

Reflections on the Demand for ST Status by Some Ethnic Groups in Darjeeling Hills

Rajatsubhra Mukhopadhyay

In the process of social formation a gradual assimilation/integration of the so called autochthons and non Aryans into the Hindu society continued until recently. But in the recent past one can notice a reverse trend where the ethno-political forces are keen in preserving their identities at the cultural level and get them recognized by the state for certain privileges or rights. The demand for recognition as Tribes (STs) by some ethnic communities in the Darjeeling hills is a case in point. The present paper offers some insights into this growing clamour of the hill people for ST status and the politics behind it.

Keywords: Scheduled Tribes, ethnic groups in Darjeeling Hills, concept of tribe, demand for ST status, retribalization.

I

Anthropological discourses on tribes and castes in India are rooted in colonial rule, particularly in late nineteenth century. H. H. Risely, a British administrator cum anthropologist propounded the thesis that a gradual Brahmanisation of the aboriginals, non-Aryan or casteless tribes continued to occur persistently in Indian Society (Risley, 1981). Talking about the Nepali speaking castes and sub-castes and communities the history is somewhat obscure and imaginary. Now with the demand of self-rule and creation of a separate Gorkhaland for the Nepalese / Gorkhas there is a need to understand their social history.

It is assumed (Subba, 2001:1) that particularly since 1866 when the region came under Bengal, several hill communities came under the umbrella of the Nepali or Gorkhali nation for their survival in a multi-ethnic situation confronting with diverse forces and interests. All these ethnically distinct communities thus became a part of Nepali social structure and Nepali language became their

language as well. Following the model of Nepal, in the Nepali caste (*jat*) structure of Darjeeling Hills, those different ethnic groups found places in the middle rank of the social hierarchy. They were placed below the Bahuns and Chhetris, but above the low/untouchable castes like the Kami, Damai and Sarki.

On the question of degree and nature of absorption of various ethnic groups into Nepali caste system, the 1941 Census offers the following categories in order of rank.

- a. The Nepali 'high castes' Hindus - the Bahuns, Chhetris (Khasas), and Thakuris.
- b. Those who were accorded a high caste status like the Newars and Sannyasis.
- c. The former tribes namely Gurungs, Mangars, Sunnwars and Bhujel, who were Hinduised and absorbed into the Nepali caste system.
- d. The Kirata tribes who were in the process of being absorbed into the Nepali caste society like the Rai/ Jimdar, Khambu, Yakka and Garthi.
- e. The so called low artisan and servicing communities like the Kamis, Sarkis and Damais. They were in the process of being absorbed into caste hierarchy.
- f. At the extreme end there were Tamangs and who were yet to be absorbed into the Nepali caste fold.

The different ethnic groups in terms of their degree of assimilation to Nepali caste system were ranked as follows: (i) Hinduised and totally assimilated/integrated groups as included in the above category 3, (ii) groups which were in the process of being absorbed/assimilated as observed in the case of category 4, and (iii) the groups included in the category 5 were on the way or yet to be absorbed to the caste system.

The Newars, who were ranked second in social hierarchy, originally had their own complicated caste system and social ranking in Nepal with about twenty odd discrete castes. Some of the Nepali castes like Limbus and Mangars were considered to be autochthones, although they had their origin in Nepal.

The Nepali society of Darjeeling Hills is stratified largely on the basis of caste. A large majority of the Nepalis (77%) in the 2001 Census are returned as Hindus. However, according to Subba (1992) besides the Lepchas and the Bhutias there are over nineteen endogamous groups professing different religions, speaking different languages, and holding of different positions in the social hierarchy among the people corporately identified as 'Nepalis'. Because of their numerical strength, the significance of each Nepali caste group in building a composited Nepali society is crucial. Historically, in the Nepali caste society, the different castes followed different occupations for their livelihood. In course of time, they became parts of the Nepali social structure where all the ethnic/racial groups were equally called *jat* (caste).

II

The leaders of ethno-political organizations in Darjeeling Hills are now demanding Scheduled Tribes (STs) status since this would bring them some special privileges. These leaders prefer to call them as spokesman of *janajati*, a term officially coined for the tribes. Thus in 2005, a new demand articulated by the GNLF supremo Mr. Subhas Ghising was that the territory of Hill Council must be recognized as a Tribal State under the provision of Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. He made this demand in order to facilitate all the Nepali communities in the hills to avail of the benefits meant for the STs. So he publicly gave certain directives about 'how to be a tribal' by reviving their archaic cultural practices (Mukhopadhyay, 2007).

In recent years certain ethnic groups of Nepali ancestry are seeking to re-establish their old cultural identities and traditions (Shneiderman and Turin, 2006). They are, however, not sure how much it would be practically possible for them to revert back to their missing ancestral culture and dialect/ language! The apprehension has some substance since the communities have gone through a long process of modernization and internalization of many of the pan-Indian cultural traits.

The ST status demand has captured the collective imagination of the people in Darjeeling hills which starve of employment

opportunities and the now dominant Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha (GJMM), which is controlling the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration is likely to mount pressure on the centre to expedite the process of granting ten Gorkha communities – Rai, Yaksha, Gurung, Bhujel, Newar, Jogi, Sunwar-Mukhia, Mangar, Khas and Thami the coveted constitutional status. Keeping in line of the demand of the hill people the Government of West Bengal, in a cabinet meeting on February 26, 2014, has resolved to request the Union government to recognize these ten hill communities as Scheduled Tribes (*The Statesman*, Feb. 28, 2014). One may wonder whether the state government has consulted the competent organizations like Anthropological Survey of India and Tribal Research Institute in this matter, and has done any groundwork before sending its recommendation to the Centre. Other pertinent questions are whether this recommendation was aimed at development of the communities or just a political strategy or a result of pressure politics. Who are going to be benefitted if the status is granted?

One may be curious to know – why the Gorkhas in the Darjeeling Hills are now so eager to rediscover their lost tribal identity. History reveals that since the unification of Nepal in the late 18th Century, Nepal's various indigenous 'tribes' (in colonial perception) have been incorporated within the caste hierarchy. These ethnic groups however did not belong to any tier of the classical *Varna* order of the Hindus. According to some scholars the Gorkhas made Hinduism the state religion of Nepal. They are a collective group of people, all belonging to Kshatriya (warrior) Varna and they derive their name from the Hindu warrior-saint guru Gorakhnath.

There is a view that the emigrants from India brought the local tribes of Nepal into the caste-fold converting them into Hinduism. The Gurungs and Mangars were the first to be converted. They accepted Hinduism in Toto while others are found to have accepted it only partially (Northy and Morris, 1974: 4). It is also felt that the Hinduism, which the Mongoloid Nepalese follow, does not have castes and it is closer to Shamanism. On Varna question of the Nepalese, there is a view that the three tier social ranking of the Nepalese society based on status groups i.e. *tagadhari* (wearer of sacred thread/ high caste), *matwali* (liquor consumers/ low caste), and *sanujat* (untouchables) seems more meaningful in the context

of Darjeeling Hills (for more detail see Caplan, 1970).

Based on the ethnic categorization of the Nepalis in 1941 Census, A. J. Dash in his *Darjeeling District Gazetteer* (1947) recorded the Nepali communities such as Mangar, Newar, Gurung, Limbu, Kami, Sunawar, Yakka, Sarki, Garhi, and Tamang (Murmi) as 'tribes'. The ethnic groups like Rai, Sherpa, Chettri, Sanyasi, Brahman, Bhujel, Yogi, on the other hand, were designated as 'Other Nepali Castes'. The Bhutias, Tibetans and Lepchas, mostly Buddhists or Christians by religion, were classified as 'tribes' under the broader category of 'Other Hillman'.

In the succeeding 1951 and 1961 Censuses, the castes and tribes, other than the officially listed SCs and STs were not enumerated separately. Naturally the leaders of both GNLFF and GJMM have based their demands on the 1941 Census classification. To them it is the only source to justify their claim as genuine 'tribes'. That also helps legitimize their claim in getting recognized as STs. Based on this classification they play out the 'tribal identity card' forgetting other considerations. For them, recognition as STs is the panacea to all their problems. The ethnic categorization of the people of Darjeeling Hills as offered by the 1941 Census later led to considerable confusions and controversies on the question of the actual identity of the various tribes and castes living in the area. One can hardly deny that in 1871-1941 Censuses, the authorities were not always successful in identifying caste and tribe boundaries properly/ scientifically.

All the facts noted above made the Nepalese caste system much more complex and the social position accorded to different ethnic groups was controversial. But it is true that Nepal's different indigenous communities were not in any way placed in the core of the Hindu societies of the Khas, Newar and Madhesi. Their social position was somewhat peripheral and they were designated as lowly *matwali* (alcoholic) castes.

Nepali, according to Vimal Khawas (2006: 22), is a generic term which subsumes more than fifteen ethnic groups. These ethnic groups had migrated to the area (Darjeeling Hills) during 18 - 20th centuries from Nepal and later became a part of Nepali social structure. According to Roy Burman, in addition to Bhotias and the Lepchas who were recognized as indigenous Scheduled Tribes,

there are good numbers of 'tribe like constellation' in the Darjeeling Hills who have distinct cultural traditions and organizations of their own (1961: 33). T.B. Subba has identified the hegemonic role of the Bengali population and their cultural domination over the hill communities of Mongoloid origin. He writes:

The political and cultural pressures of a numerically dominant and educationally far 'superior' Bengali 'race' forced the various communities like Gurung, Tamang, Mangar, Rai and Limbu to come under the umbrella of the Nepali or Gorkhali nation. Their respective identity had to be submerged in order to constitute a force strong enough to resist Bengali domination and ensure their common survival. Thus, they became a part of Gorkhali or Nepali people and Nepali language became their language as well (2001: 1).

He continued saying:

In Nepal, the Gorkha rulers were actually aware of the cultural, linguistic and other differences across communities but they were not officially recognized as separate nationalities. They were essentially treated as subjugated or conquered people who needed to be brought under the Nepali nation (*ibid*: 2).

On the question of cultural approximation of the hill communities we come across an opposite view given by Sarkar. He argues: 'Sanskritisation had been at work in the hills ever since the mid 19th century. Available historical data are capable of establishing the fact that the Mongoloid communities felt content with the Nepali caste system and quite often despised the cause of tribes' (2014: 25).

III

Many of the ethnic groups in the Darjeeling Hills have recently acquired an interest in being listed and labelled as Scheduled Tribe. Leaders of political movements in the area at different times have favoured the term 'Gorkha' over 'Nepali' to differentiate between the Nepali citizens of India and Nepal. In the last three decades, the political forces operating in the hills have not only halted the

absorption of the different ethnic communities of Mongoloid origin into the wider society but have to some extent reversed the process. Thus the list of ethnic communities granted ST status has become longer. Originally there were only four Scheduled Tribes, namely, the Bhutia, Lepcha, Sherpa and Yolmo in the Darjeeling Hills, but in 2002 the Tamangs and the Limbus were added to the list. Recently the leaders of the newly formed *Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha* (GJMM) are pressing the demand for ST status to ten more ethnic groups.

Earlier Subhas Ghisingh, the GNLFF supremo had demanded autonomy under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution for Darjeeling Hills and at the same time demanded ST status for all communities living in Darjeeling hills, irrespective of their individual ethnic/ caste identity. Following Ghisingh's line, recently another newly created political platform called *Bharatiya Gorkha Janajati Manyata Samiti* (BGJMS) has demanded that all the people of Nepali origin (including Bahuns and Chhetris) should be recognized as Scheduled Tribes.

On the whole, several hill communities are now aspiring for ST status in order to avail of the benefits of reservation. The power and status elements are also involved in the issue. But the selective granting of ST status is clearly a part of governance strategy of 'divide and rule' which might create discord among the communities and unsettle the Gorkha unity (identity movement). This may also eventually lead to social dissonance far more violent than the Gorkhaland agitation. Following Beteille one can doubt if this assertion of tribal identity in the political domain can be described as retribalization in any meaningful sense (Beteille, 1997: 78).

Darjeeling experience leaves with us several questions on the very highly cryptic concept of 'tribe'. Article 342 of the Indian Constitution empowers the President to draw up a list of STs in consultation with the government of each State. But it nowhere defines the word 'Tribe'. Although the Constitution is quite clear on the question of eligibility for entry in the tribal fold it is quite surprising that why the definition of tribe was left vague. This lack of clarity on the definition allows power-politics in the process raising demands for and granting of ST status to more and more communities, and which ultimate defeats the very philosophy of

protective discrimination.

Absence of a clear definition of 'tribe' has made the identification has left room for manipulation in identifying new communities as ST. Beteille has pointed out the inadequacies in the conventional concept of tribes in the Indian context. For him, in contemporary India the 'tribe' of an Anthropologist's 'ideal type' can be rarely found. Now the 'tribe' is more of an administrative category. Moreover, there is a lack of fit between what Anthropology as a discipline defines as 'tribe' and what the Anthropologists are obliged to describe as 'tribes' (1991: 59). The other reality is in conceptualizing tribes in India, the scientific or theoretical considerations were never allowed to displace administrative or political ones.

The tribe in India is both a legal and political category since only with the approval of the government a community can attain ST status. On this issue Xaxa has observed that the question of tribes in India is closely linked with political and administrative considerations. This partly explains the reason behind the steady increase in the number of STs in India (1999: 3589). It is paradoxical yet true that the number of communities deemed to tribes has increased along with the modernization and development in India. Thus while in 1950 there were only 212 officially recognized STs in India, the number is now estimated around 700, of which 73 belong to the category of Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs).

Now if the Indian State endorses the demands of the hill leaders for granting ST status to another ten ethnic groups (a demand that has already been endorsed by the West Bengal Government) their total number would increase to 16 in the hills. The share of the hill tribes to total ST communities of the State would then go up to 28 per cent. The political angle of the issue is rooted in the Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) agreement where both the state government and the GJMM have endorsed the demand of all the ethnic communities (excepting the communities which have been recognized as SCs or OBCs) for ST status. One fundamental question is who are going to benefit from this inclusion of new communities in the list of STs? Should the State surrender to this pressure politics without assessing the condition of the aspirant communities objectively? It is true that the State has an obligation to periodically identify and recognize some deserving

groups as tribes. But it is expected that it has to be done scientifically. Otherwise it may develop certain vested interest in many ethnic communities who do not deserve the ST status. And it would be difficult to arrest the trend because from the beginning the list of Indian tribes while preserving the vagueness in the definition. This is not to say that those engaged in drawing up lists of Indian tribes did not have their own conceptions of tribe, but these conceptions were neither clearly formulated nor systematically applied (Beteille, *op.cit.*: 59).

IV

In the Darjeeling situation, the demand of recognizing several ethnic groups as STs has less to do with primitivism, indigeneity or autochthonous status than it does with ethnic discreetness and cultural distinctiveness for gaining material or political advantages. This certainly epitomizes a kind of 'neo-tribalism'. As we see, recently the three distinctive Nepali SC communities have already asked for inclusion in the category of STs. Nepali upper castes like Bahuns and Chhetris are also in the fray.

In 2004, the GNLFF leadership demanded of Sixth Schedule status for Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC). For adding strength to the demand there was a move to ethicize community identities and to turn to animism and follow several other archaic practices. So there is an apprehension that any attempt to include the people of Nepali origin in the category of ST en-masse may turn to be counterproductive. Eventually it may lead to fierce rifts and violent ethnic conflicts in hills in near future. Moreover, as Atal asserts, any attempt on the part of ethnic leadership to insist on retention of the primitive traits is nothing more than aspiring to keep certain groups backward for all times (2008: 449). They should therefore refrain from playing the card of what may be called 'politics of backwardness'.

The Constitution has given to the tribal identity a kind of definiteness it lacked in the past. It has also sealed the boundaries between tribes and non-tribes which were 'fuzzy' in pre-British India (Chakraborty, 1995: 3376). Census enumerations, however, give us information on discrete identities which are used by the

state for distributive justice. As fallout, tribal identity not only enjoys legal (or Constitutional) sanction but political and material interests prompt the ST groups to maintain and strengthen that identity. That has certainly halted the process of 'tribal absorption', which had once happened.

We often come across conflicting information about the size of the hill communities, their economic and their social conditions in media. At a time when more or less every community is aspiring for ST status any current survey data about their population, education, occupation, income, nutrition and overall condition are bound to be dubious. There is every possibility of getting some kind of concocted data if the entrusted agencies/organizations work as willing tools in the hands of government in power. The academicians/scholars often shy off handling such issues which are politically sensitive. They are often denied the responsibility of preparing objective reports on the condition of the communities aspiring for ST status.

V

Politics of culture in Darjeeling hills of today is showing divergent trends. On the one hand, there is a call for Gorkha (Nepali) unity, while, on the other, the ethnic communities, the major political players and the State government are demanding ST status with the hope that they can draw political dividends out of their actions. The ethnic communities look for new opportunities for the younger generation as ST status, if granted, would bring them some special benefits, especially in the field of education and employment. The call for revival of primitive cultural practices is a ploy to justify the claim for tribal status.

One may wonder whether the communities asking for ST status are really qualified for the same! Or, what objective yardsticks one should follow before granting them tribal status? As a matter of fact, many of these communities hardly possess any 'primitive traits' and are very much in the process of modernization. They neither lack competitive spirit nor are they egalitarian in their social formation. We do not have sufficient empirical data to categorize these ethnic communities in Darjeeling Hills as 'backward' or

'forward'. Granting of ST status to new groups could create new space of competition and conflict not only among these groups but also among the new ST groups and the already existing ST groups. The consolidation of tribal identity might impact upon the Gorkha identity negatively.

The latest National Tribal Policy (2006) has directed the State to take necessary steps in arresting the increasing demands from new communities for inclusion in the list of STs by rationalizing the 'process of scheduling'. If the State really cares for the backward communities it should invest more on human resources development and creation of opportunities. Alongside capacity building the strategy of development should be on enhancing the control of these communities on the material resources so that they can take advantages of the market-induced opportunities. The politics of culture in the hills which all the major players resort is a step in self-deception. The State and the major political players should play their part in saving the hill society from the process called 're-tribalisation'.

Note

An earlier version of this paper were presented in a National Seminar on 'Socio-Economic Life of the Hill People: Persistence and Change', organized by Netaji Institute for Asian Studies, Kolkata, on 6-7 December 2014, at Netaji Museum, Kurseong.

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Foregrounding Differences and Diversity: Dalit Youth of India

Antara Ray and Ramanuj Ganguly

This paper attempts to focus on the changing dalit youth culture in India tracing the socio-historical factors which facilitated the development of the contemporary youth identity among dalits. It focuses on the diverse kinds of motivations and ideologies which are now mostly continued by the youth of the contemporary society. The paper also tries to draw attention towards the fact that youth of India are taking prominent collective action guided and provoked by the changing social institutions (which are more politically active and mobile now) that are creating contradictions and new form of discriminations/exclusivist trends in the Indian society. The paper narrates how youth of contemporary India is getting involved in the new age caste-discriminations based on politics by using their cultural baggage. The rationale provided to the youth, either Dalit or non-Dalit is reasoned on the basis of cultural tools in order to gain a leading role in Indian political system. This paper examines this dichotomy, contradictions and the logic of Dalit politics and the involvement of youth.

Keywords: Dalit, youth, consumer culture, post-reform India, social change, structural violence, Jyotiba Phule, Ambedkar.

Introduction

The primary back ground condition for this paper came from the fact that in the socio-historical and technological features that congregated in the post-economic reformed India, when the country moved from welfare economy to get integrated into the market-driven universal consumer culture, the youth were central to this design, and therefore the dalit youths were not left out of this. The Indian youth in general got progressively lulled into the believing that the market advertised stereotypes with a youth tag that could be adopted and celebrated with emblematic connotation

by them as a means to map a cultural terrain distinctive from the cultural pattern of their parents' generation and from the broader social trends. Contemporary media representation extol the youth for their energy, enterprise, and ability to engage as a change agent on the one end, and on the other denigrate their gullibility as victims and moral panics, which often lead to erroneous assumption about youth culture and the various forms of social practices that young people in India engage with. Youth groupings among dalits in particular whose collective identities are still based on structural determinants such as caste, class, and gender in India are getting further divided around these new aspirations based on consumer sensibilities of standard of living and taste. Young dalits become victims of cultural, structural and direct violence, thus become probable carriers or perpetrators of such violence.

There is, though, a strong tendency among politicians, policy-makers, academicians and researchers to see such issues as specific aberration or anomic situation that needs to be resolved. Also, in such cases the youth are underrated as constructive agents with power and potential to bring social change and work as key player in the process of social integration. The problem of bias has also been observed that dalit youths face, come from the fact that asymmetric judgment the society has about the process of negotiation with new technology they undertake. On-line communication, mobile telephony or gaming has eroded the divide of public and private space, giving a newer meaning to the age old concepts like social group or community or culture among the youth in general in India. However, the dalit youth still at times are debarred from using these because of their socio-economic background. This brings to the fore the fact that contrary to the popular representations and the everyday life experiences of youth, young dalits is still encumbered by their caste legacy, face subjugation and deprivation. Under such legacy, for the dalit youth, new social pressures, like risk and uncertainty that is confronting the youth of contemporary India in general, get further layered and magnified. Therefore, for a dalit youth the popular portrayal of a youth as disaffected, apathetic and apolitical becomes a myth.

