are also the devout followers of Mahapurushia Vaisnava Dharma. Again they are the worshippers of different Gods and Goddess. They worship the spirit underlying thunder and lightning. The Misings observe **Dabur Puja** and **Sarag Puja**. Worshipping of the ancestral spirit **Urom Posum** is another feature of Mising religion. Today every Mising village has a Namghar. The Mising are secular and flexible in their attitude to religious beliefs. Traditionally the Deoris are worshippers of Saktism. Their principal deities called **Gira** (Lord Mahadeva) and **Girisa** (Parvati) and **Pisadema**, the son of Mahadeva and Parvati. They also worship **Gailurkundi** as

Ganesh and **Kun-Konwar** as Kartika. All their rituals and worshipping are performed in the name of these deities by sacrificing birds and animals. The Deoris also worship a good number of household deities. Apart from their traditional deities the Deoris also observe Durga Puja and Saraswati Puja. Each Deori village has a **Than Ghar** (House of worship) which is erected at a distance of a few metre away from the site of the village. **Pujas** performed for the welfare of the village community are held at the **Than**. Goats, ducks, fowls and pigeons of same colour are sacrificed in such religious functions. They have their own priests and functionaries for conducting their religious functions. The sonowal-Kacharis are by and large Vaishnavites and all of them are disciples of one of the four Satras - Auniati, Dhakinpat, Gormur and Bengenaati. Certain religious rites are still performed by the Sonowal-Kacharis indicate the prior to their embracing Vaishnavism, they worshipped various Gods and Goddess. Vaishnavism has brought change not only in religious rites, beliefs but also in social customs and manners. Traditionally the Tiwas are the followers of a religion which is based on a beliefs in some deities. They believe in a supreme God whom they call the '**Pha**' i.e. the Lord Mahadeva. According to their belief the '**Pha**' is the creator, protector and destroyer of universe. Besides '**Pha**' the Tiwas worship a number of Gods and Goddess. They have both community and individual types of worships. The community worship is performed collectively by the families of the village in a common place of worship called '**Than**'. The individual families perform worship in their own houses. In the contemporary period majority of the Tiwas have become Hinduised by converting to neo-vaishnavism. The Rabhas are Hinduised and worshippers of different Hindu Gods and Goddess and on the other they have not given up their traditional religious beliefs. Some Rabhas also perform the **Durga** and **Kali Pujas**. The Rabhas worship their own Gods and Goddess. **Khaksi** is a fertility festival of the Rabhas. During **Khaksi Puja** and Rabhas sing songs accompanied by traditional Rabhas musical instruments like flute and **singa** etc.

Festivals :

The festivals of the Plains tribes of Assam are mostly related to their religious practices. For example, the Tiwas worship different Gods and Goddess celebrating festivals in different times of the year. The Tiwas have also household festivals. The festivals of the Sonowal-Kacharis are multifarious and the most important one is the **Rangali Bihu**. **Husari Semora**, **Bator Sabah**, **Pal Nam**, **Narasinga Sabha**, **Babi Sabhah** etc. The Deoris observe two major annual

festivals such as the **Bohagiya Bishnu** and **Mangiya Bisu** which are also the national festival of other Assamese communities. The two important festivals of the Misings are **Ali-Ai-Ligang** and **Porag**. The oncoming of the **Ahu** season is marked by the celebration of the **Ali-Ai-Ligang** a spring festivals of dance and drink when the ceremonial sowing of **Ahu** seed on the manured soil of mother earth is performed. The Mising perform this festival with much pomp and grandeur. It is a spring dance festival of socio-cultural significance. **Porag** is another important festival of the Misings. This festival is held at the close of the **Ahu** cultivation. **Porag** is a festival of feast and merry making. Generally **Porag** festival is held in **Morung**. The festival starts with some offerings to the creators **Chedimelo** and **Donyi-Polo** etc. Feast and dance continue day and night for three days. The Bodos contributed a lot of the composite culture of North Eastern Region as well as in the field of national festivities. The national festival of the Bodos are **Baishagu** (Bihu), **Domacni**, **Kherai** and **Moroi**. The national festivals of the Bodos lent glamour to the colourful festivals celebrated in Assam. **Baishagu** festival marked the end of the old year and beginning of the new year. The **Kherai** festivals are of different types and they provide also ancestral and heroworship.

The Plains Tribes of Assam contributed a lot to the composite culture on North East India. The colourful dances of the Misings, Bodos, Rabhas etc. have good reputation in the national field. All the Plains Tribes are very rich in classical music. Now-a-days, modern music has also become popular among the Bodos. Their contributions to the dance and music of Assam is very great. The dances of the Plains Tribes are called by various names. The Bodo dance called **Doudini Mochanai** gave rise to **Deodhani Nritya** prevalent in Assam. In points of rhymes, pause, movement and clarity of appeal the classical dances of the Plains Tribes have closed similarities with the classical dances of different parts of India. The musical instruments used by them have enriched the music and dance. The rhyming metres of their verses and songs always appeal to the readers ear and heart. The themes and beauties of their music and dance reveal their mode of life and attitude towards nature.