Difference in understanding the youth and Dalit youth

Youth are considered to be the backbone of any country, as the adage goes. The change, advancement and innovation rest highly on their shoulders. However, in India, homogeneous connotation of youth as a category is embedded with plural interests and forged with multi-layered identities that abate their collective strength. Youth of India reflect just the same chasms and fractions that India is mired with as a multi-ethnic and multi cultural society. Nevertheless, if a careful look through is made in various programs and policies of post colonial Indian state and/or literature from social sciences, we will observe that similar to the title of the previously cited bill, there is an inherent tendency in the mainstream gaze of the society to homogenize deprivation and marginality among the youth of India. Just like Indian history and politics can never be separated from jati, so is the case of Dalit youth. History of anti-caste movement can be traced as early as thirteenth century starting from various Bhakti traditions throughout India. But anti-caste movement took a prominent shape from early 19th century with Jyotiba Phule. Phule, nevertheless despite forming Satyashodhak Samaj, couldn't mobilize and organize lower caste groups in general, and the youth in particular the way Ambedkar did. Here one cannot ignore Gandhi's mobilization of untouchables though it is argued that he tried to inculcate them into an alternative Hindu-ideology keeping the skewed structure intact. The mobilizing and organizing of lower caste youth, especially the untouchables, took place with Ambedkar in the proper sense of the term. Caste subdivisions and its multitudinous sub-caste bifurcations, hegemonic structures of knowledge and forms of oppression based on exclusive privileges were confronted and challenged by various means, be it political or reformist or contradictory, by Ambedkar to topple the existing social relations and exploitative structures. Where Gandhi focused on a reformist view towards Hinduism, Ambedkar completely rejected Hinduism and called for 'annihilation' of it and conversion to Buddhism.

The mobilization of youth around the issue of caste and untouchability differed from region to region in pre-colonial India despite of Ambedkar's influence and charismatic leadership. Examples can be drawn from various states like West Bengal where

a small section of youth got involved in Namashudra's movement which was later on quite unsuccessful because of lack of leadership and motivations for youths. In case of UP, pre-independence era saw the mobilization of Chamar youth against the caste system. Though they supported Ambedkar but their standpoint and actions were different from Mahars of Maharashtra who were under Ambedkar's direct leadership. If we look at the lower caste youth of other two states prominent in anti-caste movement that is Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, we will again find different political ideologies mobilizing the youth. Where Karnataka was mainly pro-Congress and supported Harijan Sabha, Andhra and the Telengana region was mainly under left ideology. There was no prominent Dalit antagonization in terms of movement but there was Adi-Andhra movement in coastal Andhra and Adi-Hindus movement in Hyderabad region where youth not particularly belonging to Dalit participated but youth of other exploited class and caste participated against the exploitative character of caste. Hence, if we look at the scenario of Dalit politicization and participation of youth in pre-independence period, then we will find that other than massive participation of youth in Dalit movement at Maharashtra there was no significant unified political action carried forward by the Dalit youth in India. Anti-caste agitations and politicizations, though present in various pockets throughout India, but that was dependent on the localized problem of that area and was guided in a specific directions by the dominant political ideology out there. Like for example since, Andhra was dominated by Left politics mainly, hence they ignored many caste realities rather concentrated on the issues related with land which was more economical in nature (Omvedt, 2010). Therefore no exclusivist Dalit politicization took place. There, youth were guided to take part in issues that are being taken up by the leftist parties. The upper caste and non-Dalit youths of colonial period were basically involved in the nationalist movement against the colonial rule and there was no visible involvement of them in the anti-caste and Dalit politics. Moreover, it can be seen that the Dalit youth of India in the pre-independence era were not under one ideology or political affiliation but under many and were scattered in terms of their political action against caste structure and relations producing out of it, since then there existed ideologies of Ambedkar, Gandhi, Nehru, Leftist ideologies and other regional specific motivations. Dalit movement in particular and anti-caste

movement in general, of pre-colonial India, was value-oriented or anti-systemic movements (Omvedt, 2010).

The term Dalit and Harijan both have two different political and social connotations. In the post-independent era the term Harijan lost its achieved popularity among the youth belonging to lower caste and untouchable whereas the term Dalit gained its power and influenced them. It is argued that the term Dalit is not merely a rejection of the very idea of pollution or impurity or Untouchability, it reveals a sense of a unified class, of a movement toward inequality (Michael, 2007). Dalit as a subject emerged as political which does not put forward one unified identity since the concept is having many interpretations and definitions, no one homogeneous interpretations can be found. Youth of contemporary India is getting absorbed but scattered within multiple ideologies, strategies, associations and political parties associated with this term Dalit. Dalit now has no one discourse but numerous divisions which in the process are channelizing the youth into caste politics in diverse ways. Dalit grouping has emerged as a unique kind of political subject taking youth in its folds and enabling constitutive contradictions in Indian political modernity. Political liberalism, democracy, growth of human freedom, neo-religions, media and diverse theoretical discourses have taken away the binary and paved ways to various contradictions, dispersions and dis-aggregations rather than cohesion on the issue, demands and rights among the youths of India.

Ambedkar with his death in 1956 left behind a vast political legacy which nationalized the Dalit identity that further got deep-seated with Dalit Panther movement. Greatest mobilization and agitation of Dalit youth which established the concept Dalit and Dalit Discourse took place in Maharashtra during 1970s with Dalit Panther movement. The members of Dalit Panther movement were young men and women mostly between the ages of 20-30 years. The militant Dalit Panthers Party founded by two writers Namdeo Dhasal and Raja Dhale in April 1972 antagonized and organized the Dalit youth of Maharashtra within its folds (Zelliot, 2010). But this radical movement was unable to mobilize the dalit youth from other parts of India into their fold the way it happened among the Dalit youth of Maharashtra, since there doesn't exist one

homogenized identity, ideology and political affiliations. This can be drawn from the instances that Dalit Panther Party formed only in Maharashtra and in no other state of India. A radical movement carried forward by Dalit Panther Party did not influence the other parties based on Dalit ideology existing elsewhere like UP, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala etc. Rather the Dalit Panther organization got scattered within two years (founded in 1972 and split in 1974) and remained important only in Maharashtra among few youth (Zelliot, 2010).

Understanding the Dalit and Dalit youth

The social asymmetry and injustice rooted on caste/*jati* assigns an ascribed status by virtue of birth, have been engaged with and questioned repeatedly by thinkers and social reformers throughout the history of India. Dalit is the widely used post-colonial term for the former untouchables and Avarna or Panchama of so called Hindu religion belonging to the Indian society. The term Dalit does not have a uniform definition. People from different perspectives have understood and defined it in dissimilar ways. The non-Dalit writers and intellectuals mostly have found its origin in Sanskrit texts locating it in the term 'Dal' which means broken, crushed, scattered, downtrodden etc. In the pre-colonial period, the most prominent figure who raised the issue of untouchability was M.K. Gandhi (1869-1948). Though Gandhi called untouchability an evil but he did not go against Varnashrama Dharma. He believed untouchability as a subversion of true Hinduism. But first time in history of Indian caste system untouchables or Ati-shudras or Pancham were named as Harijans, or children of God, which marked a relative change in status and a new discourse emerged with the terminology.

Although there has been an increasing interest in youth of Dalit descent, most of the studies are paying attention principally on the strong points in their character in comparison to the youths of other (higher) caste groups, especially their high cumulative attainment in production process in primary and secondary sector of Indian economy. The emphasis on mechanisms underlying successes or failure of Dalit youth in the various domains has contributed to the maintenance of the popular myth of the success of Indian democracy. However, recent studies in the first decade

of 21st century India indicate that caste based discrimination continue to remain a salient feature in the experiences of Dalit youth, including those who have converted to other religion like Christianity or Sikhism, and that such discrimination has negative consequences for their psycho-social well-being. Researches that present thick descriptive insight into Dalit youths' perceptions of discrimination, most have focused on high school and college students, and relatively little is understood about the incidence, nature, and correlation of caste-bigotry among youth in contemporary India. Moreover, few studies have examined the extent to which affirmative Dalit identity works as a protective shield and if such identity beliefs provide any form of security to the Dalit youths in contemporary India.

The rate of recurrence and variables of perceived caste discrimination from peers among Indian youths and the aspects of caste identity serve as a protective in-group identity. The Dalit youth even in urban areas of Indian states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh report alarmingly rate of high encounter with caste based discriminatory practices from their peers, which exposes the fact that protective in-group identity of Dalit youth often insulate them from the harmful effects of such exposure, and allow some mental well-being. On the basis of the above, it can be argued that Dalit identity today does shield Dalit youths' mental health in the face of caste based discrimination.

Media hyped stereotypes have made the society believe that caste based discriminations faced by Dalits are only of physical nature laced with violence, though it is our finding that Dalit youths daily experiences from peers some form of rudeness, disrespect and caste bigotry, and discrimination in the form of exclusion and mockery. Salience of caste based oppression of Dalit youth harm their sense of self and creates poor self-esteem, resulting in distorted group and self-identity issues among them. The distance to schools/ colleges is also considered a huge barrier for Dalit children, and a significant part of the explanation for the low enrolment rate and the high dropout rate. Due to the unwillingness of higher caste groups to live side by side with Dalits, Dalit families often live in remote areas, away from the main villages and schools. This residential pattern has two major implications. Firstly, the location

of schools within the main villages, and hence within higher caste areas, makes it difficult for Dalit children to gain access to schools, due to caste tensions. Secondly, the great physical distance to schools often result in Dalit children dropping out, as the distance is simply too far to walk on an everyday basis (UNICEF, 2006: A). Similarly, migratory labour is another factor that adds to the high dropout rates. Many Dalits are landless and are forced into migrant labour, as this is often the only way to ensure the economical survival of their families. The continuous migration in search for labour implies a frequent disruption of the Dalit children's education and makes them incapable of keeping up with the academic advancement of other children (HRW, 2007). The caste bias manifests itself in the way teachers ignore Dalit students and unjustly fail them in exams, in social exclusion and physical abuse, and in the unwillingness of the university administration to assist and support Dalits. As a grave consequence of this harassment, a disproportionate number of Dalit students have committed suicide (*The Death of Merit*, 2011: A). Indeed, in India alone, 18 Dalit students have committed suicide in one of the country's premier institutions between 2008 and 2011, and this number only represents the official cases. Counting all the Dalit students whose families did not protest against the incessant discrimination that eventually led to suicide, the number is likely to be much higher (*The Death of Merit*, 2011: B). According to the *Briefing Note (2010)* by Navsarjan Trust (www.navsarjan.org), more than 200 million people in India are vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and violence simply because of the caste into which they were born. The caste system relegates Dalits, formerly known as 'untouchables', to a lifetime of segregation and abuse. Caste-based divisions dominate in housing, marriage, employment, education, and general social interaction - divisions that are reinforced through economic boycotts and physical violence. Dalits are forced to perform tasks deemed too 'polluting' or degrading for non-Dalits. The reports provide irrefutable evidence that public servants and community members in India - i.e. state as well as non-state actors - violate a number of human rights protected by domestic laws and international human rights treaties. The various rights that are violated for Dalits are: The right against 'untouchability'; deny Dalit children access to an equal education; deny Dalit children their equal right to health by forcing them into hazardous work that includes cleaning human excrement and disposing of

dead animals; child labour and manual scavenging-work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development; teachers and community members force Dalit children into unpaid labour, primarily cleaning schools, homes, and toilets, in what constitutes a modern form of slavery.

However those Dalit youth who have a high self-perceived regard about their caste background are found to be confident and are often engaged in raising the consciousness and standard of living of people from Dalit caste group. Thus, they, by affirming their Dalit identity negate the outcomes that have been associated with discrimination based on caste origin. However, this does not mean that such engagements have dented the overall caste based discriminatory scenario among the youth of contemporary India. Nor has it changed the mental makeup of the educated urban youth of the country because their perception of others opinion about their own is invariably negative and full of suspicion. Those who readily accept their subjugated position in the society among the Dalits, and are still engulfed with prejudice, are a sizable section of the Dalit youths who are socially and mentally better off because they do not hurt the status quo thus, instead of hostility enjoy the security of ordered inequality. The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights and International Dalit Solidarity Network in their 13th Session of the Universal Periodic Review Report of the Human Rights Council - India: 'Caste Based Discrimination in India - Key Recommendations and Questions' found the following to be key areas of human rights violations for Dalits in India: Impunity and non-implementation of laws for the protection of Dalits; Exclusion in access to basic services and extreme poverty; Diversion of economic benefits allocated for Dalits; Lack of political participation; trafficking and forced prostitution of Dalit women; Manual Scavenging and Bonded Labour; systematic exclusion of Dalits during disaster management; Infrastructure inaccessibility and investment related displacement is most acute in Dalit populated area; and Continued Discrimination in Education.

The study: orientations and aspirations of Dalit youth

In a small survey in three districts of sub-urban West Bengal, keeping the above variables in mind, it was observed that dalit

youth perceived their role not as an age-group but a stage in their life where they represent a life-characteristics and optimistic personality stance, thus, have certain option and opportunity to assert their autonomous outlook. It was seen that the dalit youth consider that conditions as ripe to correct the skewed life-chances of their community; however their optimism was tempered by their reading of continued dominance of caste hierarchy and emergence of newer forms of caste-alliances, therefore, there was a sense of meaninglessness among them about their educational attainments and employability. Similar to youth of any place and culture, for the dalit youths, education, employment, travel, friends, music and sensitivity about current social issues were found to be the spot of highest concern and attention, but what was unique was their very high concern about environmental sustainability and distortion of local culture due to 'cultural imperialism' due to spread of mass media. Another cause that was perceived by them with apprehension was the 'homogenizing-tendency' by the market in terms of availability of goods and services, thus, signifying their concern about the fact that unique cultural trends, tastes and skills are getting destroyed, making many from their community unsuitable for the job-market and forcing them to accept unsustainable wage. Though they are upbeat about the enabling and life-transforming role of technology but are very conscious about the 'digital divide', and their limitation in matching the performance of those who have access to technology. With regard to politics and civil society movement, a sense of disenchantment and disregard seems to have crept in among the dalit youth as they feel – the dalit question compounded with reservation issue – has queered the field for them, and personal agenda fulfilling ambition of politicians and civil society workers who do not have much to offer them.

Nussbaum (2000, *Women and Human Development: A study in Human Capabilities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) broadening the capability approach of Amartya Sen indicate that for expansion of human capabilities to achieve the human potentials, various other lived criteria of individual has to be taken into consideration like their life-span, nutrition and health, safe housing and shelter, choice of mate selection and time of procreation, informed decision making, right to education, security against discrimination and threat of violence, and ability to make

choices about ones politics, environment and relationships. Taking these as parameters to check the condition of dalit youth, it was found that they perceive under most of the factors they remain both deprived and excluded, as well as strive much more than other young people because of their caste background. In the long run, such passive condition of exclusion restricts their space for participation in the society. It was also observed that there are numerous and multifarious connection between basic rights and health of the vulnerable groups like dalits. Violations or lack of attention to basic rights can have serious health consequences for certain groups like dalits. The approach with which health procedures and schemes are designed are favourably disposed to higher caste groups for which it fails to protect the rights of accessibility to services, information and awareness, dignity and privacy, and cultural sensitivity of dalits. Empowered dalit youth today are aware of social milieu related abuses, so they can recognize and confront their caste groups' face, understand the reason for which they suffer group-specific health hazards that also affect their health awareness.

Poverty is a significant feature that adds to social exclusion of the dalits. Though poverty has an effect on all poor, it has distinct impact on the dalits. Poverty, illiteracy and age-old caste based domination make the dalit more vulnerable to environmental and health problems as they have scarce ability to take advantage of the facilities of essential services that in last two decades in India have progressively become commercialized and valued in terms of money. Heterogeneity of multicultural India and the accommodation process practiced due to the political compulsions has given rise to newer forms of intense tension, conflict and violence against the vulnerable dalits. The apathetic state machinery is antagonistic and intimidating therefore when their support is sought by such groups they become victims of red-tape and policy inertia, bribery, benefaction and clientalism. The insecurity and inequality that marginalize the youth among the dalit poor in India also deprive them of constitutional rights and social security entitlements. It will be misleading if one fails to see the dalit youth in relational terms because their identity is constructed in relation to other groups, social and economic processes and institutionalization. Freire's, (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1996) argument seems very pertinent for the dalit youths today as he

suggested to recognize the dehumanization process they face that has to be struggled against without taking any 'generosity' from the oppressors who act humane to perpetuate their oppression.

If we analyze the contemporary period, on the basis of our study, we will find that there is no one ideology or one set of motivations that are guiding the youth of India to get involved in the Dalit Politics. The politics which surrounds around the identity of Dalit where youth are taking a leading role in terms of actions is not one but many. Post-independent India rather than extracting out from the situation of caste-exploitation has crystallized new kind of discriminations in terms of creating 'secular-Brahmanism', 'elite-dalits' and as a result fragmented youth political involvement as too many choices and directions are being laid down before them. Dalit youth of contemporary India are placed across different regions, economic standards, educational levels, social groups and sartorial choices. Youth reside in multiple worlds and Dalit youths are no exception in this matter. These numerous worlds socialize youth in different ways. The processes of globalization and modernity have created a huge impact in these worlds. This brings out multiple responses, activities and inclinations.

Situating Dalit dynamics

With the growth of democratic institutions and the so many political parties, the Dalits have begun to assume importance in national politics of contemporary India. The leaders of these political associations by taking advantage of this situation are mobilizing youth in their favour. Hence, the youths involved in these associations are only acting as pressure groups. The political initiatives taken up by Dalit leaders have marked a beginning of a new era of involvement of youth in democratic politics. Rajni Kothari maintains that Andhra Pradesh and Bihar are examples where one can see that there is a rapid succession of various caste groups into factional networks of politics which provided the best channels of mobility (Kothari, 2009). Youth of the contemporary India who are always inclined towards upward mobility and more so true for Dalit youth who has a history of being an oppressed and exploited class are getting easily antagonized under political folds.

Religion plays a major role in forming diverse ideologies and sources of motivations for the mobilization of youth in the contemporary Indian situation. Just like every other social institution, religion has also gone through immense change and we call this new age religion to be 'neo-religious institutions'. The use of religion in politics can be seen from India's pre-independence era but the formation of neo-religious institutions, the mixing of religion and politics has been consolidated with the interdependence on each other. The party organizations and voting habits are significantly getting affected by religious divisions and affiliations. One important reason for having multiple political parties and ideologies is due to this numerous neo-religious associations. One of the key political parties Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) is an example of a dominant political party of India which is closely linked to Hindu-nationalist agenda that is getting strong support from neo-religious association like Rashtriya Sayamsevak Sangh (RSS). India's political - religious divides in turn cross cut caste loyalties. Youth of India being active, politically inclined and ambitious are getting absorbed by these various parties and neo-religious institutions. Institutions like RSS are saffronizing Hindutwa and motivating a large section of youth to participate in their activisms. These institutions are not only attracting youth from upper caste but also from Dalit caste. Hindutva ideology, in a relative subtle manner, is swaying the mind and attitude of lower caste youth into its domain and thus forming an ideology completely contradicting the ideology of Dalit associations and the youths involved there. But in case of Dalit politics too we see acute political motives to gain state power. If we look at the case of UP, BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) first for the sake of votes mobilized the Dalit people and especially the Dalit youth of UP where the Dalit population is very high. As a result BSP came into power and Mayawati became the first Dalit woman to be a chief minister. But later on the ideology of the BSP changed and they tried to incorporate the Brahmins and other upper castes youth into their party ideology for votes.

Caste loyalties are increasingly being taken up by the religious divisions and as a result many youth from the poorest caste are most likely to convert out of Hinduism. One such religion is Christianity where we can find a large number to people formerly belonging to the class 'untouchable'. But the rise of Hindu religious

power in many parties has resulted in lack of inclusion of the Dalit converts to Christianity and Muslims into the constitutional safeguards. A Dalit who is a convert to Christianity or Islam will lose affirmative action rights. Dalit youths are getting fragmented with respect to the issues whether to remain within the Hindu folds or to get converted into Buddhism (but this conversion is more or less restricted to the Dalits of Maharashtra) or to some other religion. Dalit leadership has failed to give one unified direction to them. As a result there are multiple political parties and associations in the country attracting and catering to the Dalit youth. If we look at the state Kerala and Karnataka, we will find Christian-Dalit youths whose demands are different from those of Dalits under Hinduism. Dalit converts into Christianity does not have the privilege of protective legislation. So their main motive is to get included as a category under protective legislation as Scheduled Castes of India. Same is the case of Dalit converts to Islam. Dalit ideology and leadership are unable to take their demands and basic need into account and Dalit youths, are further getting segregated between Hindu, Muslim and Christianity. The religio-ideological and associational position of Dalit youth of India is creating multiple ideologies and thereby dalit youths are picking up political mobilization in order to achieve their personal aims as well as broader associational aim. But no one party or political ideology is all encompassing the diverse issues and as a result multiple political associations are mushrooming. Hence, Dalit youth belonging to Christianity or Muslim has separate path of actions than those Dalit youth who are within Hinduism. As a result not only within the various political parties but Dalit youths are getting segregated within various religions and therefore there is no one unified actions or ideology and reality.

The other important factor which is acting as a catalyst for the further consolidation of youth in Dalit politics is media. Media, rather than focusing on the identity of a youth as simply 'youth', is viewing and constructing their identity with their *jati* affiliations. The political reality is continuously being constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed by media, and is being analyzed in terms of emergent power relations invariably cantering on *jati*-quotient. Indian media fail to serve the public in the matter of caste tensions. Indian media does neither have a religious beat nor caste beat, per se, and thus lack reporters with expertise. The media

often fail with poor reporting and mislead and mislabel events and thus create constructed reality. It will be a utopian view if it is considered that media only deal with reality of today's youth and Dalit politics since in fact, reality is far too complex to be comprehended by one single way. The recognition of Dalits and non-Dalit are forcefully enacted by this new age media. Rather than portraying youth as only youth, media is now attaching them with their jati affiliation and giving a new turn to the issue ignoring the reality. Dalit politics as conducted in the mainstream media (now interchangeable with PR, post paid-news) is all symbolism and no substance.

Conclusion

The aspirations of youth of contemporary India are completely different from those of traditional India and it is truer in case of Dalit youth. This change is due to the difference in visions of the 'untouchables' of the past and today. The collective thought and action; philosophical, political, and social are built on the changing visions or self perceptions. Believers in one vision will engage themselves in a set of actions that would be very different from that of the followers of another vision. The ramifications of such conflicting visions extend into economic, judicial, military, philosophical and political spheres (Michael, 2007). Increased intellectual activism has marked Dalit-Bahujan cultural life at both national and the regional levels in recent times (Guru and Geetha, 1997). Under the backdrop of various theoretical and academic discourses, the mobilization and antagonization of youth for/against the Dalit politics is taking place.

There is no one ideological expression and framework for the youth of India for supporting or rejecting the Dalit Politics. Here not only exists an egalitarian framework but also strong pro-religious forces. There is a conflict between political motives, ideologies and motivations which are further getting consolidated by neo-religious institutions, media and numerous theoretical discourses and thereby putting forward options to be picked up by the youths of India as they desire. In one hand there is high militancy of Dalit youth in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, on the other there is lack of involvement of youth in Dalit politics in West Bengal and Punjab, and highly politically mobilized youth of Uttar

Pradesh. The antagonisms between youths belonging to various associations are creating contradictions and conflict in Indian politics now. The recognition and politicization of public space and its all encompassing capacity to involve the youth have been possible due to the state structure, multiple political associations, neo-religious institutions, media and theoretical discourses. This multiple areas have been created due to the tension between Dalit self and individual rights which is enveloping youth into multiple realities of Dalit politics. This politics of identity and recognition of youth is giving rise to politics of difference among the youths of India on the issue of Dalit Politics. This is in turn perpetuating inequality and new age discriminations among the youths. Mainstream political forces, media and discursive interventions in the name of human rights protection are contributing to crystallize the process of exclusion among the youths on the one hand and the rise of Dalit youth identity on the other.

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Deserted Women in Patriarchal Sikkim and Darjeeling Hills

Sanjay K. Roy and Babika Khawas

In patriarchal social orders in Sikkim and Darjeeling Hills, which also have kept into practice many elements of feudal social order, the women are subjected to various forms of discrimination and violence; one manifestation of such a social situation is desertion of women in their 40s and 50s. This is a form of cruelty done on women across classes and communities in rural as well as urban areas, despite the fact that they have served their husbands and in-laws with all sincerity and played their role as mothers. The victim women do not get much support either from the society or from the state or the institutions (including the law against domestic violence) and live with a lot of hardship. In Sikkim the Family Court, State Women's Commission, and NGOs come forward with some support but in Darjeeling Hills there is no presence of any institution that could come forward in defense of the deserted women.

Keywords: patriarchy, Family Court, State Women's Commission, short stay home, alimony, sexuality, domestic violence, Family Counseling Centres.

Introduction

One of the ugliest manifestations of patriarchy in the State of Sikkim and Darjeeling Hills is the growing incidents of desertion of middle-aged married women in their late 40s and 50s by their sexually active husbands. The women who have served their husbands and in-laws with all dedications and sincerity, satisfied the sexual desire of their husbands for many years, procreated for carrying their lineage forward, are neglected, humiliated and deserted by their husbands when they needed their protection the most. The husbands secretly develop relations with 'younger women' outside marriage and then throw their existing wives out of the family in one fine morning. Betrayed and shattered, the women move to places for shelter, security and other means to live a life of dignity.

The family- and humane values totter as the close kin, the social support system, and the state-sponsored institutions, which are heavily loaded with patriarchal biases, largely side with the culprit while giving only nominal support to the victim. How do the deserted women encounter such disasters? How far are the social support system and the state-supported protective mechanisms effective in giving support to the deserted women? Whether the protective mechanisms need a thorough revision? The present paper would examine a few cases of women in Sikkim and Darjeeling hills in the light of these questions.

Generally speaking, the social orders that we find in Sikkim and Darjeeling Hills seem to be struggling to free themselves from the commonly shared elements of patriarchy, a hallmark of feudal social order, while embracing the values of modernism and liberal humanism. One has to have some idea of the socially shared culture and the predominant practices in a given point in time because that helps us understand the mode of legitimation and practice of the normative standards that determine the iniquitous gender relations. The rigid adherence to the traditional normative standards often defies the normative and value standard set in by the legal system. Tradition is clearly in conflict with the modern; it is strong enough to defy human and gender sensitivity. Even in the urban context and in the educated section of the society the elements of patriarchy find legitimation as they are put into practice in a large scale. The collectively shared perceptions constitute a part of culture, which is strong enough to manipulate the institutions which aim to wreck the fabric of the shared culture and collective mind set.

When a crisis builds up the society responds by framing some institutions to combat it. Over the years Sikkim has developed some forms of institutional arrangement (the Family Court, the Women's Commission, and the NGOs) to address the cases of domestic violence and desertion but Darjeeling hills locally do not have any such arrangement to take care of the victims of domestic violence, barring the court of law. True, not all cases of domestic violence and cruelty reach the Family Court and when, only in a small number of litigations do come up the cases run for years and in most cases the verdicts end up fixing an insignificant amount of alimony. There is no arrangement whatsoever to penalize the

wreckers of morality, faith and responsibility. The ethos embodied in family tradition, humanity and the language of love, pity or reciprocity are breached at will by the impulse-driven 'rational' men while the system (the law, court, law enforcing authorities or the 'conscience collective') remains a passive onlooker.

Sources of data

The present paper is based on a number of case studies that have been done by the authors in different points in time, starting from 2005, in connection with a research project and out of personal interest. Locating the problem in the field of micro-sociology the paper is based on the information collected by applying the techniques of qualitative research (observation and case study).

The senior author visited to Gangtok on 10-13 May 2005 with the objective of collecting some information in connection with the research project on 'Integrating Support Services with the Family Courts in India - An Action Research in the State of Sikkim', which was done by the Centre for Women's Study, North Bengal University. Teaming up with Prof. Dwibedi, the project coordinator, Prof. Roy did case study of a few deserted women and examined the role of the institutions like Family court, State Women's Commission and the NGOs in protecting the deserted women¹.

Besides doing case study on the victims of family disputes we recorded the personal accounts or assessments of the knowledgeable persons working in the field of family counseling/ family court/ NGO and State Commission for Women. The junior author of the paper, a sociologist by training, did some case studies of the deserted women, the victims of domestic violence, in some parts of Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The present paper therefore offers an opportunity to look at the victims from a comparative perspective.

The case studies from Sikkim

Case study 1

Geeta Subba, aged 35, hails from Lumsey 5th Mile, Tadong, and

Gangtok. Geeta was married at the age of 25 in 1995 to one Mon Bahadur Rai, a Nepali of the same area. Geeta, a fair complexioned pretty lady, conceived in the first year of her marriage and in a span of nine years of conjugal life she gave birth to five sons. Geeta had studied up to class VII and her husband had studied in class X before dropping out. Geeta's husband was working as a Chowkidar in the office of the PWD in Gangtok. Geeta, a housewife, lived happily with her husband and children in a separate house and did home-making for all the years until the problem cropped up sometime in 2003.

A couple of years back Mon Bahadur developed an affair with another lady of 23 years of age. Geeta knew about the affair but did not have the courage to speak to her husband about it. Her husband finally married the woman and brought her home in October 2004. Mon Bahadur was ill-treating Geeta since he developed the new affair. The atrocities grew in scale after the entry of the second wife and Geeta was finally thrown out of the house. Geeta was ready to accept the second marriage and pleaded with her husband to allow her to live in the house but her husband did not show any sympathy.

After being thrown out Geeta went to stay with the family of her sister in the neighbouring village along with her youngest son (the eldest two had been sent to Bangalore and Delhi for work and two other sons were studying in a boarding school) and stayed there for two months. Her sister treated her well and extended moral and material support.

Geeta's sister took her to the local *panchayat* on the advice of the *panchayat pradhan* who took her to the local police station where she lodged a formal complaint against her husband. The officer at Tadong Police outpost advised her to approach Family Counseling Cell (FCC) at Police Head Quarters at Gangtok for help. Geeta went to the FCC with her sister and registered the case on 6th December 2004.

The FCC fixed a date of hearing and summoned Geeta's husband. Even after rounds of counseling the husband did not agree to take Geeta back. Finally the settlement agreement was signed. According to the agreement Geeta was given a *kuccha* house and monthly alimony of Rs 1400. Also, the husband agreed to bear the expenses

of the education of two children whom Geeta took with her.

The relatives and friends of both sides were involved in settlement negotiations. When Geeta was being tortured by her husband, the neighbours had come forward to her rescue and they had tried to dissuade Geeta's husband from ill-treating her. Geeta's children too loved her and they were sad at the way their father treated her. Now, when Geeta lives in a separate house they often come and stay with her.

Geeta is now worried about the future of her children. She is now pleading the FCC to exert pressure on her husband and secure a share of the husband's property for her. She also wants the alimony to be raised.

Geeta confessed that she is totally unaware of her legal rights and she did not have any idea of what will happen to her husband if she moves the Family Court. The FCC never advised her in that line. She, however, is not prepared to risk the support she receives from her husband by taking a harsh step. She was vulnerable enough to be defensive and accept the ill-treatment as her fate.

Case study 2

Mr. Raja Lohar, aged 24, is a graduate and government employee. He is serving as a statistical investigator for the last four years. Raja married Sujata, who hailed from Nepal, in April 2003. It was an arranged marriage. Sujata's parents continued living in Nepal.

Raja lost his mother early and was brought up by her aunt, who stayed in the family along with Raja's father. His aunt was therefore like his mother. Raja's aunt was very caring of Raja and possessive too. Sujata never got along well with Raja's aunt; they used to quarrel often on the sharing of domestic responsibilities. Sujata kept complaining about Raja's aunt to her husband ever since she came to this house. Raja, however, preferred to keep quiet because he never wanted to take a side. The relationship strained further and one day Sujata left the house and went to live with her sister in Gangtok.

Sujata came to the FCC and registered a complaint on 23 April 2005 saying that Raja's aunt was torturing her mentally and physically and Sujata did not receive enough support from her

husband Raja. The FCC, on receiving the complaint, arranged for counseling; Raja's father and aunt also were summoned. Sujata came for counseling with her sister.

After a day's counseling the parties agreed to settle the issue amicably and both the parties were in a mood to forget and forgive. Raja and his father were very keen to get Sujata back and Sujata was not unwilling either. The FCC advised the aunt not to ill-treat Sujata any more to which she agreed. The FCC threatened Raja's aunt that police would take care of her if she failed to keep her promise. Thus with the intervention of the FCC normal family relations were restored.

The role of the institutions in Sikkim

In Sikkim there are two *Family Counseling Centres* (FCC); one at Gangtok (i.e., the one at the Police Head Quarters, Gangtok, which we had visited) and the other at Kaluk Subdivision of West Sikkim district. We visited the FCC at Gangtok and spoke to Mrs. Kidoma Bhutia (centre-in-charge) and Ms. Susma Chhetri (Counsellor) and inquired into the mode of functioning of the centre; they also shared their experience of working in the field with us. Besides, they invited a couple of victims of domestic violence whom we had interviewed at length.

According to Mrs. Bhutia and Ms. Chhetri the Centre was receiving an ever increasing number of cases every year; 90 per cent of the victims who come to the centre with complaints are the women while only about 10 per cent constitute the men. On an average, the Centre registers 6-7 cases every month. In 2004, 63 victims approached the centre for help; 50 such cases were successfully settled by the Family Counseling Centre and nine cases were referred to the Family Court as the FCC could not resolve them. The cases relating to property sharing, child custody and divorce are generally referred to the Family Court. In the remaining four cases the victims withdrew the complaints and settled them on their own initiatives with community support. An increase in the registration of cases with the FCC is primarily because of two factors: (a) the incidence of family disputes is on the rise, and (b) the victims are increasingly realizing the effectiveness of the FCC in redressing their grievances. There is a distinct demonstration

effect of the good work of the FCC on the society; people now generally take it seriously.

The victims generally come to the centre with complaints like (1) adultery, (2) torture and harassment by husbands and in-laws (domestic violence), (3) desertion by husband, (4) alcoholism and maltreatment, and (5) suspicion in the integrity of the partner.

Once a victim approaches the FCC the latter first lodges FIR with the nearby Police Station. Sometimes the women victims are so scared that they do not want to go back home. Most of them leave their husbands' house when they come to complain and take shelter in the house of a close kin and those who have none to ask for shelter take refuge at the Short Stay Home run by ASHI at Gangtok. Then, the FCC contacts the husband and tells him to come to the centre for counseling. On the day of hearing the counselor listens to the versions of both the husband and wife in separate sittings, sometimes together in one sitting, and then the FCC tries for a negotiated settlement with an agreement on the amount of alimony.

The first step the FCC takes is to arrange for treatment of the victim in case she is physically assaulted and provide her a safe shelter, particularly for those who do not have close relatives to support them. As the next step the FCC tries for a reconciliation and restoration of the normal life. In most cases the victims already have spent several years with the husband and have children. Separation means the women victims have to shoulder greater hardship with their minor children. If this fails and the separation is unavoidable the FCC initiates negotiation on the maintenance allowance for the woman. Under normal circumstances the maintenance package includes a monthly allowance of Rs. 500 per month per head, a house to live or rent to be paid in case of a hired house, and an allowance on children's education. The records of 2004 show that of the total 63 cases the FCC registered 50 cases were settled by the FCC and 23 of such settlements ended in negotiated separation with a compensation package. The amount of monthly allowance however varied between Rs. 500 and Rs. 700 per person per month depending on the economic condition of the husband. The settlement is reached through a written agreement which contains the detailed terms and conditions that are binding upon both the parties. The agreement paper is also

signed by the friends and relatives of the parties and the representatives of the police.

In the negotiation process the FCC invites the close-kin and friends of both the parties, who also at times take an active role in finding a settlement. The counselors sometimes pay surprise visits to the houses of the victims to see that the terms of the settlement are being honoured. The FCC sometimes seek help from the police officers and resort to a pressure tactic to discipline the erring husbands, who are the culprits in most cases. Particularly in cases where the husband is alcoholic and is in the habit of assaulting the wife, the pressure tactic is very effective. In cases where the husband agrees to take back his deserted wife the pressure tactic also proved effective.

The FCC we visited runs on Central government fund. The Centre staffs consisted of five lady staff: one counselor-in-charge, two counselors, one typist and a peon. The FCC acknowledged the help of the police department but regretted that the State Government did not provide any kind of support or any policy direction. The counselors regretted that the State Government also does not have any scheme or policy to help the victims of domestic violence, whose number is on the rise. The FCC did not appear to have any coordination with the State Women's Commission. Asked about the performance of the Family Court the persons in charge of the FCC hesitantly expressed their unhappiness.

Asked to identify the class and community where atrocities on women are in the crudest form the lady counselors at the FCC mentioned middle and upper class Nepali and Bhutia, particularly in the urban areas. They were prompt to add that there are instances of violence in the rural areas as well, and among the members of communities other than Bhutia and Nepali. In most cases the parties that agree to alimony are the white collar employees in government offices and departments. The counselors of the FCC explain this phenomenon saying that the government employees are generally educated and have stable monthly income. By resorting to corrupt means they can earn extra money to add to the family income. A section of them owns new flats or houses in and around urban centers and gets into politics. This neo-class and new urbanites then use their wider exposure and contacts to satisfy their sexual drives by establishing extra-marital relations

with younger women. The polygamous tendencies had their roots among the Bhutias, who had a feudal past, and the Nepalis, who are the largest supplier of the members of the neo-class. The Bhutia Chogyals, the Bhutia landed gentry and the present day Nepali rulers and bureaucrats do not look at polygamous tendencies as a normative or value crisis. Many among the top political leaders and even the Chief Ministers have reportedly maintained more than one wife. The fact that they continue this practice without any social stricture or stigma, not to say of legal action, is a testimony to the wide social support to this illegal practice. Even for the first wife, the husband having extra-marital affair is no big issue. As we would see in the case studies, the first wives are mentally prepared to accept the second wife just in lieu of an assurance that they would not be thrown out of the house. It is indeed interesting to note that the stipulations of Hindu Marriage Act are flouted at will by the people active in public life. Even more interesting is the fact that there is no sign of movement by the women rights groups to raise this issue as the rallying point. The political parties too are totally silent on the women's rights issue because their leaders help reproduce the patriarchic psyche and culture in the state. With some risk of generalization one could say that the patriarchic control of the society has penetrated deep into the institutions and social psyche in Sikkim and the movement against this pathology is yet to gain momentum.

However, one can notice a growing awareness among the women victims about the existence and activities of the FCCs and Commission for Women, the Family Court and ASHI, the NGO, and that they are coming out in ever larger numbers to lodge complaints with the police and with these organizations. From their experience they can see the usefulness of this move. This is undoubtedly a positive step for the defense of women's rights. In this move the women are however more interested in securing a maintenance grant and other form of material support (housing etc.) and are ready to forget about the humiliation they have suffered in the hands of their husbands. The deserted women see it as a bargaining point and take help of the FCC or the NGO in raising the amount of alimony. They do not move the court even when they are aware that their husbands are on a sticky ground, legally speaking. They are apprehensive of the legal complications and often do not have the means to run a court case for long.

Moreover, there is always the risk of losing the meagre financial support they receive as a part of the separation agreement. As we examine the case studies later in this paper we would see how elements of patriarchy have crept into the major social institutions and people's perception which decide about women's position in society.

State Women's Commission

The Sikkim State Commission for Women (SCW), which came into being following the Sikkim State Commission for Women Act, 2001, is fast growing in popularity and in terms of the magnitude of cases it handles. The SCW has been formed with the backing of the State Government and it functions in close coordination with the government. However, according to Mrs. Manita Pradhan, the chairperson of the SCW, the people are not much aware of its existence and functioning and it does not have a wide network to generate adequate level of awareness among the people about its powers and functions. The SCW is therefore preparing itself to play a more wide and effective role in defending the rights of the women who are vulnerable to atrocities by the men, the husbands and in-laws in particular. Following the statutory stipulations the Commission performs 'various functions by looking into the cases of complaints and taking *suo moto* notice on matters relating to harassment, maltreatment, denial of rights, exploitation and taking remedial action to safeguard the legitimate rights of women and provide immediate relief and redress the women in distress and to ensure democratic welfare policy set up by the Government.' (The Sikkim State Commission for Women, *Annual Report 2004-2005*: 10).

The number of cases registered with the Commission for Women is increasing every year. In 2004-5 the SCW received 180 cases or complaints. Bigamy and fixation of alimony accounted for 80 per cent of the cases. On the basis of the nature of nature of complaints the cases have been classified under the following heads: (1) bigamy, (2) desertion, (3) divorce, (4) maintenance, (5) custody of children, (6) matrimonial disputes, (7) harassment, (8) murder, (9) property disputes (widow property, parents' property or *streedhan*, (10) shelter, and (11) miscellaneous.

The SCW successfully intervened in cases like (a) an unmarried woman's house being seized by her brothers when the lady was outside the State in connection with her job (ref. the case of Miss Chandra Gurung dated 19/09/2003), (b) an widow being deprived of her late husband's property and ornaments by her husband's brother and also of harassment (ref. the case of Rita Debi dated 25/03/04), (c) the case of an widow giving birth to a child as a result of an affair with a man who later disclaimed the woman and the children and harassed her (Ref. case of Smt. Poornima Rai), (d) a working woman being insulted by her boss in the office (the case of Smt. Tshring Doma Lachenpa), (e) the working woman being denied the right pay scale by the Corporation, (f) the case of young lady anchors working with Zee TV being denied the agreed pay, (g) the case of Damber Kumari, who was deserted by her husband after the birth of a son, and so on (for details see the Annual Report 2004-5, published by the Sikkim State Commission for Women, pp. 12-18).

The Commission received nine cases of divorce in 2004-5. In these cases the women have sought divorce from their husbands alleging of ill-treatment (mental and physical, bigamy, and alcoholism). The Commission, on receipt of the complaints involves the inmates of both the parties and counsels them not to go for a divorce. It succeeds in some cases but when it fails to settle the disputes it refers the cases to the Family Court of Sikkim, as the Commission has no power to issue decree of divorce.

We came to know from the Commission that sometimes it does not receive adequate cooperation from the concerned authorities such as the Family Court and the Government Offices while handling the cases. As an illustration of this point the Commission refers to the case of Smt. Tshring Doma Lachenpa, a clerk in the Irrigation and Flood Control Department, who was harassed and humiliated by her office boss (an Accounts Officer). On receiving complaint the SCW did necessary investigation and then approached the Chief Minister for action. But after that nobody knows what happened to the case. Similarly, the SCW took up the case of Mrs. Shanti Mothey (aged 30), who being deserted by her husband Jonathan Mothey, claimed maintenance. She also wanted separation as she was being subjected to continuous torture by her husband. The husband, on the other hand, moved the

Family Court with a complaint of adultery against his wife and demanded divorce. Shanti, on the apprehension that she cannot fight her more resourceful husband, approached the SCW and sought its help. The SCW sought the permission from the Family Court judge to represent Shanti's case with the help of a lawyer of its choice. The appeal of the SCW was outright rejected.