Fine Arts :

The Plains Tribes of Assam are very rich in fine arts. They have great contribution to the fine arts of Assam. In the past, the fine arts of the Plains Tribes particularly the Bodos reached the Zenith of excellance. The royal Bodo painters and sculptors did some matches works of pollars, idols and pictures of

various species of wild and domestic animals.

Social Status of Women :

The women of the Plain Tribes of Assam are naturally of happy disposition always with a smiling face. The women do not depend much on their husbands or menfolk for their maintenance. This is because the tribal women are industrious and hardworking. They work side by side with their men-folk in field and forests. They wave, spin, rear worms for thread and thus see to the clothing need of the members of the family. They rear pigs, fowls etc. which is a great financial income. The tribal women contribute a lot towards the betterment of economic life to the family. The weaving of cotton and silk cloth with fine embroidery is the special craftsmanship of the womenfolk,. The Tribal women occupy more or less equal social position and status and participate in all social festivals like menfolk. There is mutual co-operation between men and women in tribal families.

Agriculture and Village Economy :

Agriculture is the mainstay of the Plains Tribes of Assam. The villagers are primarily agriculturists. For their subsistence, however, they mainly depend on plain agriculture. The average holding of per agricultural family is not more than 2.5 acres. There also exists inequalities regarding the land ownership of the household. Thus diversification in their occupation towards other sector is eminent. Occupational distribution of the tribes can be made as follows - Cultivators, agricultural labourers, live stock, forestry and fishing, manufacturing in household industry and other than household activities, construction, trade and commerce, transport and storage etc. There are more agricultural labourers than the cultivators in most of the tribal villages. The occupational distribution, trade, commerce, transport and storage among the tribals is very negligible. Among the tribes both male and female carry more or less equal responsibilities in economic matters. Male-folk is responsible for heavy work in agriculture. The womenfolk do jobs like sowing of seeds, weeding, harvesting of crops etc. The women are also responsible for pounding paddy. The unemployed youths in the family also assist their family members in the different agricultural activities. The agricultural tools of the tribals are still outdated and traditional. They use bullocks or buffaloes for tilling lands. However, only few household of the tribals use Iron plough, Iron hoe, spray machine etc. The agriculture is rainfed. The irrigational facility is disappointing. The use of chemical fertiliser, insecticides, pesticides etc. is almost nil. The cropping pattern is not balanced.

The tribals are rice-growers. Sali and Ahu are the two important rice crops sown by them. After harvesting the Sali crops the Rabi crops are sown. The traditional household industry of the tribals is weaving. This is exclusively a female business. There is dearth of entrepreneur among the tribals. In the past the tribals kept themselves busy whole day in various works like weaving, fishing, collecting fuel and other agricultural practices like sowing, planting and harvesting etc. Now the situation has changed and the villagers have to face rural unemployment problem. On the whole, the village economy of the tribals is far from satisfactory. It is because their economy is still traditional. Though a section of them is exposed to modern economy yet their economic condition is also neither adequate nor self-sufficient.

The level of economic activities, the growth of economic organisations etc. are all influenced by the social environment and social structure of the tribals. The tribals have specific economic activities. The village economy of the tribals is based on agriculture. More than 70% of the tribals depend on agriculture for their living. Agriculture is still in a primitive condition and primitive methods are still applied in agricultural operation. Village economy of the tribals, thus, stands on a precarious footing. The entire socio-economic structure of the tribals evolved centering agriculture as the base. The major food crop of the tribals is paddy. Tribals also produce some other crops like jute, sugarcane, cotton, oilseeds, potatoes, pulses, maize etc. Different kinds of fruits are also produced by the tribal. The poor village economy of the tribals may also be attributed to the fact that the peasants are extremely poor. They are also illiterate and are subjected to serious indebtedness. Due to poverty peasants are compelled to sell or mortgage their lands and turn to landless labourers. Cottage industries have also occupied an important place of the village economy of the tribals. But cottage industries are run by the poor rural families with little capital and single tools and implements. These industries include handloom weaving, rope-making, cane and bamboo work etc. The tribal women also produce muga and endi. The contribution of the tribal women towards the village economy is of great importance. The tribal women are industrious and hardworking. They work side by side with manfolk in field and forests. They wave, spin, rear worms for thread. They rear pigs, fowls etc. which is great financial income.

II

During the last couple of decades changes have emerged in the socio-economic and cultural life of the Plains Tribes of Assam. Transformations have been observed more in their economic than in socio-cultural life. The tribals are receptive to the modern way of life without sacrificing their traditional socio-culture norms and values. After independence, the tribal developmental work was initiated by the Central and State government as well as the various tribal welfare organisations with a view to converting the tribal societies into communities divided into classes. Today we find in every tribal society a nascent middle class that dominates its politics, economy and culture. Since independence though a number of welfare programmes have been implemented for the upliftment of the tribal people living in different parts of the country yet, the government has failed to provide total social and cultural development of the tribals. The bulk of tribals remain poor, illiterate and back ward. The traditional values of the tribal society like co-operation, equality and village self-government are being fast swept away and being replaced by the individualistic and money-oriented values of the middle classes. Much remain to be done by way of cleansing the tribal societies of the evils of lop-sided development during the last more than years and restoring to the hutdwellers their lost sense of human dignity and self-confidence. It is not the development for the people, but the development by the people themselves that is more important for the revival of these societies and through them the nation.

The basic criterion of progress in India is the progress among the tribals. They still remain at the lowest of social hierarely. Their culture is still mainly oral. A thorough social awakening through selfless service will alone be able to initiate the tribal mind into the best values of the age. The Oral tribal cultures are changing slowly into literary cultures. Some problems of language, script and values have cropped up. This problem has to be touched with insight and sympathy. The creative minds among them resent domination and they want to express their particular experiences in words, lines and other valid mediums. We have to welcome these creation. We have to await for the real awakening among them in all sectors of life.

In pursuance of the Directive principles of state policy laid down in the constitution under Article 46 that the state shall promote with special care to educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes and shall protect them

from social injustice and all forms of exploitation, the following measures have been enforced so far which relate to the Plains Tribals in Assam.

- i. For Plains Tribals 10% reservation in the posts and services in connection with the affairs of the state of Assam.
- ii. Relaxation of age limit for 2 years for appointment posts and services.
- iii. 50% concession in application fees.
- iv. Reservation of 10% seats for admission to technical and non-technical institutions for post-Matric studies.
- v. To protect the interest of the members of the scheduled Tribes over land, government, the under chapter X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation 1886, have created Tribal Belts and Blocks in compact areas predominantly people by the Schedules Tribes. No new settlement to land in such areas with other classes of people is allowed. Transfer, exchange and lease of land in Tribal Blocks and Belts are restricted in the interest of the Tribals. Besides, government provides some special privileges to the Plains Tribals in the matter of payment of premium on new settlement of government land and conversion of annual patta land into periodic ones.
- vi. Preferential treatment in the matter of settlement of contracts, permits, fisheries, ferries, excise shops, toll, bridges, forest mahals etc. upto the limit of 7 ½% below the highest bid offered. The Scheduled tribes are also allowed 50% concession in earnest money deposit.
- vii. Provision has been made in the constitution for grants-in-aid to meet the cost of special schemes of development undertaken to promote the educational, social and economic interests of the Backward classes.

Till the end of 7th Plan, special Schemes in Assam were undertaken under the head of development 'Welfare of Backward Classes' for the development of the scheduled Tribes both Plains and hills. The special schemes under the state sector and centrally sponsored sector of the Plains Tribals can be broadly grouped under the following - Education, health and other schemes and economic upliftment.

Education :

For supplementing educational facilities available to the Plains Tribals, the schemes relating to free education and special scholarship have been undertaken. Grant-in-aid are given to the organisations engaged in cultural activities. Grants are also provided to the educational institutions. The following table shows the development of the Plains Tribals in Assam in the field of education.

Tribes	% of Literates	Male	Female
Barman	30.45	37.97	22.50
Bodo	20.51	29.73	11.06
Deori	27.72	39.58	15.10
Hojai	27.72	36.56	19.09
Sonowal Kachari	27.33	35.36	18.77
Tewa	21.43	31.47	11.24
Mech	30.58	39.66	21.64
Missing	18.20	28.54	07.54
Rabha	22.24	31.23	12.66

The following table shows the number of students of the Plains Tribals studying in different educational institutions :

Institutions	Boys	Girls	Total
University	249	116	365
Degree College	11,744	5,206	16,950
Jr. College	16,048	8,692	24,740
B.T.	72	27	99
Engineering	288	26	314
Medical	191	59	250
Polytechnic	256	26	282

Higher Secondary	9,901	6,109	16,010
High School (IX - X)	41,343	31,415	72,758
(V-VIII)	96,725	68,243	1,64,968
(I-IV)	3,27,198	3,10,216	6,82,414
Pre-Primary	1,246	725	1,971
Technical	426	277	703

The Government also provides financial assistance for construction of Girls' Hostels. From this it is seen that the Plains Tribals of Assam achieved some progress in the field of education.

Economic Uplift :

Economic upliftment includes development of Agriculture, Veterinary, Co-operation, cottage industry etc. Which are already undertaken most of the above schemes for the economic upliftment of the Plains tribals. In the field of communications the government of Assam has undertaken a number of schemes to construct roads and bridges in the tribal areas. The government of Assam put greater emphasis to construct link roads to link the plains tribal areas with the mainstream. In tribal Development Blocks under the Centrally Sponsored Sector schemes like Agriculture, Veterinary, Water Supply have implemented. In the field of agriculture a number of Rural Development schemes meant for the tribals have been implemented to improve the economic conditions of the poor farmers.

Health & Other Schemes :

Under the health services the government establishes dispensaries in the tribal areas. The government also releases grants for the improvement and construction of dispensaries. Stipends are also given to plains Tribal girls for studying Nursing-Midwifery Course. The government also undertaken scheme for extension of water supply in the tribal areas with greater priority.

Under the miscellaneous scheme the government provided facilities to the tribal youths to undergo training for self-employment. Government also releases grants to the different social welfare organisations for doing welfare works in the tribal areas. Government also creates opportunities for the tribal women to take part in public life at the grass-root Panchayat level through

reservation of seats under the Assam panchayag Act 1994 to the tribal women. By passing the Rural Indebtedness Relief Act, 1975 the government of Assam also provided relief from indebtedness to landless small and marginal farmers.