From our discussion with the Chairperson, SCW, we drew two important observations: (1) according to Mrs. Manita Pradhan the family disputes are found more among the upper caste Nepalese and mostly in the urban areas, and (2) like the Family Counseling Centre the SCW also prefers negotiated settlements in cases of torture and desertion by way of arranging accommodation and alimony. The Commission does not encourage the women victims to move the family courts and secure divorce even when the charges of bigamy are genuine. We feel that this is compromise with the overwhelming patriarchic pressure and such a submission encourage the erring husbands who are, by and large, convinced that the stipulations of Hindu Marriage Act could be flouted at will, paying a meager amount of alimony. This also does not take the women's rights movement any further.

Family Court cases

The Sikkim State Commission for Women, the Family Counseling Centres at Police Head Quarters, and the Family Counseling Centre run by ASHI refer the cases to the Family Court. These organizations send the cases that they cannot resolve; the cases relating to property disputes and property inheritance, cases relating to divorce and child custody, cases relating to murder and all those cases which are not resolved through their mediation. The fact that the number of cases referred to the FC is increasing every year is a reflection of the good work being done by various organizations working in the field and also that the magnitude of the atrocities is growing.

Case study 1

Rajkumar Pradhan, aged 39 years, hails from Rongpo Duga of East Sikkim district. He was serving as Jail Warden with the State Government. In his family he had his parents, one brother and a

sister.

Rajkumar married Sharita, a resident of Nepal at that time, in 1989 and it was an arranged marriage. With class VIII level education Sharita got a job in the Police Department as a typist.

Everything went on smoothly until 1994. In 1994 Rajkumar was dismissed from service, along with 34 other Jail staff because they were engaged in an agitation against the government in defense of their rights. As Rajkumar turned unemployed Sharita became very repulsive and developed the habit of quarreling on every petty matter in the family. One day Sharita left the house without informing anybody in the family. She left for Nepal to the house of her parents. After a couple of weeks Rajkumar went to Nepal and brought Sharita back.

In 1995 Rajkumar and Sharita had a son. One year and 10 months after the birth of the son Sharita left the house once again. In the meanwhile she had strained her relation with her in-laws. Sharita this time was living with one of her relatives in Gangtok. She took her son with her.

Meanwhile Rajkumar got back his job with the change of government in the state. As Sharita left her in-laws' house Rajkumar filed a missing diary with the police. Sharita on the other hand went to the Women's Commission demanding maintenance. The SCW organized counseling sessions for the parties but no settlement was reached. In its effort to save the family the SCW proposed alimony of Rs. 1000/ a month for Sharita and her son to which Rajkumar did not agree. This was April 2002.

Rajkumar was adamant not to yield. He moved the Family Court the same year demanding divorce. The Family Court gave the verdict on 11 May 2005 and divorce was granted. Rajkumar was ordered to pay alimony of Rs. 500/ per month for the maintenance of the son and was asked to give a plot of land on the road side to his son. The alimony has to be paid until the son reaches 14 years of age. The wife was demanding higher compensation but that was not granted by the court.

Case study 2

Sherhany Subba vs. Sushila Subba case was registered with the

Family Court in November 2004 (case no. 47 of 2004). The case was filed by Mr. Subba seeking divorce. The couple hails from Gangtok. Mr. Subba was 40 years of age, a graduate and a political leader by profession. Sushila (aged 38) is a doctor by profession and working with the government hospital.

In the Family Court Mr. Subba complained that Sushila was in the habit of undermining and humiliating him (she had a strong ego as she was a doctor and was earning more than him) and his family members and the insult was unbearable. The Court gave an ex-parte decree granting divorce in January this year (2005). Sushila then moved the High Court against the FC order. The High Court referred the case to the FC with the observation that the case was not properly heard and there should have been an effort for reconciliation instead of granting divorce. The wife is not interested in alimony as she earns handsomely. She is not interested in divorce as she is keen in saving the marriage. The case was still pending before the Family Court.

Family Counseling Centre run by the Association of Social Health in India (ASHI), Gangtok

The Family Counseling Centre run by the Association of Social Health in India (FCC, ASHI, hence forth), an NGO, seemed to be the most active among the organizations working for women's rights in the State. ASHI also runs a Short Stay Home in Gangtok which is very useful for the women thrown out of their house by their polygamous husbands. ASHI also sends its counselors from time to time to the Central Social Welfare Board, New Delhi, for training. FCC, ASHI, has a comprehensive network to address cases even in the remote areas of the State. Despite all the good work FCC, ASHI, has been doing over the years in the State it receives meager support from the State Government; last year it received an annual grant of Rs. 10,000 only. FCC, ASHI, had invited a few women at their office at Gangtok on our request and we could interview them at one place. Here is a brief account of the cases we could cover.

Case study 1

Riya Trikhatri, aged 27, wife of Mr. Prokash Mothey (32) a driver

in the Power Department of the State Government, approached the FCC, ASHI, with the complaint that her husband had married for the second time and had thrown her out of the house. Riya also complained of regular physical torture done on her by her husband. Driven out of husband's house Riya started staying in the house of her parents in the same village. Prokash and Riya got married in 1994 and had a daughter in 1996. They were living at Bisal Gaon in Gangtok.

Riya approached FCC, ASHI, on 21 January 2001. The Centre then called both the parties for hearing. In several rounds of counseling the Centre tried for reconciliation but nothing worked. However, in February the same year the parties agreed for a written settlement. According to the agreement, Prokash would pay a monthly alimony of Rs. 1200 to Riya and her son (at the rate of Rs. 600/ per head). Riya admitted that she felt humiliated at the treatment she received at the hands of her husband after serving him with full sincerity for all these years. She said, 'I shall never be able to forgive my husband for his betrayal and I shall never be able to stay with him again.'

Case study 2

Mrs. Laxmi Sharma, aged 38, was the wife of Mr. Gopilal Sharma (56), a mason. They got married about 20 years back and their eldest son, a driver, was now 17 years of age. They had one more son and a daughter. The family was living at Ravangla, South Sikkim.

Gopilal Sharma was alcoholic and in the habit of verbally and physically assaulting Laxmi. One day in early April 2005, the drunken husband returned home late and beat Laxmi badly. Laxmi was badly injured and had 15 stitches on her face.

With the help of a friend Laxmi approached the FCC, Ashi, for help and protection. The FCC lodged FIR with the police and arranged for Laxmi's treatment. On her release from hospital Laxmi was given shelter at the Short Stay Home, run by Ashi. Laxmi said that her husband threatened to kill her and she looked very scared at that time.

The FCC, Ashi summoned Laxmi's husband, elder son and other

relatives for counseling on 21 April 2005. After long counseling session an agreement was reached. Laxmi's husband agreed to take her back; their son too wanted his mother back. Laxmi's husband gave a written undertaking that he would not torture her any more. Laxmi, however, was terrified and was reluctant to go back. She agreed with long persuasion from all sides. The counselors of the FCC, Ashi, make surprise visits to check if everything is going according to the agreement. Laxmi told us that things have changed for the better after that incident.

Case study 3

Chini Maya Bhujel (40 years of age), wife of Dilbahadur Chhetri (40 years), hails from Tagong, Gangtok. Chini Maya and Dilbadur got married some 25 years ago. They had a daughter (23 years), who was married, and a son of 14 years of age.

On 10 May 2005 Chini Maya came to FCC, Ashi, with a fractured hand and wounds in her legs. She complained that her alcoholic husband had beaten her so badly that she had to run for her life. Maya was given temporary shelter at the Short Stay Home for three days. She was taken to hospital, an X-Ray was done and arrangement was made for her treatment.

Dilbahadur, Maya's husband, was called for counseling on 12 May 2005. Among others who came on the day of counseling were Chini Maya's son, daughter, and son-in-law. After counseling Dilbahadur and Chini Maya's children and son-in-law together insisted that she should go back home. Chini Maya was still under a spell of shock and was reluctant to go back. Then everybody boosted her confidence by promising that they would keep a watch over Dilbahadur's movements and behaviour. Dilbahadur gave an undertaking that he will not repeat the same behaviour in future. Finally, Chini Maya agreed to go back to her family.

Case study 4

Dawa Yanzi Sherpa (32 years of age) is the wife of Karma Lendup Bhutia (37 years). After getting married to Karma, Dawa Yanzi lived in the house of her husband at Bhusuk 10th Mile, Gangtok. Dawa was the mother of a son and a daughter. Karma was working as a police constable while Dawa was a house wife.

In 2000, Dawa was pregnant for the second time and this time around her husband was having an affair with another lady. Dawa came to know about this affair when she was in an advanced stage of her pregnancy and became depressed. She went to her parent's house for the delivery and her husband never visited her after the birth of their daughter.

During this time Karma brought her new wife home. When Dawa returned home with the new baby she was shocked to see that her position has been taken over by another woman. Thrown out of the husband's house Dawa returned to her parent's house with her children.

Dawa came to the FCC, Ashi, with her brother and requested for help. She also stayed at the Short Stay Home with her children for a week preceding the counseling. Family members from both sides came on the day of counseling. Karma was adamant not to take Dawa back. Dawa looked very sick and thin and that could have prompted Karma to go for a second wife.

As a part of the settlement Karma agreed to a monthly alimony of Rs. 1000/ and a house rent allowance. Dawa looked physically and mentally shattered as she was ill and uncertain about the future of her children in case she dies early. She was falling sick often and was spending beyond her means on treatment.

A couple of months back Dawa urged the FCC, Ashi, to do something to raise the maintenance allowance. The FCC got in touch with Karma, who is now working as a police constable at Melli Police Station. When the FCC placed the issue of raising the maintenance allowance he was furious. As a pressure tactic Dawa and the FCC threatened to go to the Family Court. On the apprehension of losing job Karma yielded to the pressure and agreed to enhance the alimony to Rs. 1500 per month.

Case studies from Darjeeling

Case study 1

Noorie Gurung, aged 39, lived with her three daughters- Romi, Richa and Rima- and her husband Hemraj 45 in Bettidhura tea-garden of Kurseong sub-division in Darjeeling. She had a regular

job as a laborer in the tea garden. They got married in the year 1991. Her husband was unemployed; he used to work as a labourer on daily wage especially in road-construction. He had to remain away from home most of the times. He developed an extra-marital affair. His wife came to know about this but for the fear of desertion she kept silent. Noorie worked hard to keep her children afloat. She earned by selling 'rakshi' (local alcoholic beverage) and firewood collected from the jungle. She supported her children's education, admitted her eldest daughter to a good school outside of the village as her own village did not have any good school.

Noorie had some elementary education, a class III dropout. She managed to deposit her savings or bought gold as security for the future. But sometimes her husband would take her earnings for his own consumption. Hemraj used to spend all his earnings on women and drink. He never looked after his family. He had the habit of torturing his wife and beat his daughters in a fit of rage. Quarrelling, suspicion on her integrity and threats were the daily affairs in the family. The villagers were also aware of his deeds. But they rarely opposed him as many thought it would be interpreted as an unwanted interference into family affairs. The villagers used to avoid him as he had records of fighting and killing people during the Gorkhaland movement of the 80s in Darjeeling; he was the right hand of one of the political leaders in the hills. Thus the villagers dared not to come to Noorie's rescue.

Hemraj started having an affair with a woman from the neighborhood. The woman was also married and had two sons but was much younger than Noorie and Hemraj. So quarrelling became the part of everyday life. Noorie was held to suspicion by Hemraj and would question her integrity whenever he would get a chance. She was worried about her daughter's studies as Hemraj had the habit of abusing his daughters. Regular fight in the family disturbed her daughter's studies.

In the year 2005 Noorie took this issue to the local body of village affairs called 'panchayat' (local court). The panchayat arranged a meeting to discuss the case and give a verdict. In this panchayat court the families of both the sides were called and after hearing both the parties gave a verdict. The 'panchayat' recommended the couple (Hemraj and the other woman) to leave the village paying compensation to Noorie. Noorie now lives with her

daughters in her husband's house. She is thankful to the villagers and to the 'panchayat' which saved her and her daughters. Although Noorie faces a lot of hardship as single mother, she is living in peace, free of the torture from her husband.

Case study 2

Meenu Rai, aged 48, was living with her husband Rambirey (50 years of age) and two sons in Sittong area of Kurseong sub-division. Meenu ran a small shop while her husband worked as a staff in the state-owned cinchona plantation. They had a good earning and a good life and both their sons studied outside in a town school. Rambirey was widely respected as a man of good virtue by the villagers. He used to drink alcohol but never got into a brawl. He had never tortured his wife. But in the year 2011 the villagers were shocked to know that he was having an affair with a woman called Seema who was of his son's age. The woman was married with a drunkard and had a son. Later on, the woman left her husband and started living with Rambirey in a rented room in the neighborhood as his elder son was old enough to drive him away. There was no noticeable change in his everyday life; he kept going to his work, coming back to the new house to his new live-in-partner and had a normal social life. His wife was in a state of shock wondering why her husband had abandoned her. His sons, angry at the turn of events, debarred him from visiting his family. Shockingly, there was no strong reaction against Rambirey from the villagers. No FIR was filed against him and no local body (panchayat) took up the matter.

The woman, Seema, lived with Rambirey without divorcing her first husband. Seema had a good reputation when she lived with her husband. She was subjected to violence (mental and physical) by her husband who would spend all his earning on alcohol. None except her family members came to her rescue. Here in Rambirey's and Seema's (and Meenu) case the 'panchayat' preferred not to interfere into the matter thinking that the quarrel between a husband and wife is just a 'paral ko aago' (fire on hay which extinguishes within a short time). Both of the women did not seek help from the law when their husbands were causing problem to their lives as they thought that taking help from the police and law would invite additional harassment. Seema's first husband

still is a drunkard but she had found peace eloping with Rambirey, who takes good care of her. Meenu leads a lonely life, struggling to find means to run her family. She still finds it hard to believe that her husband betrayed her; she mourns her helplessness by leading a silent and isolated life in the village.

Case study 3

Martha (aged 49) lived with her husband Nathaniel Pradhan (48 years) in the sub-urban area of Gandhigram near Kalimpong; they brought Elisha as a domestic help when the latter was a child from a closed tea-garden in the Dooars region of Jalpaiguri district. Elisha was seven when she came to the house and she lived with the family for ten years. She had to do almost all the domestic works and in return she was given food, shelter and occasional oversized worn clothes. According to her friends Elisha was never an outgoing girl; she always was silent and passive. She had a close friend Binu with whom she loved spending time. Unlike Elisha, Binu was a clever girl and she was concerned for Elisha. Meanwhile in the year 2011, when Elisha reached 17 she stopped meeting her friends, not even her best friend Binu. She preferred to remain inside of the house and engage herself with the work. This sudden change of behavior of Elisha shocked Binu. Binu, along with her other friends, tried to reach her but she gave some excuses to avoid them. There came a point when Binu could not bear the separation. She went to Elisha and forced her to tell everything that was bothering her. Elisha opened up to tell her that her employer Nathaniel manipulated her to have physical relation with him. He continued to have physical relation with Elisha when his wife was out of the house. He threatened Elisha of sending her back to the tea-garden where she belonged. Going back home would mean to live in starvation. She continued bearing this physical assault by her employer and kept silent because of losing social reputation. She managed to live with her agonies and broken conscience.

Binu acted smartly telling the details of the incidence to their Sunday school (Children's gathering in the Church) teacher Lilly. Lilly then tried to counsel Elisha and she confessed all that had happened to her. Lilly took up the matter with Martha (wife of Nathaniel) and his family members but nobody believed her. She received similar

indifferent reaction when she told this to the members of the village Church; no one believed that such a 'holy man' like Nathaniel could do such immoral things to the girl. As a punishment for her audacity Lilly, the conscience keeper, was replaced by another Sunday school teacher. Elisha was sent to another rich man's house (Nathaniel's relative) in Sikkim. As a reward of his manly deeds Nathaniel was promoted to the post of a Pastor of the community Church. His wife Martha knowing all the misdeeds of her husband has defended him in public; nobody knows what happened to her conscience. May be by questioning her husband she did not want to sacrifice her comfortable life and social reputation. Instead, she raised questions on the character of Elisha. Martha never complained anybody against her husband; she did not even approach her relatives or the Church to look into the matter. Elisha did not have the courage or means to take on the power-block which had solid support of the community and the Church. Movement to Sikkim was not her choice; her ejection was a part of the cleaning operation. Nobody knows if the same structural repression will be repeated in her new place of work.

Case study 4

Rita Sharma (40 years of age) lives with her husband Shyam Sharma (aged 45) and three children in a small town of Kurseong. They got married in 1989. Shyam Sharma owns several business ventures one of which was being looked after by Rita. Rita studied up to class X but failed to pass the Madhyamik examination. Her parents arranged her marriage immediately with Shyam who was then studying in a college. The couple had children and did business for a living. Rita never had a doubt on her husband's character until the day when one of his business assistants came to her to tell about Shyam's occasional outings with some women. But Rita never believed this and took it as for the jealousy of the assistant. Shyam never mistreated Rita but suspicious about her integrity he kept a vigil on her movements. In reality however Shyam was having an extra-marital affair and not Rita, who remained faithful to her husband. An incident took place in 2012 which shattered Rita; their eldest daughter Inu, who was then 22, found out a conversation between Shyam and a lady over a social networking site in his personal computer. The conversation contained number of messages bearing evidence of Shyam's illicit

relationship with the lady. Inu questioned her father about the affair and talked to the lady over the phone. In reaction to Inu's interference Shyam scolded her, warned her not to interfere in his personal matters and withdrew Inu from her college on the pretext that she had an affair with a boy. She was framed inside her house for exposing his reality. Some of the relatives of Shyam, knowing the incident from Inu, took up the matter seriously. But before they could do anything substantial Rita, Shyam's wife, declared that she is okay with her husband's affair as long as he keeps the woman out of the house. She told her relatives that men are born to have multiple women and she has accepted this as her fate. Saving her marriage and family was her priority as she prepared herself for the compromise. The relatives were shooed away by Shyam; Inu was facing cold treatments from her parents, even from her mother for whom she raised her voice.

Case study 5

Laxmi Tamang (39) of Uttar Polok of Kalimpong was married to Harka Bahadur Gurung (42) in 1993. They have a 19 year old son. Before marriage they had love affair for some years. Laxmi works as a plantation laborer in one of the government Cinchona plantations in Kalimpong division of Darjeeling district. Her husband is a graduate and works as an office staff in the plantation. They had a normal life until Laxmi suffered an inherited mental illness. That time their son was a ten year old boy studying in a local school. After having months of treatment Laxmi was recovering. But by then her husband had started to see another woman from Gangtok. One day he left his family and started living with the woman in Gangtok; he stopped attending his work and stopped looking after his family. Harka Bahadur left ailing Laxmi in a deplorable condition without thinking who would be looking after their only son. Laxmi never filed a complaint against her husband in a hope that he would return home one day. Harka Bahadur returned home after a gap of five years with another wife and a two year old son. He lived separately with his second wife in the same village. Laxmi's mental health deteriorated but none came forward. Eventually she was taken to the care of her brother. Her son was looked after by her in-laws. Two years later Laxmi got well and came to her house and started to look after her son. It has been nine years in the run; Laxmi is struggling to

take care of herself and her son. Her husband Harka Bahadur lives in his parental house with his second wife and son. Nobody has ever complained against him. Laxmi's brother holds grudges against his sister's husband and the family as well. But he can do nothing for her because Laxmi is reluctant to charge her husband.

Case study 6

Sonu Lepcha (29) was married to Rajen Mukhia (35) in 2010. They now have a two year old son. Both are from the same village Shilam busy in Kalimpong subdivision of Darjeeling district. They both work as casual laborers for the forest department office near their hamlet. Sonu gave birth to their son Rojan in 2011 and started staying home to look after the child. Rajen continued with his work in the forest department. He was given work for about eight months a year and for the remaining four months he used to work as an assistant to a carpenter named Phurba. Phurba had a 19 year old daughter Seti with whom Rajen developed an affair while working for Phurba in the latter's house. Rajesh in course stopped supporting his wife financially leaving them in hardship. Sonu resumed her work in the forest department as a casual labour in order to sustain her family. Within a few months of developing the extra marital affair Rajen eloped with Seti leaving his wife and son in distress. Sonu now lives in her father's place with her son. She works to feed her only son and she is now determined to send her son to a good school. Sonu would not consider a second marriage even though she is only 29 years of age.

The above case studies collected from the Darjeeling district show men deserting their wives when they reach a particular age-group, late 30s and 40s, when they are sexually active, fed up with the monotony of having sex with their wives and are in a mood to explore new areas of sexual activity, developing physical relation with girls of much younger age (compared with their wives). Their legal wives by then are in late 30s and early 40s, are mothers of child/children and nearing menopause or have already reached it. The men, while developing new affairs desert their wives and children forgetting their responsibilities towards them and throwing all moral and value standards in the wind.

The cases from Darjeeling hills show that none of the deserted

women except one tried to reach the 'panchayat' (local court) for justice. They bear all the humiliation and insult inflicted on them by their inhuman husbands in order to save their families; they are worried about the consequences of sudden withdrawal of financial support and protection by their deserting husbands. The women felt too insecure at the prospect of divorce or separation from their husbands. Most of the women were financially dependent on their husbands. It is being observed that the women were deserted by their husbands after they had a child or two. Two of the case had peculiar issue where women did not take any actions against their husbands (see Martha and Rita's case study) despite of knowing that their respective husbands were having affairs outside of their marriage. In Martha's case the husband happened to be a prominent religious leader of the locality; later he was seen as being handed over the higher authority of the religious institution he served. Majority of the desertion of these women by their husbands was caused by the men who developed an extramarital affair and alcoholism. A common problem among the cases was found to be the lack of attention and support that the husband were obliged to offer to their family members. In almost all the cases the children of the couple had to be looked by the women who were deserted by their husbands without a support from their husbands and the in-laws.

Concluding observations

Desertion of married women and children, mental and physical torture on married women by their husbands and other in-laws are the ugliest manifestations of a patriarchal, feudal, inhuman social order, which has the backing of the 'conscience collective' among the communities both in Sikkim and Darjeeling hills, and in other places of India. Although such cases are on the rise desertion of wife and atrocities on her by her husband are largely treated as the 'problem of the victim' or 'family problem' and not a 'social problem'. Uncontrolled sex, search for novelty in sexuality, easy availability of 'willing women', and family feuds drive men, in their 40s and 50s, to develop physical relationship outside marriage while negating family responsibilities and the value system stemming from the Hindu Marriage Act and the larger social tradition. The age of the deserted women also bears

significance since the husbands desert them when, in their late 30s and 40s, they are already mothers of two-three children and have lost much of their sex appetite and appeal as they enter menopause.

The wife, the children, who are the direct victims of the circumstances, make all efforts, with the backing of their relatives and friends, to make a compromise, even by accepting the illicit relation of their impulsive husbands, in order to save the marriage and the family. The neighbourhood community and the village church do not see much of a problem with the deserting husband and counsel the wife to reconcile, suggesting that they should accept their husbands and their relation with the 'other woman' in order to live in peace. All the organizations, NGOs, or the institutions set up by the state appear to be in a reconciliatory mood and not in combating mood. This is encouraging the erring men to continue with their atrocities against women and their amoral, irresponsible acts. The deserting husbands, driven by sex desire, are ready to forget about their responsibilities towards their own children.

The provisions of Hindu Marriage Act are flouted at will since the women are not empowered (in terms of control over material and human resources, awareness of rights, and will to fight for justice) enough to put up an effective resistance, rebelling against their erring husbands; they are more concerned about securing a regular maintenance grant from their husband so that they can survive along with their children. The collectivity is also not ready to side with the deserted women to put up a social resistance.

In Sikkim there is a kind of institutional arrangement comprising of the State Commission for Women, the Family Court, the family counseling cells and the NGOs to deal with the cases of atrocities against women and in certain cases they come up with settlements in the form of reunification of the family, fixing and enhancing alimony, regular monitoring to make sure the provisions of the agreements are adhered to by the conflicting parties, giving shelter in the short stay homes, and even taking the erring husbands to the Family Court. The FCCs and SCW usually persuade the tortured and humiliated women to go back to their husbands even when they feel insecure and reluctant to go back. Counseling the women victims to compromise may be a 'pragmatic' stand but

such surrender does not strengthen the women's rights movement in the state. There seems to be reluctance on the part of the State government to come out with a comprehensive strategy to arrest the ever increasing cases of bigamy among the neo-urbanite class who are mostly the upper caste Nepalese and who have secure government jobs and political connections. The commonly shared perception that drives this group of men to bigamy is that they have money to set up a new family and enough manipulative power to escape punishment for their irresponsible acts. Bigamy is practiced primarily by the government employees yet there is not a single instance of their employer sacking them from jobs although their actions amount to gross violation of the provisions of Hindu Marriage Act. With the instillation of more fighting spirit in the women's groups and greater will-power in the government and the Family Court at least the provisions of Hindu Marriage Act (against bigamy) could be strictly enforced. With some exemplary punishment the culprits could be 'disciplined' and this could, in turn, have a demonstration effect on the potential perpetrators of violence against women.

The State Commission for Women has not been given adequate space or any judicial power by the Government or the Court where it can act with freedom and authority. Thus its requests for action remain unattended by the State government or by the Family Court. The weakened SCW could lead to further crippling of the women's rights movement in the state. The lady counselors of FCC, ASHI, were complaining that they feel insecure during their field visits while dealing with high-tension cases. They cited a couple of instances when their workers were attacked and threatened of dire consequences for their support to the distressed women. This indicates that the forces that are willing to stand by the women victims do not get enough community or institutional support.

Only a few women dared to approach the FCC, ASHI, for help since they are aware of the far reaching consequences of involving the external agencies in 'family matters'. Some of the women need immediate help and financial support. They do not understand the complication of court cases and police intervention and always insist on a deal that would help sustain them. The women are well aware that once they come out of the house and seek the intervention of the FCC, or any other formal institution, it would

be a point of no return. They understand well that when their husbands have fallen for women who are much younger and capable of satisfying their husband's sexual desire they stand no chance of winning them back. Being 'pragmatic' the women victims give up the fight since they do not want to risk the monthly allowance. At times, the husbands tend to flout the terms of the settlement agreement and stop paying the maintenance allowance. In such cases the FCC, ASHI, seeks the help of the employer to put pressure on the erring husband and recover the amount from his salary. The counselors of ASHI told us that the employers usually cooperate in such cases.

The community, family members, relatives, neighbours feel for the victims of domestic violence but there is no organized resistance. This social force that represents the vales and pity is not articulate and as a result the victims do not get adequate support that they deserve. Had this force been organized there could have been more prevention, support and effective resistance. In order to give legitimacy to village level women's groups there should be appropriate legislation or ordinance and such groups should constitute a part of rural self governments. Now that the *panchayats* are in place in Sikkim it would not be difficult to build women's rights cell in the local bodies. Such groups should be backed by an effective network of all the organizations and the government departments. Without a sincere political will on the part of democratic and administrative bodies and without a collective resistance at the social/community level it would be impossible to fight the elements of patriarchy that has a strong roots in Sikkim and Darjeeling hills.

What of cases in Darjeeling hills are common with the cases in Sikkim is the overwhelming presence of the elements of patriarchy which can condition the conjugal relations and the relations in the family. The patriarchy works both covertly and overtly, at the individual and collective levels, in expressed behavior and psyche. That explains why the men enjoy a free hand in developing illicit relations outside family and why there is no social condemnation or organized protest against atrocities against women. The near total absence of control over material and human resources make the middle-aged women vulnerable and constrained not to go for an all-out protest at the social and institutional level. Even when a

voice is raised against the men by an exceptional few, the power hierarchy gets into action to discipline the defiant voice. Women in Darjeeling hills are doubly constrained because there is total absence of institutional or organizational support (like the Family Court, NGOs, and Family Counseling Cells, Commission for Women or NGOs) unlike Sikkim. The local power blocks like the Church, formal and informal *panchayats* deal with such cases with a clear bias in favour of men.

Considering that patriarchy has an overwhelming support of the cultural traditions and communities in both Sikkim and Darjeeling hills, and also considering the fact that the cases of bigamy and domestic violence against the hapless women is on the rise in the state there ought to be a comprehensive policy of the government for protection of the rights of the women. The policy should evolve a mechanism of integration of the activities of the Family Court, the State Commission for Women, the FCCs, the NGOs and the police. Under the leadership of these organizations the 'village level women rights groups' need to be formed, which should be empowered with training in legal rights and in capacity building so that they could put up community resistance in cases of atrocities. With human resource development and greater control over productive resources for women and organized community resistance with the backing of institutional support the problem can be addressed better.

We would conclude the paper with a reference to a cultural syndrome *machismo* that worked in Latin American countries, especially those with large indigenous and backward *mestizo* populations. Understood as a collective liability, *machismo* encompassed values and behaviours antithetical to progress: traditionalism, the absence of a firm work ethic, an excessive dependency on familism, authoritarianism, and corruption and, most importantly, a voracious sexual appetite.² Years later the term *marianismo* was used to describe a complementary series of attributes among Latin American women: passivity, self-denial, a vocation to subservience and an exaltation of motherhood (Stevens, 1973)³. We are aware that to understand a community in terms of national culture traits is not only unscientific but also an injustice to the whole community. However, it difficult not to notice the presence of *marianismo* syndrome, when authoritarian male

domination leaves its hegemonic impact on the minds and behavior of the women who strive hard to restore some sense of security and dignity but do not strike back. It would be misleading if we stop with a cultural explanation of the condition of women in Sikkim and Darjeeling hills a political economic explanation would perhaps be more appropriate.

Notes

1. On 13th the team visited the Family Counseling Centre, located at the Police Head Quarters, Gangtok, the Family Court located at the Sikkim High Court, the office of State Commission for Women at Gangtok, and the office of an NGO named Association of Social Health in India (ASHI), Sikkim Branch. The team met Mrs. Manita Pradhan, Chairperson of Sikkim State Women's Commission, Mrs. Kidoma Bhutia (in-charge) and Ms Susma Chhetri of the Family Counseling Centre at Police Head Quarters, Mr. Uday P Sharma, a Judge in the Family Court, Mrs. Mongalmit Lepcha (Coordinator, ASHI), Anjali Thapa (Counsellor, ASHI) and Mrs. Aruna Tamang (Counsellor, ASHI) and collected information covering various aspects of the project.

On prior request these persons and organizations had invited some victims of family disputes, whose cases have been taken up by these organizations, for counseling/litigation and settlement, to their respective offices so that we could meet and interview them at length. This arrangement enabled us to meet about ten victims (both men and women) and record their cases in detail in order to understand the nature of the problems and the methods resorted to by these organizations/institutions to resolve them. This exercise also enabled us to draw some understanding of the nature of integration or coordination these agencies have amongst them while addressing the cases of family disputes. As we went through the individual cases we had a good grasp of the social roots of the family problems in the state. The leaders and counsellors involved in women's rights movement in the state also came forward with interesting suggestions for working out a better coordination between the Family Court and other organization working with similar objectives.

2. Philosophical and literary writings, like those of Samuel Ramos and Octavio Paz in Mexico, further contributed to create a Latin American mystique around national character. *Labyrinth of Solitude* (Paz, 1961) continues to be cited by social scientists as it had been inspired by serious research. Filled with provocative insights and some distortions, *Labyrinth* exemplifies the sexualization of social relationships. For details see, Maria and Fernandez, 1994: 249-275

3. For details see Stevens, 1973.

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Political Islam in Bangladesh: From Faraidi Movement to Hefajat-i-Islam

Moidul Islam

The sudden emergence of the militant fundamentalist Islamic group of Hefajat-i-Islam indicates the medieval Islamic activism which is still playing a pivotal role in ossification of the democratic and pluralist socio-political character of Bangladesh. Bengali nationalism which once built strong ties among 'Bangalees' is now turning moribund due to the naked interference by the state in civic and public sphere. This paper deals with the course of transformation of popular Islam into political Islam by using discourse analysis. The many-sided character of Political Islam has generated political turbulence that throws open a serious challenges to present state democracy in Bangladesh. The root of the problem is that most of the power practitioners in Bangladesh are autocratic power mongers ready to stoop low playing with religious sentiments of the people while banking on corrupt bureaucracy pushing the ordinary people in the receiving end. The present incarnation of political-fundamentalist Islam, which thrives on militancy, betrays the fundamental tenets of popular Islam.

Keywords: Bangladesh, political Islam, militancy, popular Islam, Hefajat-i-Islam, Western hegemony.

Introduction

Bangladesh, situated in the South Asian region, is an agro-based and one of the poorest, over populated country. It emerged on the basis of secular-socialistic principles in 1971, and its first constitution, framed in November 1972, had imposed a ban on the use of religion in politics (Riaz, 2004: 5). The country was a part of colonial India from 1757-1947 and a province of Pakistan (1947-1971) in post-colonial period. Although Bangladesh was born after a few months of freedom struggle on secular, socialistic principles Islam has time and again found a fertile playground in

the fields of social and political life of the country.

After the 9/11 attack, political Islam¹, fundamentalism, extremism became the cornerstone of discussion across the countries and continents. The Western world fundamentally altered its approach to Islam and the Islamic countries and the political Islam with its outlandish idea towards the state and government was gradually taken over by the forces who believe in vengeance, dogmatism, and killing and annihilation of anything 'anti-Islamic'. The contemporary Bangladesh is passing through a chaotic phase where the fundamentalists take recourse to suicide bombings in judicial courts, assaults on NGO workers, secular writers, female journalists, grenade attacks on foreign diplomats, and so on. The most worrying part is the emergence of new extremist groups.

This paper aims at understanding the factors that have contributed to the development of political Islam in Bangladesh. I have divided my paper into several sections. First, I aim to understand the features of political Islam during the colonial period. Second, I explore the forms of political Islam that operated in post-independent Bangladesh. Third, I examine the *modus operandi* of political Islam in Bangladesh in 1972-1990- period. Finally, I cover the niche of political Islam from 1990 to 2013. I have written this article using the framework of historical specificity. According to Alam 'the notion of historical specificity shows how, for any specific situation, a series of historical conjunctures has led to a distinctive configuration' (cited in Hasan, 2012: 156).

Political Islam in colonial Bengal

Historically, Islam was introduced in the South-Asian region through the military conquest by Seljuks and Mamluks (Hasan, 2012: 156). Islam had flourished especially during the period of Delhi Sultanate (1204-1342 AD). The process of Islamisation in this region was only possible by Muslim Sufis, saints, pirs and rulers by coming and settling down here. Eaton has recorded how the Sufis worked as important agents in the conversion of Hindu population, especially the low caste Hindus, into Islam (Eaton, 2000: 189). However, there are four hypotheses on Muslim preponderance in Bengal: Intervention of Muslim rulers, Reaction of the low caste Hindus against Brahmanical oppression, Reaction

of the Buddhists against Hindu oppression, Missionary activities of the Muslim saints [pirs] (Khan, 2012: 91). Thus the 'Popular Islam in India, in many respects, copied the essentials of Hindu beliefs, ideas, and social institutions and adjusted them to the Islamic system in a very strange way' (Karim, 1976: 115). But, this popular Islam which once adapted to local circumstances gradually lost its appeal after the consolidation of British rule.

India was plundered following the rules of 'primitive accumulation' by the British. On the social front they followed dual policy to maintain the division between the Hindus and Muslims. According to Karim, the British not only withdrew all favours that the Muslims enjoyed under the Mughal rulers, but began following a policy of hostility against the Muslim upper classes (Karim, 1956: 187). In reaction, the Indian Muslims took to ethnic/religious route to mobilisation in the form of Faraizi movement of 1818, Khilafat movement of 1919, Tariquah-i-Muhammadiyah movement of 1820s and '30s, Taaiyuni movement and, Ahl-e-Hadith and so on.

Faraizi movement was launched in 1818 on the basis of Quranic monotheism and sunnah. The Faraizi movement of nineteenth century of Bengal was led by Haji Shariatullah (1781-1840) of Faridpur district (Khan, 1985: 839; Khan, 1970: 123; Khan, 2012). The term Faraizi is derived from 'farz' meaning obligatory duties dictated by Allah (Khan, 1985: 839, Khan, 2012). Shariatullah preached a return to a more fundamental Islam, shorn of ritualistic appendages (Khan, 1985: 840). According to *Banglapedia of Bangladesh*,

Shariatullah made a pilgrimage to Makkah, stayed there for 20 years and studied religious doctrines under Shaikh Tahir Sombal, an authority of Hanafi School. Returning home he launched a movement to make the Bengal Muslims follow the true canons of Islam. The Faraizi movement spread with extraordinary rapidity in the districts of Dhaka, Faridpur, Bakerganj, Mymensingh, Tippera (Comilla), Chittagong and Noakhali as well as to the province of Assam. The movement, however gained the greatest momentum in those places where the Muslim peasantry were depressed under the oppressive domination of Hindu zaminders (landlords) and European indigo planters' (Khan, 2012).

Khan further states:

He insisted on the complete acceptance and strict observation of the pure monotheism of Islam and condemned all deviations from the original doctrines as shirk (polytheism) and bidat (sinful innovation). Even Shariatullah believed that India should be classified under the category of dar-ul-harb (non-Muslim state), since it was ruled by the British. Consequently, according to Shariatullah, Hanafi law dictated that congregational prayers (such as juma, id-ul-fitr and id-uz-zoha) could not be held so long as the British ruled the sub-continent' (Khan, 1985: 840).

This movement secured widespread support from Muslim masses but after the death of its leader the vigour of this movement gradually waned.

In the early nineteenth century, Shah Sayyid Ahmad (1780-1831) of Barelwi and Shah Ismail (1782-1831) led a Muslim revivalist movement called Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah movement. Both the leaders emphasized on the interpretation of holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (Sm). Followers of Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah supported SUFISM and the need for having a spiritual guide for right kind of thought and action (Ahsan, 2012). One may recall that the Faraidi and Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah movements were especially favored by Bengali Muslims, because they maintained their link with both Hanafi school of law and mysticism while demanding penitence and return to the fundamental doctrines of Islam (Khan, 1970: 129). However, according to Ahsan (2012):

The Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah movement began in Northern India and reached Bengal during the 1820s and '30s. Sayyid Ahmad's visit to Calcutta in 1820 was marked by a gathering of about 10 thousands followers who came to meet him. He visited Calcutta once again in the next year on his way to Makka and he propagated his doctrines during his three months of stay there (Cited in Hasan, 2012: 157).

By the late 1820s one of Sayyid Ahmad Berelwi's disciples, Titu Mir (1782-1831) began another movement in rural Western Bengal (Jones, 2008: 23) about whom Khan (2012) writes:

While a student in the madrasa, Titu Mir grew up into a good gymnast and a renowned wrestler (pahlwan). He went on a pilgrimage to Makka in 1822 and came in close contact with the great Islamic reformer and revolutionary leader Saiyid Ahmad Bareilli who inspired him to free his fellow countrymen from un-Islamic practices and foreign domination. On his return from Macca in 1827 he started preaching among the Muslims.

The following points emerge out of a review of these early Islamic movements.

- a. A new form of idea was generated among the Indian Muslims to participate in *jihad* [sacred war] against the British, Hindu landlords, and the gomastahs and 'mujahid forces' were organised. The pragmatic material interest and religious faith were combined in such movements.
- b. The movements sparked of a great deal of enthusiasm among the Muslim masses in most parts of Bengal who experienced oppressions of different forms in their everyday life.
- c. For running these movements and saving Islam from 'adulteration and danger', an economic cell was formed to collect funds and support from various parts of the world.
- d. The movements often turned violent as it was against the British troops (e.g., Sipoy mutiny of 1857).
- e. Muslims were out to retain 'purity' of Islam by uprooting the influence of local religions thus scuttling the possibility of assimilation and harmony.

The multi-faceted outcome of the movements can be summed up as thus:

First, the Faraizi movement and Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah movements had brought about a sense of unity among the Muslims as they fought against the European indigo planters, Hindu landlords, and Zaminders and their associates who were looked into as a kind of class enemy. Besides, the movements aimed at regaining the lost political glory of Islamic reign. After all, they thought the British had wrested power from 'them', since they

had been the descendants of ancestors who had ruled India long (Ahmed, 2001: 15).

Second, the movements demanded (from the Muslim masses) an absolute conformity to a form of Islam that was Arab oriented (Hasan, 2011: 158)

Third and most important, these movements prompted a 'conflict in identity'. Those who had participated in the movements were both Bengali and Muslims - a conflict that returned time and again to shape the history of Bangladesh in later years (Hasan, 2011: 158)

In 1867, Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi (1833-1877) and Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (1829-1905) founded Darul Uloom (centre of the learning) popularly known as Deoband Madrasha (pl. madaris) near New Delhi. Darul Uloom was set up to teach and propagate political Islam which, later, influenced the Muslims in East Bengal. Both Nanautawi and Gangohi were deeply influenced by itinerant Islamic thinker Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi. The establishment of Deoband Madrasha in 1866 and raising it to an Uloom in 1867 was a calculated move of the orthodox ulamas to restore the lost glory of Islamic rule (Riaz, 2010: 81). Riaz argues Uloom was opposed to folk Islam, including Sufi tradition, and that of the Shi'as. The Ulama of Deoband not only adhered to Hanafi School, but also insisted that any deviation from taqlid was a serious matter of concern and must be confronted because it was no less bida't [innovation] (Riaz, 2010: 81).

The Jamiat-i-Khilafat-i-Hind (All India Khilafat Conference) and the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind (Association of religious Scholars of India) under the shade of Deoband Madrasha were active political institutions during Khilafat movement, which was launched in 1919. Jamluddin Afghani, who came to India in the late nineteenth century to propagate pan-Islamic ideas, received a favorable response from some Indian Muslim leaders (Ahmed, 2012). After the destruction of the Caliphate in the Ottoman Empire, the ulemas had played a decisive role for echoing pan-Islamism in the Indian sub-continent. This movement had made various interventions in support of Turkey, even organizing funds for Mustafa Kamal's war (Sayyid, 1997: 61). The main reason for supporting the war in Turkey was that defending Turkey had become synonymous with defending Islam (Shah, 2001: 87). With a view to protecting

Islam, many meetings were held in different parts of India. Hakim Abdur Rauf, in his speeches, made references to the troubles in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and other Muslim countries, and suggested that the object of the British government was to drive out Islam from India (Shah, 2001: 102). Qureshi has stated that when the Khilafat movement (1918-24) was at its height, thousands of British Indian Muslims, under severe emotional stress, began to emigrate to the neighboring Muslim country of Afghanistan (Qureshi, 1979: 41). Basically, in Bengal, the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement became a mass movement, which received the support of Gandhi, in which both Hindus and Muslims participated (Ahmed, 2012). But, within a short time, this mutual understanding broke down followed by a period of communal violence which occurred due to internal and external factors.