III

The New Approach : Tribal Sub - Plans & Authorities :

Under the area development approach of the Planning Commission the concept of Sub-plan for the Tribal areas was adopted. It was done because the Five Year Plans failed to improve the socio-economic condition of the tribal people. Under the tribal Sub-plan a separate development approach has been made for the solution of the tribal problems. The tribal Sub-plan is prepared to give an integrated approach for all around socio-economic development of the tribal people. Since 1976-77 detailed sectoral Schemes have been prepared and given affect under ITDP. The Sub-divisional Tribal Development Boards and the Assam Plains Tribes Development Board have been also sharing the responsibilities for the development of the plains Tribes.

To formulate developmental schemes and policies for the tribals, the government of Assam constituted the department of Welfare of Plains Tribes and Backward Classes. Besides a separate Directorate named Directorate of welfare of Plains Tribes and Backward classes has also been created to look after the implementation of the various welfare schemes for the backward classes of the Plains districts. The Assam Plains Tribes Development Corporation Ltd. was also set up to channalise institutional and financial help. Besides, there is also state level advisory Council to advice the state government in providing welfare services to the Plains Tribes. The government of Assam also constituted an Assembly committee namely Committee on the Welfare of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes to bear overall responsibilities of various welfare services to the tribal people.

Under the Assam Tribal Development Authority Act, 1983, the government of Assam constituted the Assam Tribal Development authority with a view to accelerating development in the plains tribal areas of Assam. The Authority shall have the following functions :

- i) To prepare short-term and long-term plans for all round socio-

economic development of the areas to which this Act is applied.

- ii) To formulate schemes for the development of the area in the context and within the frame-work of the state plans.
- iii) To recommend such other measures as may be considered necessary for accelerating the development of the area.
- iv) To review the schemes for the development of the area and their progress from time to time.
- v) To call for the reports relating to the implementation of the development programmes in the area and to suggest measures for co-ordination and supervision of the schemes.

From the above analysis it is seen that the Constitution of India has provided special provision for upliftment of the tribal people by giving socio-economic safeguards. The Central government as well as the government of Assam have come out with definite plans and programmes for the welfare of the plains tribes living in Assam. Both the Central and state government of Assam allocated sufficient fund in their Budgets for the development of tribal areas. For their speedy socio-economic development a good number of developmental schemes have already been executed with heavy budget. Besides, a number of authorities and agencies have been created to undertake the tribal development activities. Thus, since independence the government have spent crores of rupees in their planned effort to accelerate the tribal areas.

But if we take the stock of the tribal development and carefully scrutinise the result sheet, we find that the result is far from satisfactory. The Various tribal developmental schemes failed to achieve their desired objectives fully.

The COP :

The aforesaid social., economic and ecological factors have been instrumental in the continuing backwardness of the tribal communities. Leakage in the delivery system also deprive them of their legitimate share in the services and economic benefits meant exclusively for them. Therefore, an altogether different approach to their problems is called for if we are really interested in ameliorating their pitiable conditions and want that the benefits meant for them genuinely flow to them. We may term it as 'COP', approach each letter of the acronym standing for Conscientisation, Organisation and Participation, in that order.

Conscientisation :

The term here means generating awareness in the people of their rights and privileges, rightful claims, and of the resources, services and benefits flowing to them from public, semi-public, private and voluntary agencies. Their ignorance in this regard is largely responsible for their deprivation. It is important that the tribals should be aware of the rights conferred on them under the existing laws and also of the various programmes meant for them. These cover many areas, such as tenancy and land reforms, minimum wages, various concessions and subsidies to which they are entitled. Conscientisation, in fact, should have been one of the rural local bodies operating in the tribal areas. But the people engaged in operating these bodies have had vested interest in the ignorance of the tribals as this helped them to appropriate a major portion of resources, benefits and services meant for the letter.

Organising the Poor :

Conscientisation, however, is not enough in itself. Weaker sections, even if they are aware of their rights, are unable-some-times even if they unwilling to assert themselves. A need for the organisation of the poor, including that of the tribals becomes very important at this point. What is relevant is whether they can organise themselves so as not only to defend their interest but also to choose their allies for different times and situations. Organised tenants have to see that the tenancy laws are implemented. Organisations of the landless have to see that surplus lands are identified and distributed to them in accordance with the law within five years. Local leaders of the poor have to ensure that all area plans and sectoral plans designed for the benefit of their localities and target groups are effectively administered. It is realised by all concerned that only such unions and organisations can ensure due share of credit, water pumps, animals, inputs, assets, infrastructure and social services to the rural poor - including the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes. The voluntary organisations, which are either totally rural oriented and rural located or based in small or medium towns, nearest to the rural areas can make significant contribution in this direction. Moreover, the organisations of the poor have to be given proper direction, imparted suitable skills and provided with sufficient resources. It has to be realised that adequate motivation and training of the poor is a necessary condition for their organisation to become self-reliant and capable of withstanding exploitative forces in the Politico-economic real world.

Enhancing true Participation :

The ultimate objective of these efforts directed towards conscientisation and organisation of the weaker sections is to secure their effective and meaningful participation in the formulation and implementation of development programmes meant for radical improvement in their social and economic conditions. Indeed, it is in the context of securing their participation in the local decision process that the quickest possible conscientisation and organisation of the weaker section have been advocated and emphasised. Their participations is highly relevant to some most vital areas of the very great importance to their economic life. These include implementation of land ceiling laws and distribution of surplus land among the landless, effective implementation of the minimum wages laws, fair distribution of the most essential commodities through the public distribution system and formulation and implementation of programmes and schemes having direct immediate bearing on their socio-economic life.

The Panchayat Raj bodies may also provide a suitable forum for effecting a meaningful participation of the weaker sections - including the scheduled casts and scheduled tribes - in the local decision process and programmes implementation.

The adoption of conscientisation, organisation and participation 'COP' approach would take adequate care of causes and consequence of continuing deprivation and backwardness of the scheduled tribes and other weaker sections and facilitate their emergence from the present morass.

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REGIONALISM - A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Sewali Kurmi

The phenomenon of regionalism is one of the most significant aspects of international politics. Regionalism is a concept of organising states on regional basis. According to Palmer and Perkins, "In international relations a region is invariably an area embracing the territories of three or more states. These states are bound together by ties of common interest as well as of geography. They are not necessarily contiguous, or even in the same continent".¹ Sisir Gupta, an expert on south Asian affairs, conceptualises regionalism by analysing the definition of Norman J. Padelford in the following manner, "an association of states based upon location in a given geographical area, for the safeguarding or promotion of the participants, an association whose terms are fixed by a treaty or other arrangements". It seems that such an association can only be the product of a long period of planning and cooperation of the people of a particular region. In a broader sense, regional integration mean any tendency on the part of any group of nations belonging to some region or adjacent regions to cooperate in the fields of their national and international policies or coordinate their efforts in order to promote an ever increasing relationships, as distinct from the relationships with other parts of the world.² Karl Deutsch emphasised more on 'community-building,' which is required to forge a sense of regionalism among the member states and this community building includes - (a) the growth of the nation - states feeling and mutual difference, (b) development of mutual trust, confidence and practicability, (c) economic integration, (d) disappearance of regional communication barriers, (e) the heightening of mutual awareness, alternative and responsiveness at all societal level.³

But the very process of regionalism began to emerge in a concrete shape only after the second world war. In this regard two distinct factors are mainly responsible for this development. First, it is the security concerns, and

secondly, the developmental objectives - such as economic, social, cultural and political integration - which paved the way for the formation of regional grouping,

The importance of regional arrangement was recognised at the covenant of the League of Nations and at the United Nations charter. The primary provision of the United Nations charter concerning regional arrangements are found in chapter VIII containing three articles (Article 52-54). The important principles of the chapter VIII are as follows :

- (i) The member of the United Nations entering regional arrangements or constituting such agencies shall make very effort to achieve pacific settlement of disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies before referring them to the Security Council.
- (ii) The security council shall encourage the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies either on the initiative of the state concerned or by reference from the security council.
- (iii) The security council shall at all times be kept fully informed of activities undertaken or in contemplation under regional arrangements or by regional agencies for the maintenance of international peace and security⁴

It is also true that the increasing importance of regionalism has caused much uneasiness among the supporters of the UNO. Carlous P. Romulo, the former foreign minister of the Philippines, was one such sceptics who said that the United Nations is dying, because member states are more taking the political issues outside the framework of the organisation⁵ Another observer of international relations also expressed the similar view, "The United Nations has been placed in a position of inferiority so that now the links between regional arrangements and the world organisation exist at the practical pleasure of the former." ⁶ But Trygve Lie, the former secretary general of the UN pointed out the regional arrangements can be a very useful element in building united nations system of collective security, provided, they recognise the supremacy of the charter. In other words, regional arrangements have constructive possibilities if they are truly a part of a larger pattern, centering on the United Nations-the one common undertaking and universal instruments of the great majority of the human race.⁷

The co-existence of regional and a nearly universal world organisation

is a fact of contemporary international life. Both meet a real need in the area of interstate cooperation. According to John. C. Stoessinger :

"The record support neither the building block theory of regionalism nor the opposite contention that regional arrangements are necessarily antithetical to the principles of united nations charter. Rather, the evidence shows that frequently the united nations has been a second line of defense for regionalism, and that sometimes regional arrangements have served as backstops for the world organisation. Certainly there is ample room for both types of political order building on the international scene."⁸

Regional cooperation arises out of security compulsions, pressure and threats which affect one or more than one country among the entire group of countries of the region. The nature of these compulsions could be internal or external due to environmental pressures. The state of insecurity within the regional countries demands cooperation and understanding to avert, neutralise the gravity of the prevailing circumstances. Basically all the developing and underdeveloped countries have the same objective, i.e., preservation of their national identity, to live in peace and amity with their neighbours, safeguard territorial boundaries and improve economic condition.⁹

The need for regional cooperation can be discussed from the three contemporary challenges to the nation-state.