The Faraizi and Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah movements were read as a threat to British rule in India. These Islamic revivalist movements were aimed at restoring pure Islamic practices; Khilafat movement was a pan-Islamic movement. The Muslim leaders realised that Islam can be used as a very powerful tool of mass agitation. The establishment of Deoband madrasa and the cultivation of orthodox ulema also encouraged the political Islam. On the other hand, observing a unique unity between Hindus and Muslims in Khilafat movement, the baffled and scared British administration resorted to the politics of 'divide and rule' by raising inflicting a sense of Bengali nationalism in Bengal and playing one community against the other in order to foment communal tension.

Political Islam and parochial Bengali Nationalism in East Pakistan

Nineteenth century Muslim nationalism in Bengal culminated in the formation of the Muslim League party in 1906 in Dhaka (Khan, 1985: 841). Most of the Muslim League leaders and common people, especially the peasant class, welcomed the partition of Bengal in 1905. Muslim elites and peasant classes lagged behind their Hindu counterparts in terms of Socio-economic and political standing and they thought they will have a say in Eastern Bengal. By that time Bengali politics, public affairs and large part of opportunities were virtually monopolized by the Hindu Bhadrals (gentlefolk). Muslim cultivators had to live with the oppressions of Hindu

zamindars, moneylenders, and policemen (Heehs, 1997: 122). Heehs further argues that when the British announced their intention to partition Bengal, Muslims readily agreed to the proposal and they thought they would have much to gain from the new administrative arrangement, i.e., the creation of a Muslim majority province in the East (Heehs, 1997: 122). According to Khan, 'Indeed, significant development did occur in East Bengal after 1905. New institutions of higher learning were established which led eventually to a significant expansion of opportunities for Bengali Muslims in the areas of administration, education, and business' (Khan, 1985: 841). The Hindus, in fear of losing their hegemony opposed the partition of Bengal. In some places, some Hindu-Muslim riots broke out. Subsequently, in the face of severe opposition the British administration annulled the partition of Bengal in 1911, which was read by the Muslim League as a Hindu-British conspiracy. Despite the provocation of Bengal partition, communal agitation triggered off in several region of India. This could be explicated with reference to major communal outbreaks of this period: Calcutta in 1918 and 1926, Dacca in 1926 and 1930, Pabna in 1926 and Kishoreganj in 1930 (Das, 1990: 24). Frequent outbreak of communal conflicts led the British government under Lord Curzon, to take steps to polarize the Hindus and Muslims on the basis of 'two nation theory'- India or Hindustan for the Hindus and Pakistan for the Muslims. The Muslim league wanted an independent Muslim home in the subcontinent. The subcontinent received its freedom from colonial rule 1947 while compromising with the two-nation theory.

The formation of Pakistan was the hope of Bengali Muslims for stabilizing social, economic and political emancipation commensurate with their qualifications and strength. But within a very short time, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) was transformed into a captive market and population and powerful West Pakistanis established a kind of neo-colonial rule. While opposing the domination of West Pakistan the Bengali Muslims of East Pakistan tried to find a solution in Bengali linguistic nationalism. The emergence of Pakistan in 1947 was accompanied by a strong assertion of Muslim nationalism and an emphasis on Islam as the basis of identity and unity, binding together disparate groups (Murshid, 2007: 06). Islam has summed up the situation as thus: 'Here was a nation united by the common belief of its people in

the religion of Islam but at the same time a fragmented conglomeration of people speaking different languages, following different customs, belonging to different ethnic groups and even living in geographically non-contiguous territories (Islam, 1981: 57). In East Pakistan the Bengalis, irrespective of their religious affiliation, got united under the leadership of Awami Muslim League, which was later renamed Awami League with a secular touch. It is important to remember that the Jamaati-i-Islami was the only organized political force in former East Pakistan which rode on Islamic nationalism and was opposed to the secular forces and ideologies (Kabir, 1990: 121). Jamaat-e-Islami ('Jamaat') was formed in 1941 and it became a leading political organization in East Pakistan in the 1950s (Kumar, 2009: 542). Jamaat had emerged as the principal force on religion-based politics, although its leading leaders such as Golam Azam (who was educated both in a religion and secularism) and Maulana Mawdudi had supported Bengali nationalism as well. Golam Azam was among the early leaders who had submitted a memorandum to the then Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan demanding that Bangla be made a state language along with 'Urdu' (Hossain and Siddiquee, 2004: 386). For this, 'He was imprisoned in 1952 for his role in the language movement and he again suffered imprisonment in 1955 for speaking out against political repression by the Pakistan government' (Rahim, 2001: 239). Therefore, in the era of language movement we find, political Islam merged with the echo of Bengali nationalism. The ideology of Bengali nationalism sharply turned into an ethno-centric ideology in the liberation war in 1971. Jamaat was sympathetic to the united Pakistan because of religion. Therefore, it sided Pakistan, with arms and weapons supplied by the Pakistan Army, the Jamaat organized the Al-Badr, Al-Shams, and Razakars and fought pitched battles against the Mukti Bahini (freedom fighter), guerrillas, and acted hand-in-hand with the Pakistan army in carrying out one of the largest genocides in recent history (Hossain and Siddiquee, 2004: 387).

Political Islam in Independent Bangladesh (1972-1990)

Almost a year-long armed struggle and unprecedented loss of life saw the defeat of united religion-based Pakistan, and the birth of Bangladesh on 16 December 1971. A new Constitution came into

force on the principles of democracy, secularism, nationalism, and socialism; secularism was announced as one of the fundamental principles of state policy (Ahamed and Najneen, 1990; Riaz, 2004, 2008; Murshid, 2007: 11; Devine & White, 2012: 130). But soon Mujib found himself under increasing pressure from the Awami Ulema, a vocal and powerful section of Islamists within his party, for the reversal of secularist decisions that he and a few leaders around him had made on their own without widespread consultations (Khan, 1985: 845). So, Mujib eventually reversed himself and made Bangladesh more Islamic than before (Khan, 1985: 845). Towards the end of his rule, he thus made frequent references to Islam in his speeches and public utterances by using terms and idioms like Allah (the Almighty God), Inshah Allah (God willing), Bismillah (in the name of God), Tawaba (penitence) and used to end his speeches saying Khuda Hafiz (may God protect you) while dropping his symbolic valedictory expression Joy Bangla (Glory of Bengal) (Moniruzzaman, 1990: 73-74).

After the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with his family members in 1975, the first military dictator, Ziaur Rahman came to power illegally with the help of army. Thus, the symbol 'Islam' made a massive and formal entry into the political arena. As a part of Islamization of politics he even removed secularism from the Constitution and replaced it with 'absolute faith and trust in Allah' and 'Bismillah-ar-Rahman-ar-Rahim' (in the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful) to give the Constitution an Islamic colour. Apart from the constitutional changes, other symbolic measures were undertaken such as the hanging of posters in government offices with quotations from the Quran, display of Quranic verses and prophet's advice in public places, the flying of Eid-Mubarak festoons beside the national flags on Eid festivals, issuance of messages by the head of state on government on religious programmes such as I'd-i-Miladunnabi, Shab-i-Barat, and Muharram and offering of munajat (prayer) on special occasions, the compulsory broadcasting of azan (call to prayer) five times a day broadcast on state-owned radio and TV, creation of a new ministry of Religious Affairs, establishment of Islamic Foundation with research facilities, setting up of an Islamic University with an Islamic Research Centre attached to it (Ahamed and Nazneen, 1990: 796-797, Karim, 2004: 294-295). The policies of the Zia regime vis a vis Islam was one of cautious ambivalence; but that of Ershad

was a conscious effort to turn the cycle back to Islam-based nationalism (Husain, 1990: 143). The second military dictator, General Ershad, took several measures in continuing the process of Islamization. He established a national zakat board to collect tax in accordance with Islamic teachings, introduced Arabic and Islamiat in the schools, beginning with class one, emphasized on the cultural life of Bangladeshis based on Islamic principles. He made frequent visits to various shrines and mosques and extended financial support to these religious institutions, supported the pirs (holy men) and imams (religious leaders), declared Friday the weekly holiday, introduced prayers on national TV, declared Islam the state religion of Bangladesh through the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution on June 7, 1988 (Ahamed and Nazneen, 1990: 797; Karim 2004: 296). Both Zia and Ershad found in religion an important tool for legitimation of their rule.

The Jamaat-e-Islami and other Islamic political parties which were banned after the independence of Bangladesh on the basis of the constitutional principle of secularism were re-legitimized by Zia who allowed them to participate in electoral politics. With 'secularism' being dropped from the Constitution and Islam being made the state religion, Jamaat-e-Islam, the leading fundamentalist party in Bangladesh, began its activities and within a very short time it succeeded in establishing itself as a formidable force through its organizational activities and militant programmes.

The introduction of Islam in the public life of Bangladesh and the emergence of JIB as a formidable political force are inter-connected (Hasan, 2011: 161). After the independence of Bangladesh, this country had to face mounting financial difficulties. So Bangladesh had to seek aid from oil-rich Middle East countries, West Asia, and North Africa. In the middle of the 1970s when the oil prices had soared these countries accumulated enough wealth to support the groups that worked for the spread of political Islam. With all the wealth in their hands these countries targeted economically vulnerable countries like Bangladesh. Ahamed & Nazneen argue that some of them had made efforts to shape the world the way they wanted, financing missionary programmes in various Muslim countries (Ahamed and Nazneen, 1990: 806). The proliferation of Islam-based institutions and organizations, mainly of a charitable and missionary character, and the construction of new mosques

and madrasa along with the repair, extension, and beautification of old ones could be widely noticed (Ahamed and Nazneen, 1990: 806). During the Zia regime (1975-1981), the influence of the Middle Eastern countries, especially that of Saudi Arabia, on Bangladesh increased enormously. While only 78.9 million US dollars were given to Bangladesh as aid by these states, including Saudi Arabia, during 1971-1975, the amount rose to 474.7 million during 1976-81 from the same sources (Kabir, 1990: 125). Kabir argues that the political interests of the Zia regime combined with internal social pressures and external influences from its new found Arab friends encouraged the rapid growth of religion-based politics in the country (Kabir, 1990: 125).

India-Pakistan proxy-war was the second major factor for emergence of political Islam in Bangladesh. The ongoing hostility between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue is the hotspot for many years. An indigenous movement for self rule in Kashmir took militant shape in 1989 (Riaz, 2008: 77). Extra judicial killings, custodial deaths, excessive use of force, torture, rape, and arbitrary arrests by the Indian forces and the widespread rigging of the 1987 legislative elections all contributed to the radicalization of the movement (Riaz, 2008: 77). Riaz states that after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan came in the open in its patronage to militant groups like Lasker-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad among others in Kashmir (Riaz, 2008: 77). This proxy-war instigated the rise of Islamist militant groups in Bangladesh as well.

Thirdly, the sudden rise of national and international support to the madrasas in Bangladesh hugely contributed to spread the message of political Islam and consolidation of Islamic orthodoxy. Over a period of 32 years (1972- 2004), the number of post-primary madrasas grew by 732 percent (Kumar, 2009: 543; Karim, 2004: 297; Riaz, 2008: 37). Between 1983 and 1993, the growth was almost 100 percent (Riaz, 2008: 38). In the same period the growth of Dakhil madrasas has been an astounding 1103 percent (Kumar, 2009: 543; Riaz, 2008: 38). Over the same time, enrolments in primary schools doubled but those in Dakhil madrasas increased thirteen times; per head public expenditure on students of the government middle class educational institutions was Tk. 3000 as against Tk. 5000 in madrasas (Barkat, 2013: 10). The Aliya madrasa

- a government supported and supervised institution modeled after the Calcutta madrasa - included Bangla, English, Math, and Science apart from theology in its textbook curriculum. Thus the Islamic forces maintained strong control over various public and private universities throughout Bangladesh. On the other hand, the Qwami madrasa - officially unrecognized madrasa modeled after the Deoband madrasa - focuses exclusively on religious education and runs without government support. This auto generated Islamic scholars are not capable of coping with the demands of the competitive world. Karim estimated that the Quomi madrasa number around another 15000 and unofficial sources estimate that they have an enrollment of more than two million students (Karim, 2004: 298). While these madrasas do not accept government funds, they have received patronage from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Libya, and also receive private donations from overseas Bangladeshis residing in the United Kingdom and the Middle East (Karim, 2004: 298). After returning home, many Bangladeshis patronize the private Qoumi madrasa. Those with interest in politics also support the madrasas in order to garner votes in local elections (Karim, 2004: 298). The widespread poverty in the country makes way for the global Islamic forces to penetrate deep into rural Bangladesh and make them easy prey for the fundamentalist forces which operate with massive money power and sophisticated organizational skill.

Political Islam in contemporary Bangladesh

After the surrender of military dictator Ershad in the face of a mass upheaval in 1990, the journey of democracy to Bangladesh took a new turn, because it was common people who expressed their anger aloud. But after the four parliamentary elections in 1991s, 1996s, 2001s, and 2008s under the caretaker Governments, Bangladesh's democracy is still in paradoxical mess and unfathomable inconsistency. Democracy in Bangladesh is still tottering because of several factors like a) irreconcilable division between the parties; b) lack of internal democracy within the parties; d) weak of political institutions; e) widespread social and economic inequality; and f) corruption (Barkull). Use of muscle power and lumpenisation of politics, annihilation of the political opponents are part of everyday political life in Bangladesh. In order to improve the situation many foreign organizations and agencies

with specialized knowledge enter Bangladesh to work in the areas of women's advancement, poverty eradication, good governance, human development, social protection and so on. Previously many Middle Eastern countries used to be major allies of Bangladesh in terms of disbursing foreign aid during the army regime, but with the formation of a democratic government in 1990s, many Western countries have started taking their place (Hasan, 2011: 162).

After the attack on Twin Tower in 2001, Islamic militant activities have dispersed globally and Bangladesh is no exception. In Bangladesh alone while the number of Islamic organizations was only 11 in 1970 the number has increased to 100 in 2006 (Riaz, 2008: 29). Though the Islamist parties have increased in number in recent years, only seven of them are politically active. These are JIB, Islamic Front Bangladesh, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolan, Bangladesh Muslim League, Jaker Party, Jomiote Ulamaye Islam Bangladesh, and Islami Oikko Jote (IOJ). However, among these Islamic parties, in the 1991 election the JIB and the IOJ won 18 and 1 seat respectively out of 300 seats; in the 1996, 2001, elections, the same parties owned 3 and 1 seat, 17 and 2 seats respectively. In the ninth national parliamentary election, which was held in 29 December, 2008, the BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) won only 29 seats while its former alliance, the JIB was the only Islamist parties to open its account with only 2 seats. On the other hand, BAL (Bangladesh Awami League) popularly known as the mainstream secular party with centre-left ideology, headed by Sheikh Hasina, daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, received a massive mandate winning 230 seats in 2008 election. These facts show that Islamic groups that adopt violent means are not at all popular in Bangladesh.

Yet political Islam which receives patronage from global players is looked into as an alternative mode of politics which is heavily based on religious fundamentalism and is strong enough to sabotage the process of consolidation of modernist democracy. Many clandestine religious extremist groups maintain their fundamental doctrinal breeding by trans-national channels which strengthen their roots in contemporary Bangladesh. The extremist groups dream of establishing a sharia-based Islamist nation.

In 2002 Bertil Lintner warned that Bangladesh will gradually be taken over by religious extremism. Some sources have identified

33 Islamic extremist groups in Bangladesh. Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI-B), one of the most extremist groups, came into limelight through a press conference held at the Jatiya Press Club (in Dhaka) on 30 April, 1992, pressing for converting Bangladesh into an Islamic state (*South Asia Terrorism Portal* [SATP], 2013). According to Kabir, there are more than 15000 militant activists belonging to the Harkatul Jihad; few of them were government officials. This organization has trained 25000 youths in the last 14 years. They introduce themselves as 'Banglar Taleban' (Taliban of Bengal). In 2001 election campaign they used this provocative slogan: 'Amra hobo Taliban, Bangla hobe Afgan' (we will be the Taliban, Bangladesh will become Afghanistan) (Datta, 2007: 158). The group has become notorious for masterminding violent attacks on the Hindu minority in Bangladesh as well as on moderate Bengali Muslims (Lintner, 2002). After receiving death-threat from Harkat the Muslim writer Taslima Nasrin fled the country. The outfit organized an attack on the British High Commissioner in Bangladesh in May, 2004, and made an attempt to murder the popular poet Shamsur Rahman at his residence on 18 January 1999. It organized another grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Dhaka on 21 August 2004 killing 23 people, and organized a failed attempt to assassinate Shaikh Hasina (Lintner, 2002, 2002; *The Daily Star*, 2007: 1; Bhattacharya, 2011; SATP, 2013). The Harkat group has links with banned Islamic militant groups in Pakistan (like Jaish-e-Muhammed, and Loskar-e-Toiba) and in the Middle East (Lintner, 2002).

Bangladesh's main militant outfit, the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami was formed in 1992, allegedly with financial support from Osama Bin Laden himself. There are close links between this group and Al Qaeda, which has officially declared a 'holy war' against the United States on February 23, 1998. The other notable signatories to the declaration were Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri (leader of the Jihad Group in Egypt), Rifa'i Ahmad Taha Aka Abu Yasir (Egyptian Islamic Group), and Sheikh Mir Hamzah [Secretary of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan] (Lintner, 2002). Following the ban of Huji by USA, in 2002, Bangladesh government banned it on 17 October, 2005 (*The Daily Star*, 2007: 1). Even after the ban Huji activists operate in Bangladesh using different names. Some sources claim that the banned outfit members of Huji-B are operating under a new name: Tamirut-at-Deen (*bdnews* 24, October 7, 2013)

Another militant group JMB (Jamaatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh) was formed in 1998. The JMB opposes democracy but propagates establishment of Islamic rule in Bangladesh; the leave leaflets at various bombing spots which include statements about their objectives. The supporters of this group threw bombs at two separate cultural events in Sherpur and Jamalpur on 12 January 2005, and on jatra (band of cultural troop) performances at Bogra Natore on 15 January 2005 (Singh, 2006: 2). This group organized 500 bomb explosions within a span of 30 minutes throughout Bangladesh on 17 August 2005 (Riaz, 2008: 98; Datta, 2007: 145). Later in 2005, it targeted the country's judiciary - court buildings, judges, and government officials - while pressing for a demand for immediate release of around 400 JMB suspects, arrested after the August countrywide blast (Roul, 2011). Under the severe pressure from donors and diplomatic wings, Khaleda-Nijami government banned the JMB on 23 February 2005. Riaz (2008) argues that the militants of JMB or JMJB (Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh) were trained in Afghanistan, Pakistan and that explains how they could organize nation-wide bombing. The execution of seven of its captured members by Bangladesh government in 2007 could not arrest their activities. On 5 January 2011, an unknown member of JMB threatened to assassinate Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and to blow up Chittagong Central Jail and the Chittagong court building unless the demand for release of JMB cadres within a month was met by the authorities (*Daily Star* 2011: 1). In 2012, five top leaders of JMB were arrested on charge of plotting to foil the ongoing war crimes trial by destabilizing law and order (*Daily Star*, 2012: 1).

Another global Islamist party Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT) was formed in 1953 by Islamic thinker Takiuddin Al Nakhani. The main objective of this party is to establish Khalifah State which will be based on Islamic principles. In Bangladesh, it launched its chapter as Hizbut Tahrir Bangladesh (HTB) on 17 November 2001 (Hasan 2011: 164). Most of the workers of this organization are University teachers and students. Muhiuddin Ahmed is the kingpin of HUT in Bangladesh, who teaches in Dhaka University, wherefrom he not only continues his notorious activities but also recruits and motivates university and madrasa students for *jihad* against USA, West and Jews (Lintner, 2002; Choudhury, 2008). This outfit attacked the then Bangladesh British High Commissioner on 21

May 2004 (*Daily Star*, 2008: 1). One of its pamphlets titled 'how the *khilafat* will solve Bangladesh's Economic Crisis' argues that the present democratic system does not work for the welfare of the vulnerable people of Bangladesh. It also claims that the crises that face the Bangladeshis are the result of a conspiracy worked out by the Western forces and this justifies *jihad* against the West. This outfit has been banned in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Pakistan, Tunisia, Libya, Turkey, the former Soviet states of Central Asia, and in Bangladesh on October 22, 2009 for carrying out anti-state, anti government, anti-people, and anti-democratic activities (Hasan, 2011: 101).

Rapid growth of foreign Muslim NGOs under the shade of humanitarian works has become a means to supply foreign money to the indigenous extremist Islamist groups in Bangladesh. Some 575 registered Islamic NGOs were active all over the country in 2005 which receive funds from Libya, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Iran, Egypt, India, Pakistan, USA and UK (Kumar, 2009: 905). It is estimated that 34 major foreign funded Islamic NGOs annually receive 200 crore (approximately 40 million dollar) from donor countries/organizations (Riaz, 2008: 85; Kumar, 2009: 905). At least ten NGOs were identified for channeling funds for various Islamists extremist outfits in the country (Kumar, 2009: 906). The controversial UK based NGO, Green Crescent, came into spotlight after the Rapid Action Battalion unearthed a mini-ammunition factory inside a madrasa-cum-orphanage in remote village of Vola on March 24 2009 (Kumar, 2009: 906). These NGOs construct mosques, madrasas, orphanages-cum-madrasas, diagnostic centre, educational institutions, financial institution throughout Bangladesh and most of them have been proved to be the centers of militant activities. Barkat has pointed out that the economic institutions run by the Islamic fundamentalist groups in Bangladesh, earn 54.2 million US dollar annual net profit where as NGOs 41.6 earn million (Barkat, *Secular Voice Bangladesh*). The militant outfits thus operate with a very strong economic support base and this gives them power to influence poverty-stricken average Bangladeshi Muslims.

'Hefajate Islam Bangladesh' (protector of Islam) is another Islamic extremist organization that came into media spotlight in 2011. HIB is a quomi madrasa based organization and its headquarters is in

Chittagong, the port city of Bangladesh. This fundamentalist organization is headed by Ahmad Shafi, the director of Darul-Ulum-Moinul-Islam (Hathazari madrasa) and its Nayeb-e-Ameer is Mufti Izharul Islam Chowdhury. This madrasa was modeled after Darul Uloom Deoband. This organization opposed the 2009 Women Development Policy, which proposed to grant Muslim women equal rights to inheritance, the secular education policy and propagated religion-based politics. In 2013 the HIB came to the surface opposing the 'Shahbag Movement'² which was demanding capital punishment for Bangladesh Liberation War criminals and a ban on the Jamaat-e-Islami (its top leaders are under trial on war crime charges). Abdul Kader Mollah, one of the war criminals, has already been hanged. The HIB supported the collaborators of Pakistani army in 1971 who were executed under International War Tribunals. Even they tagged the organizers, bloggers (albeit, most of them even do not know what 'blog' is and 'bloggers' are), online activists who were supporters of this movement as 'atheist' and demanded their immediate arrest for defaming Islam. Hefajat burst into the political scene in 2013 with its 13- point charter of demands. The demands, included among others, inclusion of the phrase 'Absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah' in the Constitution as one of the fundamental principles of state policy, legislation for providing death penalty for blasphemy, scrapping of laws of women rights and the proposed education policy, declaration of Qadianis (Ahmadiyyas) as non-Muslim, banning of all foreign culture including free mixing of men and women and candlelit vigil, stopping of anti-Islamic activities by NGOs and by Christian missionaries at Chittagong Hill Tracts, banning of setting up sculptures at intersections, colleges and universities across the country. Historically speaking, Hefajat's demands and its implementations follow the legacy of JIB which wants to convert Bangladesh into a Talibanized, Islamic country.

In support of its 13-point demand, HIB organized a long march on 6 April 2013 from Chittagong, Sylhet, and Rajshahi to Motijheel area in Dhaka where more than a million people had gathered. Taking a violent turn the members attacked at a rally of 'Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee' in Dhaka from their procession, attacked 'Projonmo Chattar' in Shahbag and even beat up a female journalist of Ekushe TV, named Nadia Sharmin because of her presence in male gatherings. On 5 May 2013 the members of the same outfit

clashed with police in Dhaka right after the mid-day prayer, uprooted numerous trees from road dividers, damaged the small shops of pavement hawkers, set fire to the office of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), vandalized and torched many vehicles and even burnt thousands of Quran, Hadith, and many religious books adjoining Baitul Mukarram National Mosque. Those who claim to be the 'keepers of Islam' had set fire to almost 55 bookstores destroying more than 55000 books (bdnews 24, May 6, 2013). These programmes, which perpetrated unprecedented violence, were organized jointly by HIB, JIB and BNP (*Daily Star*, 2013: 7, *Prothom Alo*, 2013: 11). HIB has been supported and financed by JIB (*Prothom Alo*, 2013: 11). Like JIB, HIB also emphasizes on the establishment of Taliban style rule in Bangladesh. Most of these organizations have direct links with global militant outfits. Maulana Habibur Rahman, a madrasa principal of Sylhet, one of the main organizers of Hefajat-e-Islam's Dhaka long march, revealed his links with Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami and his meetings with Osama Bin Laden. In one of the interviews Habibur gave a detailed account of his visit to Afghanistan in 1988 (*Daily Star*, 2013: 1). He said, 'An invitation from Harkat-ul-jihad al Islami made it possible for me to make the fortunate trip to Afghanistan.... Those of us who visited the Afghan war fields during the trip are Shaikhul Hadith, Aatur Rahman Khan, Sultan Jaok, Abdul Mannan, Habibullah, myself and three others' (Ibid). Hefajat Nayeb-e-Ameer Mufti Izharul Islam Chowdhury, who were linked with Huji, set up a private funded madrasa in Chittagong. In this madrasa a hand-made bomb exploded when students of that madrasa were making bombs (*Daily Star*, 2013: 1).

JIB and HIB are now under some pressure, since BAL government has started prosecution of long awaited trial of 1971 war criminals. Most of the war criminals are the leaders JIB of whom one is already hanged on 12 December, 2013 after 42 years of liberation of the country; other war criminals are awaiting trial and punishment. If all war criminals are punished morale of some of the extremist outfits will break.

The fundamental observation in this section is that the militant organizations which propagate political Islam are out to destabilize the democratic-secular-modernist fabric of Bangladesh. Most of the militant outfits have external links and are heavily funded by

some global Islamic organizations and this makes the task of handling these outfits difficult for the secular-democratic forces and the state. The rise of political Islam or the phenomenon called 'Islamnationalistic' has been aptly summed up by Muhammad Ayoob as thus:

Political Islam is a modern phenomenon, with roots in the socio-political conditions in the Muslim countries in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The attraction of political Islam increased as the government elites failed to deliver on their promises of economic progress, political participation, and personal dignity to expectant populations emerging from colonial bondage (Ayoob, 2004: 2).

Furthermore, Ayoob emphasizes the conflicting relation between the 'political Islam' versus 'hegemonic West' (Ayoob, 2004: 2). In present day Bangladesh, which is marked by persisting economic discrimination, lack of political participation, and lack of security, there is little hope of peaceful democratic society. In the absence of economic emancipation the common masses often fall prey to militant groups. One can note that a large number of activists of Hefajat represent the rural poor who do not have access to any form of capital (economic, social or political). The state does not do enough to secure their fundamental rights. No surprise, Bangladesh has achieved three time championship for being the most corrupt countries in the world according to the Transparency International. Corruption gives space to injustice, radicalization, whereas insecurity makes people God-fearing. In this context I would quote Hossain, who has said: 'The spread of corruption, the inefficiency and degradation in government services and the ensuing waning of confidence in the political system have created a fertile ground for groups outside the government to supply social and economic services, which are delivered along with ideas, values, and cultural elements in conformity with the radicalizers' ideology' (Hossain, 2007: 24-25).

Conclusion

Looking at the historical records since the beginning of 19th century one can notice that the seeds of political Islam were sown in the colonial period in the Indian subcontinent. The British

miscalculations and the policy of playing one religious community against the other, the Islamic revivalist movements, setting up of Islamic institutions, pan-Islamic movements, Global oil crisis of 1970s, the patronage of the Islamic organizations by the oil rich countries of the Middle East, Soviet-Afghan war in the 1990s, the 9/11 attack, the Kashmir war, the establishment of close links, both material and ideological, between the local militant groups with militant groups that work globally, and Western hegemony, the economic vulnerability of the masses in Bangladesh and many more factors have contributed to the proliferation of political Islam in Bangladesh. In colonial period, the exploited ordinary Muslim peasants formed 'Mujahid forces' in the name of Islam to express their anger against the exploiters. The tenacious bigot ulemas took initiatives in setting up Deoband madrasas in every corner of the country for imparting ideological and extremist training. The 'khilafat' movement was another turning point for the spread and consolidation of political Islam; the Deobandis were the key players for popularizing pan-Islamism in Bengal. The oil-rich Middle-east countries provided generous financial support for establishing madrasas, and mosques with a plan to keep political Islam alive. The youth of Bangladesh received commando training in Pakistan from the Talibans in the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan fought alongside the Afgan Talibans against Socialist (most of the Muslims of Bangladesh believe socialist means 'infidel') Soviet in 1990s, and then returned home as Gaji, to work for the international militant organizations like Huji, JMB.

However, the strength of the average Bangladeshis is that they favour democracy, pluralism, peace and tolerance and other ideals of modernism. The state draws support from the democratic spirit of the large majority of Bangladeshis and takes recourse to administrative and legal and political means to corner the disruptive forces, both local and global. The interference of the global players, both Islamic and non-Islamic (Western), makes the task of sustaining democratic political ethos difficult. Shahbag movement, the trial and conviction of the war criminals are some the silver linings in the recent history of Bangladesh.

Notes

1. Although the term 'political Islam' is much more disputed, it is used here to exemplify multifarious unprecedented irruption of contemporaneous

domestic politics where Islam is being put to use for political purposes by Islamic scholars as well as Islamic political parties.

2. 'Shahbag movement' is a non-violent, secular-humanistic, and a mass awakening civil society's movement designated by 'bloggers and online activists' networks'. This movement was basically born to vehement the rejection of the International Crime Tribunal's (ICT) verdict to condemned Abdul Qader Mollah, Assistant General Secretary of Jamaat-i-Islam to lifetime imprisonment and people demanded he who killed hundreds of people and raped a young girl during Bangladesh's Liberation war, to be put to death.

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Ancient Kirata and Kirata Today: A case of the Lepchas of West Bengal

D. C. Roy

Based on textual interpretation and an analysis of the geo-spatial, socio-cultural conditions the paper examines the relative position of Lepchas in Eastern Nepal and in Eastern Himalaya (Sikkim and Darjeeling) while dealing with the question whether the Lepchas could be included in the Kirata group of people.

Keywords: Puranic texts, Kirata, Eastern Himalaya, Suniti Kumar Chatterji, Kirata Region, Lepcha.

Introduction

Kirata is a generic or composite term which geographically indicates a specific area in the eastern Himalayan region and sociologically it identifies some communities who reside in this area. Kirata is an ancient term and has been mentioned in Yajurveda, Mahabharata and Puranas of Hindu tradition. But there is no unanimity among the scholars and researchers over the origin, settlement pattern, specification of linguistic group and other details of the community which have been included under the composite word Kirata. In its broad-spectrum Kiratas include all inhabitants of the Eastern Himalayan region starting from Nepal in the west up to Nagaland and Burma in the east. So all those who live in Nepal, Sikkim, Hills of Darjeeling, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Burma can be termed as Kirata in the broad sense of the term. But in its narrow sense Kirata region includes the eastern part of Nepal bordering Sikkim and Darjeeling and the communities that reside in this region like the Rai, Yakkha, Limbu and other are known as Kirata. All such communities who are included under Kiratas are non-Aryan and non-Hindu people and possess distinct culture, religion, language and tradition.

On the Eastern Himalayan region a good number of studies have been carried out on the ethnicity, religion, politics, history and various other socio-anthropological aspects but no systematic study has so far been done on the Kiratas and there is lamentable dearth of literature on the life and problems Kirata groups of people. Available literature uses the term Kirata but does not specify the ethnic groups that are included or excluded. The present article aims to analyze the Kirata tribes in both broad and narrow senses and examine if the Lepchas, a Tibeto-Burman linguistic group of Eastern Himalayan region, could be included under the umbrella term Kirata.

Ancient or broad meaning of Kirata

The term Kirata has been derived from the Sanskrit words 'Kiriāt', 'Kirant', 'Kiryat', 'Kyranti', or 'Kiranti', which was used to designate hunter people of the mountain. Early reference of the term Kirata is found in Yajurveda (Sukla Yajurveda, Vajasaneyi Samhita). Kirata also finds mention in Atharva Veda. Kirata is an ancient term and its reference has been found in the classical Indian texts like Mahabharata, Ramayana, Purana and even in Ptolemy's writings. Macdonell & Keith (1912) mentioned that the pronominalized Tibeto-Burman language speaking *Kirāta* people are found first in several of the Vedic (1000-500 BC) texts [(the Vajasaneyi Samhitā (xxx.16) of the Shukla-yajur-veda, Atharva-veda (x.4.14), the Taittiriya Brāhmana (iii. 4.12.1) of the Krishna-yajur-veda) and the Atharva-veda (10.4.14)]. Chatterji (1974:58) notes that a Mongoloid ruler named Bhagadatta participated in the Mahabharata war (950 BC) in Kuruchetra.

The five Pandavas spent their years of disguise in palaces of Kirata king Viratha in the Terai of eastern Nepal. During those periods, there were only Kiratas in the eastern Himalayan region whom the Aryans called Mlechha and the region as Mlechha desh i.e. country of Mlech or Mech people. Mlechha is a derogatory term used for the tribes living in the Himalayan region.

In the map given by Macdonell and Keith (1912) the so-called Kiratas are shown to have occupied western Nepal in the Vedic period. Here, the name Kirata simply means the Tibeto-Burman pronominalized language speaking Mongoloid peoples, the

predecessors of the present day Kanauri, Lahuli, Manchadi, Chaudangsi, Byangsi, Raji, Raute, Kham, Magar, Bhujel, Chepang and Newar speaking peoples. It is unlikely that the Vedic Aryans (1500-500 BC) could have been the neighbors of the Kirata language speaking populations of eastern Nepal although today the word Kirata only refers to them (Pokharel, M.P).

The old Sanskrit word has been used in two different meanings. The first meaning identifies the highlanders and referred to a form of Shiva. There is a complex link between Shiva and the mountain and tribals. The other meaning, which is most commonly used in literature, refers in a disparaging manner to the Himalayan tribe without further precision (Schlemmer, 2004).

According to *Markandey Puran*, the famous seven Kirata kingdoms during the Mahabharata time were: 1. Aswakut or Kabul, 2. Kulya or Kulu Valley, 3. Matsya or North Bihar Paundra or Bengal, 4. Sumer or Assam, 5. Malak or Mlek or Lohit, 6. Kinner Kirat or Garhwal and 7. Nepal. Thus, Kirat region included a vast geographical area and all those who reside in these areas were known as Kiratas.

Manu Smriti mentions about Narakashur, the first Kirata king of Mlechha desh, who built his capital at Pragjyotishpur, the present day Assam. King Bhagadatta, the son of King Narakasur, led two regiments of Kirat and Chinese soldiers and fought on the side of Kauravas against Pandavas in the battle of Kuruchetra. In the battle king Bhagadatta was slain. Another Kirata king Jitedasti, who was fighting the Kauravas, was also slain and the Kirata force fought under the command of Bhimsen.

As per Kirata folklore Lord Krishna of Mahabharata sent a strong force of Yadava tribe under the command of Bhuktaman to conquer the kingdom of Banashur, the first Kirata king who ruled central Nepal. Bhuktaman attacked and killed Banashur and established new Yadav kingdom in central Nepal for eight generations.

There is no unanimity on the route of migration of Kiratas in their present location of Eastern Himalayan tracts. T.B. Subba is of the view that 'there was a Kirata substratum in the eastern Himalayas, which absorbed migrants from different directions at different

periods of history. It is also indicated that such migrations occurred in trickles: the glaciers on the north and the long malarial terai in the south must have dissuaded many aspirants from migrating to the Himalayas. It is not difficult to visualise that the indigenous people moved about on account of shifting cultivation, pastoralism and trade' (Subba 1999: 24). Whichever might have been the route of migration, it has been accepted by all that the Kiratas have the Mongoloid origin and they are not Aryan.

In his *Kirata-Jana-Krti* (1951) Suniti Kumar Chatterji has discussed about the settlement pattern of the Kiratas. He has written: 'During the centuries immediately before Christ, and in the early Christian centuries, the Kiratas were known to the Hindu world as a group of people whose original home was in the Himalayan slopes and in the mountains of the East, in Assam in particular, who were yellow in colour and presented a distinct type of culture. They had spread all over the plains of Bengal up to the sea, and appear to have penetrated as far as West Bengal' (Chatterjee, 1935: 35). In another place, the Prof. Chatterji has specified the region over which the Kiratas were in majority saying: 'They had occupied the southern tracts of the Himalayas and the whole of north Eastern India, North Bihar contiguous to Nepal and to the north of Ganges, the greater part of Bengal, and Assam, including the areas through which the Ganges (the Padma or Padda of the present day) passed into the sea. Eastern Nepal and the Lauhitya or the Brahmaputra Valley were the lands specially connected with them. The Greeks in the 1st century A.D. had heard of them (during their visits to Western India and South India). As a wild people with the characteristic flat nose of the Mangol race, living to the north-east of Orissa, by the sea, possibly in the delta of the Ganges' (Chatterjee, 1951: 36-37).

If we take a geographical division of the present day Eastern Himalayan region Kiratas are found in Nepal, hills and foothills of Darjeeling, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Linguistically Kirata tribes fall under Sino-Tibetan family which has been categorized into two groups - Tibeto-Burman and Siamese Chinese. For those who live in Nepal, Prof S.K.Chatterji (1951) gave detailed description about the Newars and sporadically mentioned about the Magars, Gurungs, Rais, Dhimals, Khanbus, Lepchas, and so on.

Descriptions are available for the Tibetans and the Lepchas of Sikkim and Koches in the foothills of Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Extensive analysis of Ahoms in particular and other tribes of Assam like the Bodos, Kukis, Koches, Meches, Chutiyas are available. Khasi, Jaintia and Garo of Meghalaya; Manipuris of Manipur; Tipra and Bodo of Tripura; other small tribes like Abor, Miri, Aka, Dafla, Naga, Kuki, Mikir, Mizo, Kachari of North East India find mention under the broad category Kirat. Chemjong (1966) includes almost all the Mongoloid groups of Nepal like 'Lepcha, Maangar, Gurung, Tamang, Sunuwar and Hayu under the umbrella term Kirata.

Both the communities under Kiratas and their geographical spread remain inconclusive and unsolved. T.B.Subba writes: 'while Chatterjee associates them with the northern Himalayas, he does not negate the view of Gopal Chandra Praharaj who locates them in Northern India nor does he refute Jnanendra Mohan Das who claims that their ancient habitat was 'the Eastern Himalayan tracts, including Sikkim and Bhutan, and Manipur and other adjacent tracts, which are exactly the lands of Mongoloid settlement in India' (Chatterjee, 1951:18, as cited in Subba, 1999: 25).

Contemporary or narrow meaning of Kirata

Although Kirata is an ancient term in its modern meaning, coverage and significance it is substantially different from its earlier connotation. In this section, we would try to (a) identify the geographical area (popularly known as Kirata region) over which the Kiratas are spread out, and (b) identify the ethnic groups which are included under the generic term Kirata in the modern time.

(a) Kirata region

Tracing the Kirata history it is found that the ancestral homeland of the Kirata was in Sapta Sindhu (present day Jammu Kashmir and Himachal in northwest India), which was called Indus-Saraswati Region over 5000 years ago (Tiwari, 2002). The seventh Mandala of the Rigveda contains references to the Battle of the Ten Kings (notably, hymns 18 and 83), where king Suda defeated a confederation of hostile Aryan and Dasyu tribes. In other word the battle of the Ten Kings was between the Aryans, who conform

to the Vedic teachings and those who did not. Kiratas joined the 'Dasyu', who were non-Aryans and had a culture different from Vedic culture. Rig-Veda mentions that in the famous war between Kirata emperor Sambara and king Divo-das of Sindhu-Saraswoti Region, Lord Indra helped the latter. Sage Bharadwaja was Divo-dasa's royal priest. He had ordered the King to annihilate the Kiratas from the northern frontier of Sapta Sindhu. Thus, the Aryans of Early Rig-Vedic times kept on moving towards the east, fighting with both Kirata as well as Nishadhas (Indo-Austroloids). The Kiratas, on the other hand, marched towards the east of Himalayas and arrived in present day Northeast Himalayan region.

The first Kirata king was Yalambar, who fought at the second great war of Kuruchetra on the Kaurava side and was killed by Krishna. The last Kirata king was Gasti who was a weak ruler and was overran by the Sombashi ruler Nimisha and brought an end to the Kirata dynasty (Tiwari, 2002). The Kiratas lost control over the Kathmandu valley and moved eastward to settle in small principalities of Wallo Kirata, Maj Kirata and Pallo Kirata. Later, in 1769, Wallo Kirata and Maj Kirata and in 1774 Pallo Kirata signed treaty with Gorkha king Prithvinarayan Shah who unified Nepal in its present form. The Gorkha king Prithvinarayan Shah captured Wallo Kirata first which lies in the east of Kathmandu and was the stronghold of the Sunuwar, Thami, Chepang and Hayu communities. This act of horror surprised the Rais and Yakkhas of Maj Kirata or central Kirata but they fought bravely and was about to win the battle. King Prithvinarayan Shah used more troops consisting of Gurungs and Magars from Kathmandu and used guns and muskets and ultimately captured Maj Kirata. The extreme eastern part of Nepal, Pallo Kirata, was the stronghold of Limbu, Dhimal and Lepchas and came under Gorkha rule in 1774 and peace was established in the region. Many communities with their distinct identity inhabited the Kirata region. It was a common practice that all the communities use their ethnic community name as their surname. The Gorkha ruler gave new title to these communities; the Khambu Rai got the title Jimder; Yakkha Rai became Dewan; Sunuwar Rai got Mukhiya; Yakhumba Limbu became Subba and the Rong Pa became Lepcha. None of the ethnic community use Kirata as their title.