These are as follows :

(i) The challenge of economic interdependence :

Today every nation is motivated by a calculus of cost and benefit. If goods and services can be obtained cheaply and quickly then it is a waste of resources to produce them at home. Economic of scale and efficiency of operations have been multiplied manifold by the regional and international division of labour. In no sphere of life no country can pursue its separate course keeping aloof from developments taking place around it.¹⁰

(ii) The challenge of military technologies :

The proliferation of destructive military technologies and the advent of the thermonuclear weapons have rendered every nation state physically vulnerable and insecure. So, the nation-state alone have ceased to be an adequate safety cover for its citizens.¹¹

(iii) The challenge of internal fragmentation :

Today, many of the states are confronted by the prospects of

fragmentation and weakening because of international ethnic or sub-national movements. The recent example is the emergence of Bengali nationalism in the United Pakistan and eventual emergence of Bangladesh. In its wake, both India and Pakistan had to face violent ethnic movements in their provinces. The only lesson is that a regional cooperation is viable to contain these forces and provide collective security.¹²

Besides these contemporary challenges, many other factors are also responsible for the growth of regionalism. These are - proximity, homogeneity, functional interests, common threat perception, acceptance of pivotal power in the region, strategic harmony and regional institutions.

Proximity : The concept of regionalism is facilitated by regional contiguity which is based on rough geo-political calculation. In south Asia, proximity of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan strengthen the ties of regionalism.

Homogeneity : Social, political and economic homogeneity also leads to regionalism. Social homogeneity lies in measuring similar attitudes and values of the people. Economic homogeneity leads to more and more flow of trade and transactions in communication, trade and mobility. Political homogeneity maintains affinities between national political cultures, which develops understanding, trust and cooperation between neighbouring countries. Regionalism can be fostered efficiently if there is similarity among the nations regarding structural frame and political behaviour of political elites.

Functional Interest : In international relations, functional interest is an integrative factor. The alignment of nations in a war for national survival is also one of the important ingredients of regionalism. For example, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) established for containing Iran-Iraq war. In South Asia, faith in international disarmament agreement, and an emphasis on interdependence help in the formation of SAARC.

Common Threat Perception : Common threat perception, internal or external is of prime importance for regional cooperation. The emergence of SAARC is an instrument of promoting internal security against economic backwardness in the region and external security effort against super power.

Similarity in Foreign Policy Orientation : Similarity in foreign policy orientation is also a cementing factor towards the growth of

regionalism. As for example - the pro-western ASEAN countries drew closer to each other because of their dependence on the united states.

Acceptance of Pivotal Power in the region : A pivotal role of a particular power in the region has to be accepted by other nations in the region. For example, in ASEAN, Indonesia and in SAARC, India overshadows other members of the organisation. If these pivotal powers are not accepted unanimously by other nations of the regions, then constant fear of their hegemonistic role may create hindrances of regionalism.

Strategic Harmony : Strategic harmony is one of the significant elements which encourages for the formation of regionalism. No meaningful economic cooperation in a region is possible unless strategic discord is smoothened and mutual security dilemmas are contained.

Regional Institutions : The establishment of regional institution to shape and implement regional policies is indispensable. A regional institution can develop cohesiveness and solidarity between national societies and may become more oriented towards integrative activity.¹³

Mohammed Ayoob, an expert on South Asia has initiated a comparative study of different regional groups and identified four basic political factors essential for regional cooperation. These are --

- (a) Common and similar threats either from within or external sources or both provide a congruence in their security perceptions.
- (b) Similar political systems which provide a congruence in their ideological perceptions.
- (c) Common foreign policy orientations regarding major issues related to the global balance of power and its regional manifestations and provide a congruence in their strategic perceptions.
- (d) A consensus regarding the role of the pivotal power itself provides the basis for internal cohesiveness within the grouping and sets the limits beyond which neither the pivotal power nor its partners may stray in intra-regional and intra - group relations.¹⁴

On the other hand, S.D. Muni another expert and keen observer of south Asian affairs, does not agree with Mohammed Ayoob regarding the above mentioned factors necessary for regional cooperation. Muni argued that no meaningful economic cooperation in the region is possible unless strategic discord

is smothered and mutual security dilemmas are contained.¹⁵

Theoretically, the following five major approaches have been identified to study the regional integration process.

Functional Approach : The functional approach in the regional integration theory concerned mainly with economic and social aspects of regional cooperation activities. It means that regionalism was collective action at regional level to secure national goals. In the functional approach, unification and the loss of attributes of sovereignty was ignored. The main emphasis lay on side tracking political aspects by initiating regional action on non - political, non-controversial issues at lower level.¹⁶ In this regard David Mitrani, the leading functionalist, stressed the role of the functional at the cost of political cooperation among nations through international functional organisations in the promotion of peace and prosperity. He said that it is possible to evolve a supranational functional community transcending the boundaries of nation - states through the performance of common functions and fulfilment of common needs in the way of national communities naturally evolved through performance for functions by their members. He argued that the state is neither the best medium for securing peace and security nor necessarily the most appropriate institution for the economic development of societies. Mitrani observed that the problem of our time is now to bring the nations actually together. In this regard he gives importance on political decisions of the international agencies through which the interest of nation-states are served and they would be gradually integrated.¹⁷

The Neofunctional Approach : The neofunctional approach from classical functionalism and derived from the earlier strategies of European integration. The neofunctionalists emphasised that over time regional cooperation will spill over from the economic to the political sphere. The neo-functional approach gives importance the need and role of both non-political and political actors in the integration process. In the words of Hass, neofunctionalism refers to the process where political actors in several district national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations or political activities towards a new and larger centre whose institutions possess jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states. The neofunctionalist recognised the role of 'supra-national agency' as a prerequisite to effective problem solving' which gradually extends its authority to undermine the independence of the nation - state.¹⁸

Intergovernmentalism :

The intergovernmentalism approach discusses the primacy of the nation states in all forms of international organisations, their absolute autonomy, and sovereign equality in all forms of international interaction. According to this approach international organisations whether regional or global exist to preserve and reinforce the nation-states as the principal actors in international life. The nation-states is regarded as an ideal form of political organisations as well as the indispensable framework for all social, cultural and economic activities. The state continues to be the focal point in international politics and economics. Morgenthau, in this book "Politics Among Nations" said that what the national government does or does not do is much more important for the satisfaction of individual wants than what an international functional agency does or does not do.¹⁹

Transnationalism :

By transnationalism approach means the movements of people, good, information and other tangible or intangible objects across national boundaries. Such transnational movements and cross national interactions are creating new transnational forces and linkages and exerting an influence on international relations and foreign policies" Keohan and Nye in their book " Transnational Relations and World Politics" pointed out five main effects of transnational interactions on contemporary international relations, These are as follows :

- (i) Transnational experience of the members of the national elites exert a beneficial influence on national politics and enjoin accommodation among nations.
- (ii) They promote international pluralism, which means the linking of national interest groups in transnational structures, involving transnational organisations for the purpose of coordination.
- (iii) They create webs of dependence and interdependence among governments.
- (iv) They create new instruments of influencing the thought and action of other governments. The attempts of some governments to mobilize their multinational corporations and private capital in aid of their foreign policy objectives.
- (v) They help the emergence of independent non-governmental international actors such as humanitarian environment, libertarian,

environmentalist, pacifist or anti-nuclear national groups with district policies of their own.²⁰

The World Order Approach :

The world order approach is sponsored by the globalists like Richard A. Falk and Saul Mendlovitz. According to this approach, the present structure of the international system is not able to tackle the current problems like nuclear arms race and population explosion. The proponents of the world order approach emphasise the global governmental mechanism which can tackle these problems. In this regard one of the necessary preconditions is the growth of regionalism. The approach believes that the diversities of different countries can be minimised only through regional cooperation.²¹

II

The evolution process of regionalism and the potentialities for further changes can be understood in the context of environment development, compulsions of common problems and the experiences gained due to drawback and inadequacies of the existing international organisations. The nation - State system is evolving towards a system in which regional grouping of nations will be important than independent sovereign units.²²

Prior to nineteenth century, there was no concept of international organisation. According to drucker's analysis, "Before 1914 world integration was proceeding steadily by means of regional policies expressed in custom unions, preferential relationships, open door arrangements, long term commercial treaties interrelated through the most favoured - nation clause, monetary unions and world wide acceptance of the gold standard".²³

After the end of world war I, there was a growing demand among the people and government of European countries and the US for an association of nations to enforce peace. A peace conference was held in 1919 in Paris with thirty two participating states drafting the covenant for League of Nations. It was designed as an instrument for international cooperation to achieve international peace and security. It had the core of collective security system which could develop into effective international political instrument.²⁴

During the inter war period (1918-1939) a number of regional

arrangements came into being without fully organized named 'Little Entente' composed of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania was created shortly after the conclusion of war. It grew out of a series of bilateral mutual assistance treaties among the three countries. It gradually developed into a broader political organisation and after 1993 formed a close diplomatic confederation with definite organisational structure.²⁵ Regionalism in that period remained confined to Europe and Western hemisphere. Even before 1939 Inter-american collaboration has been regarded as a regional arrangement. After the world war II this arrangement brought unprecedented cooperation among the American Republic, made provision for common defence, exchange of essential materials and financial and cultural collaboration. And eventually the charter of organisation of American states (OAS) was approved at Bagota conference in 1948.²⁶

After the World war II, in June 1945 the charter of United Nations was signed for a more equitable international order giving importance to the operation of regional organisation and to other agencies and agreements. The UN charter under Article 52 laid down that:

"Nothing in the present charter precludes the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action".²⁷

In Western Europe, various kinds of regional organisations came into being to counter the communist threat. In the economic field rapid integration was started with the reconstruction efforts under the Marshall plan. The Benelux union composed of Belgium, Netherlands and Luxemburg form a customs union and collaboration on international issues. The organisation of European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), In 1948 was formed for European economic cooperation in matters of trade, international payments and movements of labour. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949 was established as regional organisation of great military significance to meet the new international developments directing its activities in the fields of political, affairs, information, cultural, armament, economic production and finance etc. The creation of European community comprising of Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and West Germany - the European Coal and Steel Committies (ECSC) in 1951 and European Economic Committee (EEC) in 1958 emerged to boost up the economy.

In the East European block, regionalism appeared in 1920 with the

forming of Little Entente as a military defence agreement. in 1930, this organisation expanded its cooperation in other fields also. Many bilateral treaties of mutual assistance emerged under the Soviet leadership between 1943 and 1949. Council for mutual Economic Assistance (CMES) was formed to implement 'Molotov Plan' as a substitute to Marshall Plan' COMECON was formed "for the purpose of providing mutual assistance, coordinating foreign trade, furnishing economic information, exchanging common experiences".²⁸ In the military field, Warsaw Treaty Organisation was established in 1955 as a rival to NATO under the leadership of Soviet Union.

In the middle East, a comprehensive non-Western regional arrangement called Arab league was formed in 1945 to achieve close cooperation among the Arab states in economic, financial, cultural, Social affairs and safeguard their independence. In 1959, CENTO was formed by Britain, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan to cooperate economically and militarily to counter Soviet threat from the North. The CENTO was unable to continue as an effective organisation due to troubles in Turkey and Iran. A new regional organisation named as Regional cooperation for Development (RCD) between Pakistan, Iran and Turkey developed. The organisation is considered as the first example of regional cooperation among developing nations.

In the African continent, with the emergence of a large number of new several patterns of regional cooperation were developed. Conference of independence African States (CIAS) in 1958 was formed for establishing machinery for consultation and cooperation by eight African states - Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Morocco, the Sudan. Tunisia and the United Arab League, In 1963, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was established to maintain unity of African continents, sovereign equality of all members and denouncing colonialism, apartheid and social discrimination. The African-Malagasy Organisation for Economic Cooperation (AMOEC) aimed cooperation in planning for economic development, extension of a customs (CCTA) union harmonising fiscal policy. The commission for Technical cooperation in African States was created for the promotion of economic cooperation among European governments and moved from organisation to that of constituting a regional association of African countries.²⁹

The Asian and Pacific regionalism commenced with the holding of series of conferences and signign of various social and economic pacts. These are as follows :

Table - 1**Early Attempts at Regionalism in Asia**

Sl.No.	Conference	Countries Participated (Total)	Issues Discussed
1.	Asian Relation conference March 28, 1947, New Delhi.	Afganistan, Bhutan, Burma, Sri Lanka, China, India, Indonesia, Malaya, Nepal, Mongolia, Iran, The Philippines, Siam, Tibet, Turkey, Vietnam, Egypt, Palestinians and Soviet Central Asian Republic. (19)	Freedom movements in Asia, Racial problems, Interracial Migration, Cultural Affairs, Agriculture and Industry.
2.	Conference on Indonesia, January 1949, New Delhi.	Afganistan, Australia, Bhutan, Burma, Iran, Iraq, The Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, China, Nepal and Thailand. (18)	Dutch action on Indonesia and the settlement of the Indonesia question, machinery for continuous contacts.
3.	Baguio Conference, May 1950, Baguio (Philippines)	Australia, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, The Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia. (7)	Economic and cultural cooperation in Asia, collective security in Asia.
4.	Colombo plan 1 July 1951	India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand. (7)	Economic and Technical cooperation.
5.	Colombo powers Conference, April 1954, Colombo.	Sri Lanka, Burma, India, Indonesia and Pakistan. (5)	Indo-China situation and other Asian crises, Hydrogen Bomb, Economic cooperation.
6.	Afro-Asian Conference, April 1955, Bandung (Indonesia)	Afganistan, Burma, Cambodia, Central African Federation, Sri Lanka, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gold Coast, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Laos, Lebanon, Siberia, Libya, Nepal, Pakistan, The Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam. (28)	Economic and cultural cocoperation, problem of nation sovereignty, racialism and colonialism, Afro-Asian contribution in world peace.
7.	Simla Conference, May 1955, Simla (India).	India, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan, The Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaya, Singapore, British Borneo. (13)	Utilization of U. S. special allocation of US\$ 200m. ³⁰

In South Asia, the economic pressures and political interest had a mild impact on the propensity to work towards regionalism. In this regard the western powers also shown keen interest in encouraging cooperative relations among the South Asian powers. The U.S. President carter and the British Prime Minister Callaghan visited India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in January 1978. These western leaders had talked to peace, amity and cooperation in the region. The combined impact of all the conducive factors on south Asian regionalism was evident in many ways since the middle of 1977. The Foreign Minister of Bangladesh paid a visit to Sri Lanka in November 1977. The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister in his talks with the visiting dignitary called for the establishment of a regional Asian grouping, including an Asian Common Market for greater economic cooperation in South Asian region.

The king of Nepal, Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev by inaugurating the Colombo plan consultative meeting in Kathmandu, December 1977, called for cooperation among Asian countries like Nepal, China, Bhutan and Bangladesh.³¹

In the improved climate for regional cooperation, a number of high level visits were exchanged in South Asia between 1977 and 1978. There was a marked stress on mutual bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the deliberations of the leaders during these visits. The Janata Government of India described its policy towards the south Asian neighbours as "beneficial bilateralism". Among other things, Salal Dam Agreement with Pakistan, Farakka water sharing agreement with Bangladesh, new trade and transit treaties with Nepal and accord on matters related to trade and joint ventures with Bhutan and Sri Lanka mentioned as the achievement of this policy.³² There was a better appreciation of India's policy in the region by the South Asian neighbours. At the UN international conferences, South Asian countries had more mutual consultations and contracts on the various economic issues of common interest. It was against the back ground of these developments that the initiative taken by the late Bangladesh President Zia-Ur-Rahman in 1980 for setting up a forum for regional cooperation in South Asia came into being 1985 to promote welfare of the people of South Asia and to improve their quality of life.

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