The present day Kirata region constitutes the eastern part of Nepal,

bordering India. In 2007, when Nepal became a secular country, many suggestions had come up about the formation of the provinces and their boundaries. Most draft maps have shown Kirata region as a separate province. For example the maps prepared by Nepal Communist Party (Maoist), Amresh Kumar Singh, Gobinda Neupane, Kumar Yonzone and others have shown the eastern part of Nepal, bordering India, as Kirata Region (Rimal, 2007). The ten eastern districts out of total seventy five districts of Nepal that lie between Darjeeling district and Sikkim in the east and Dudh-Koshi river in the west has been marked as Kirata region or Kirat-Autonomous Region. The ten districts are: Solukhumbu, Okhaldhunga, Khotang, Dhankuta, Bhojpur, Sankhuwasabha, Taplejung, Terhathum, Panchthar and Ilam. Total area of the region is 15,860 square kms., which is 10.77 percent of the total geographical area of the country. The population of Kirata region is 17, 57,144, which is 7.59 percent of total population of Nepal.

(b) Kirata ethnic groups

The present Kirata region in the eastern part of Nepal bordering India is constituted of ten districts of Nepal. The major ethnic group reside in the region are Rai, Limbu, Sunuwar, Sherpa, Tamang, Chhetri, Magar, Newar, Brahmin (hill) and Yakkha. Some other communities reside in the Kirata region but they are insignificant in number.

We have used religion as one of the markers of identifying the ethnic groups under the generic term Kirata. The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) could identify eight different religious groups in Nepal, namely, Hindu, Buddhist, Islam, Kirati, Jain, Christian, Sikh, Bahai and Others. Kirata religion is the animistic form of traditional belief where all the objects such as tree, stone, wind etc are believed to have souls. The Kiratas worship all such natural objects as god.

Kirata religion has been included in the census since 1991 and the followers of Kirata religion have increased from 3, 18,389 (1.72% of total population of Nepal) to 8,18,106 (3.60% of total population of Nepal) i.e. an increase of 157% in one decade, i.e. between 1991 and 2001. Ethnic consciousness among the population of Nepal has been reflected in decline of the population under Hindu category and the consequent increase of the followers of Kirata

religion. The proportion of the followers of Hindu religion in Nepal has decreased from 88.87 per cent (73,18,392) in 1952 to 87.69 per cent (82,54,403) in 1961 and then increased to 89.39 per cent (1,03,30,009) in 1971 and further increased to 89.50 per cent (1,34,45,787) in 1981. The proportion of Hindu population on the other hand decreased to 86.51 per cent (1, 59, 96,653) in 1991 and further to 80.62 per cent (1, 83, 30,121) in 2001. Although the absolute number of Hindu population has increased over the census periods their relative proportion has decreased in recent years – a reflection of the trend that the Kiratas want to distinguish them from the Hindu. Thus, both the absolute number of Kirata and their proportion to total population have increased during 1991-2001. The Buddhism and Kirata religions appear to be increasingly invoked in the ethnic identity politics in Nepal after 1990. Out of the total 2,27,36,934 enumerated populations in the 2001 census, 1,83,30,121 (80.6%) are Hindu 24,42,520 are Buddhist (10.74%), 9,54,023 (4.2%) are Muslim and 8,18,106 (3.60%) are Kiratas.

In 2001 census the major ethnic groups that follow the Kirata religion are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Major ethnic groups following Kirata religion by number and percentage, 2001 Census.

<i>Ethnic Group</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Kirata Religion Followers</i>
Major four groups		
Limbu	359,379	310,108 (86.3%)
Yakha	17,003	13,846 (81.4%)
Rai	635,157	450,283 (70.9%)
Sunuwar	95,254	16,553 (17.4%)
Total	1106793	790790 (71.4%)
Other groups above 1000 followers		
Dhimal	19537	1494 (7.65%)
Magar	1622421	2789 (0.17%)
Kami	895954	1302 (0.14%)
Tamang	1282304	1000 (0.08%)
Total	4927009	797375 (16.18%)
Total followers of Kirat religion:		
	818,106	797375 (97.46%)

Total population of Nepal:**22736934****818106 (3.59%)***Source: CBS, Nepal, 2001 Census*

Limbu, Yakha, Rai and Sunuwar collectively call themselves as Kiratas or declare their religion as Kirata. Table-1 shows that only 17.4% of Sunuwar population follows Kirata religion. As high as 86.3 percent Limbus follows Kirata religion, followed by the Yakkhas (81.4%) and Rais (70.9%). According to the 2001 census, 79.5% of Sunuwars are Hindus. Nevertheless, these four groups together represent 96.7% of the total Kirata religion followers. In addition, 29.10% of Hayu, 14.6% of Thami and 7.64% of Dhimal population follow Kirata religion. Among the other ethnic groups with at least 1000 persons following Kirata religion are Magar, Kami and Tamang. But they constitute a very negligible proportion of their total population. The followers of Kirata religion among the Lepchas is only 0.14 percent.

Limbu, Yakkha, Rai and Sunuwar are the main followers of Kirata religion. There are twelve other ethnic groups who also follow the Kirata religion and they are: Thami, Lepcha, Majhi, Bote, Magar, Sherpa, Chepang, Raji, Tamang, Gurung, Kumal and Danuwar. One can notice that the proportion of population who follow Kirata religion has increased for all the ethnic groups (core nationalities and the peripheral nationalities) over the 1991-2001 period. The four-core nationalities comprise as high as 96.7% of the total Kirata religion followers in Nepal. All the remaining twelve peripheral Kirata nationalities comprise only 3.3 percent of the Kirata followers.

The Kiratas, who were once the dominant political and cultural force in Nepal and ruled over the Kathmandu Valley at the time of Buddha, are generally believed to have been the progenitors of various presently Tibeto-Burman peoples (Davids & van Driem, 1985: 117). Although Kirata influence was once wide-spread in central Nepal, at present they are mostly confined to eastern Nepal. Rai, Limbu, Yakkha and Sunuwar have common racial and linguistic origins as well as a body of oral tradition which show traces of common ancestry and identities (Madan et al., 2008: 13). On the basis of literacy rate, housing unit, land holding status and

economic assets, the Indigenous nationalities of Nepal are grouped in five categories: endangered group, highly marginalized group, marginalized group, disadvantaged group and advantaged group. All the major three core Kirata ethnic groups, i.e., Limbu, Yakkha and Rai, belong to disadvantaged group and Sunuwar under marginalized group. Among the peripheral Kirata groups, Lepcha and Raji fall under endangered group; Thami, Majhi, Chepang and Danuwar under highly marginalized group; Magar, Sherpa and Gurung under disadvantage group; and none in the advantaged group. None of the Kirata ethnic groups, whether core or peripheral, is categorized as advantage group, and this is indicative of their socio-economic backwardness.

Both the core and peripheral Kirata nationalities not only follow Kirata religion but they also belong to the Kirata region which comprises of ten eastern districts of Nepal. For example Rai dominates in the districts of Khotang (38.7%), Bhojpur (34.1%), Solukhumbu (31.5%), Ilam (24.4%), Dhankuta (23.0%), Sankhuwasabha (22.4%), Panchthar (13.9%) and Okhaldunga (11.9%). Total population of Kirata Rai in these eight districts is 3,82,523 which is 60.23 % of the Rai population of Nepal. Limbu dominates in five districts of Kirata Region; Taplejung (41.8%), Panchthar (40.3%), Terhathum (35.4%) Ilam (14.3%) and Dhankuta (13.7%). Limbu population in these five districts comprises nearly 70% of total Limbu population of Nepal.

Thus, in a narrow or modern sense Kirata region located in the eastern part of Nepal bordering Darjeeling and Sikkim. It comprises an approximate area of 15,860 square km which is 10.77 percent of the total geographical area of the country. The population of Kirata region is 17, 57,144 which is 7.59 percent of the total population of Nepal. The major or core ethnic groups who follow Kirata religion are Limbu, Yakha, Rai and Sunuwar. These four groups together represent 96.7% of people who follow Kirat religion in Nepal. It is important to note that the present day Kiratas are largely confined to ten districts of eastern Nepal instead of the entire Eastern Himalayan region starting from west Nepal to Burma. In narrow sense the term recognizes only four core nationalities under the generic name Kirata. Regmi in his *Ancient Nepal* prefers yet another narrower definition of Kirata which includes only the 'Khambus and Limbus' as Kirata (Regmi, 1969: 16).

Lepchas and their Kirata option

The Lepchas, a Tibeto-Burman linguistic group of Eastern Himalayan region, have their distinct language, religion, language, culture and tradition. Majority of the Lepchas live in Sikkim (40,568 in 2001), Darjeeling district of West Bengal (32,377 in 2001) but a good number of them are found in Nepal (3660 in 2001) and Bhutan (figure not known). In the pre-historic period, the whole southeastern Himalayan region was once occupied only by the Lepchas. They as nomads used to move from one place to another for food and shelter over Sikkim-Darjeeling-Nepal-Bhutan region where there was no concept of political boundary like today. The Lepchas are widely regarded as the earliest settlers and are the autochthonous people of this tract. The origin of the Lepchas is obscure and there is still no unanimous theory about the migration route of the Lepchas in their present settlements. Some indicate that they had migrated through Tibet in the north while others opine that the Lepchas came via Khasi hills, Naga Hills and Assam. Overall, it has been accepted by the historians and the social scientists that the Lepchas are the early settlers and are the indigenous people of the region. After political arrangements over different periods, the Lepcha land has been divided and they fell in different countries namely India, Nepal and Bhutan. The present section examines the rationale for inclusion/exclusion of the Lepchas into the composite term Kirat.

Rationale for inclusion of Lepchas under Kirata

Kirata is a generic term and in a broad sense, it is used to designate all the ethnic groups who reside in the Eastern Himalayan region. Generally speaking, the Lepchas being a resident of Eastern Himalayan region, particularly in Nepal, Darjeeling and Sikkim, can be included under the generic term Kirata.

Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji (1951) included the Lepchas within the category of Kirata since they were the residents of Eastern Himalayan region and spends five pages (22, 25, 41, 78 and 79) discussing the possible route of migration, linguistic group, literature, alphabet, religion, life style and so on in his book *Kirata-Jana-Krti*. The author never specifically attach the word Kirata for the Lepchas but the simple reason of spending five pages on the

community in his book on Kirata signifies his 'intent' for inclusion of the Lepchas in the category Kirata. Prof. Chatterji not only mentions Lepchas in his book but most of the tribes of Nepal and North-east India like Newar, Khasi, Jaintia, Naga, Garo, Mizo, Bodo, Koch, Ahoms, Kukis, Tipra etc find mention in his book. Prof Chatterji placed the Lepchas in the same linguistic group alongside the Newar, Magar, Gurung, Murmi, Sunwari, Kirati and Toto but differentiates them from other linguistic groups of Nepal like Dhimal, Thami, Limbu, Yakha, Khambu, Rai, Vayu etc. which fall under the Pronominalise Himalayan dialects of Tibeto-Burman sub-family. Chatterji considers the whole of eastern Himalayan region as Kirata region and all those who live in this area, including the Lepchas, qualify to be included under the composite term Kiratas.

Iman Singh Chemjong in his book *History and Culture of Kirat People* (1966) included Lepchas as Kiratas. While discussing the 'The Munlom Faith of Rong Kirat People' the author states: 'The Mun or the female priest of the Rong Kirat populace instructs her people about the existence of Rum God or Tukbo Thing, one of the most powerful and celebrated good spirit. Her abode is Bo-inda or heaven and she dwells in the midst of a bright light and Moong or Chhuge-Moong-Pano and the malignant king of evil spirits or who permanently dwells in Nyok or hell...' (Chatterjee, 1966: 97). Although the author sporadically mentions about other tribes of eastern Himalayas the focus of discussion is on the Limbu and Rai communities of Nepal. Chemjong has included the Lepchas under the category of Kiratas because he understood the term in a broad sense.

Many scholars have examined the structure of Lepcha language and alphabet while trying to identify the similarities with the other languages of the Kirata group. Kirat is a composite word and it consists of good number of ethnic groups with distinct language and dialect. Limbus have been identified as a core Kirata group and their language has been simply termed as Kirat language. The Limbu or Kirata alphabet is structurally similar to Lepcha script and it is said that the Limbu script has been modelled on the Lepcha alphabet. According to many historians, King Sirijonga invented the Limbu script in the late 9th century. It has 20 consonants, 8 vowel signs, and 7 final consonants. Letters like YA, RA, WA in Limbu are subscribed in the manner similar to that of Lepcha script.

Following Shafer, Lepcha language has been grouped under Tibeto-Burman language family. Under Tibeto-Burman family there are five sub groups - Tibetan, Non-pronominalised, Pronominalised, North Assam group and Assam-Burma Group. Each of these groups has again been classified into several sub-groups. The Lepchas fall under Naga dialect of Bodo-Naga group of Assam-Burman family. Some of the other Tibeto-Burman language families are: Burmese, Dzonkha, Garo, Kayahli, Limbu, Lisu, Manipuri, Mizo, Navi, Newari, Sunuwar, Tangut, Tibetan, Tujia, Yi and so on.

Kirata and Kipat are the two concepts used in a similar sense in Nepal. Kipat was a communal land tenure system that existed in the eastern part of Nepal, particularly in Maj and Pallo Kirata areas. After the unification of Nepal, King Prithvi Narayan Shah established the same land tenure system as it was during the control of the tiny Kirat principalities. In Kipat, land cannot be sold to other person and it remained the property of the king who can change its use for social purposes. The list of the populations which received land under the Kipat system are 'Limbu, Rai, Majhiya [?], Bhote, Yakkba, Tamang, Hayu, Chepang, Baramu, Danuwar, Sunuwar, Kumhal, Pahari, Thami, Sherpa, Majhi and Lepcha' (Regmi, 1978). One can see that all the populations associated with the Kirata ensemble appear on this list; but all the populations with Kipat rights are not identified as Kirant. Some of them are probably not included because they have other identity referents which are more obvious than this default category. This is clearly the case for the Buddhist populations (Bhote, Tamang, and Sherpa) (Schlemmer, 2004). After the Land Reform Act, 1964, Kipat was abolished in Nepal but the Lepchas, being a follower of Kipat land tenure system in early days, have remained under the simple bracket of Kirata.

As the Lepchas of Nepal are residing in the Kirata region and some writings included them under Kirat group; most people knowingly or unknowingly identify Lepchas as Kirata in the broad sense of the term without finding the rationale of their inclusion.

Arguments against inclusion of Lepchas under Kirata

At present the Lepchas primarily reside in Nepal, Sikkim,

Darjeeling and Bhutan. If the Lepchas of Nepal are identified as Kirata then their counterparts in India and Bhutan should also be so identified. But the existing literature does not identify the Lepchas as Kirata nor they themselves want to be recognized as Kirata; they prefer to be identified as Lepchas only.

The eastern part of Nepal, popularly known as Kirata region, is dominated by the Rai and Limbu communities. These two communities feel themselves proud to be identified as Kiratas. Both the groups had their history of kings, kingdom, and war against the rivals and have a long association with the area. The eastern Nepal has a long history of ethnic and revivalist movement in the name of Kirata solidarity. The revivalists have tried to unify all the communities living in the region under the term Kirata and have gone to the extent of demanding a separate Kirata state. Lepchas, a small and insignificant community of Nepal, have become the victims of the majority will and the historical developments in the region. Their opinion was never sought in the process. Like the other Buddhist communities, namely, Tamang, Sherpa, and Bhutia, the Lepchas have their own identity and they do not feel any insecurity in being clubbed with the Kiratas in Nepal.

Only 0.14 percent of the Lepchas in Nepal follow Kirata religion. But since most of the Lepchas are animists by tradition some of them might have included their names under Kirata religion. As per 2001 census, in Nepal, 88.79% Lepchas are Buddhist, 7.62% Hindu, 3.33% Christian, 0.14% Kirata, 0.03% Jain and 0.82% follow other religions. Thus on consideration of religion there is no justification to incorporate the Lepchas under Kirata category. For the Lepchas living in Sikkim, Bhutan and Darjeeling, Kirata religion does not bear any relevance.

Kirata and Kipat land tenure system applied only to Nepal and all those who follow Kipat land system are identified as Kirata. Some historians link Kipat with the Limbus. Bhandari is of the view that Kipat has been derived from Limbu word where 'Ki' means 'Kirati' and 'pat' means 'fallow or barren land'. Shrestha is of the view that the word kipat has been derived from Limbu language which means 'revenue free land' (Bhandari, 1985: 51). In Sikkim-Darjeeling there is no Kipat land so a large majority of the Lepcha of Sikkim-Darjeeling cannot be included into Kirata category.

Rai, Limbu and other Kiratas who have settled in Sikkim-Darjeeling have been enlisted as 'Gorkha' and get the benefit of reservation for recruitment in the Indian army. However, the Government Order No. 13-229/200/Estt, dated 10/09/2004 of Ministry of Culture, Government of India, denied Lepchas of the 'reservation' that the Gorkhas enjoy. Lepchas are a Scheduled Tribe of India and they are non-Gorkhas. They have their unique origin and culture and are the autochthonous people of Sikkim-Darjeeling Himalayan tract, who are not clubbed with other Kirata communities.

So far as religion is concerned there is none among the Indian Lepchas who has claimed to practice Kirata religion. Most of the Lepchas are either Buddhist or Christian, and a few are Hindu. Kirata religion has never been recognized in Indian census and no tribe in India fall under this category. Kirata religion is practiced in Nepal is followed mostly by the Rai, Limbu, Yakkha and Sunuwar communities there. Thus in terms of religion the Lepchas living in eastern Himalayas can in no way be placed under the Kirata category.

The Europeans, Indians and the ethnic writers have enriched the literature on the Lepchas. In fact, Lepchas have a rich language, literature and culture of their own. In none of the writings, Lepchas have ever been identified as Kiratas. It is only in a few writings on Kirata History of Nepal that a few writers have incorporated Lepchas under the category of Kirata. Most of the scholars have refused to include the Lepchas into the Kirata groups.

There are a number of social organizations in Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling Himalayan tracts whose basic aim is to retain their culture, language and religion. Although these organizations use the word Kirata but 'many so called Kirata organizations are essentially Limbu organizations' (Subba, 1999: 126). 'All India Lepcha Association' and 'Indigenous Lepcha Tribal association' are the two main organizations of the Lepchas in Darjeeling and none of them use the term Kirata. Lepcha organizations in Sikkim also do not use the word Kirata but prefer to use 'Lepcha' in order to segregate them from the Kirata organizations which are controlled by the Limbus and the Rais. Lepcha folktales talk about the origin of the Lepchas from the lap of Kanchenjunga and their subsequent dispersal over the Sikkim-Darjeeling Himalayan tracts.

There are at least two evidences which narrate the migration of one section of the Sikkim Lepchas to Ilam in Nepal in the early days. The first version says: 'about 10 years previously 1200 able-bodied Lepchas, forming, according to Captain Herbert, two-thirds of the population of Sikkim, had been forced by oppression of the Raja to fly from Darjeeling and its neighbourhood, and to take refuge to Nepal' (O'Malley, 1907: 22). Another incidence occurred due to the assassination of Lepcha Prime Minister Bolod by the Tibetan King of Sikkim. 'The murder of Prime Minister was immediately followed by the flight of some of his relatives to Unthoo, on the border of Nepal. When Bolod was assassinated by the Maharaja Tsugphud Namgyal's orders, his nephews, the sons of Kotaba Kungha named Dathup and Jerung Denon and Kazi Gorok left Sikkim, taking with them about 800 houses of Lepcha subjects from Childam and Namthang and went towards Ilam and settled down there' (Sprigg, 2005: 11-12). The above two incidences amply prove that Ilam is by no means the original homeland of the Lepchas rather they were forced to take refuge there in distant past. If the origin of the Lepchas of Nepal is in Sikkim, there is no reason to place even the Lepchas of Nepal under the Kirat category because their predecessors in Sikkim were not the Kiratas.

T.B. Subba clearly distinguishes Lepchas from Kiratas. He observes: 'Kirata communities cannot claim to be wholly native to the region. Written history shows that the ancestors of many Kirata people living here have come from Nepal. The only community which is known to have originally inhabited this region is the Lepcha' (Subba, 1999: 20). Although Subba made his remark on the Lepchas of Darjeeling the logic can easily be extended to the Lepchas of Sikkim and in broad sense to those in Nepal. Subba's work *Politics of Culture* (1999) confines to the three Kirata communities of Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling and excludes the Lepchas. This is a clear indication that he does not prefer to include Lepchas under the composite category Kirata.

Conclusion

Some opinion surveys conducted in Darjeeling part of Himalayan region among the Kiratas and non-Kiratas reveals mixed response. However the view that emerges strongly is that for all practical

purposes Lepchas are not and should not be included under Kirata. While the Limbu and Rai communities call themselves as Kirata the Lepchas vehemently oppose the idea of their inclusion into the Kirata category. The information and facts available are insufficient to come to any final conclusion. The present exercise would open up avenues of further research on the question. In dealing with the question one has to take the political and social history of eastern Nepal into cognizance since the historical, social and political locates of the Lepchas living in Sikkim and Darjeeling Himalaya could be substantially different. In Nepal, the unification of different groups and ensuing supra-local identities are in part the result of state influences: those of the ancient Hindu kingdoms of the plain, of the Nepalese state and perhaps of the Sikkim monarchy. It seems that it was with respect to outside powers that the region's populations felt the need to unite - and/or were united, by outside influences - in encompassing ensembles. Denomination is an eminently political act, and all groups are the product of a history. But the case is different for the Lepchas of India.

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Cultural Dimension of Ethnic Identity: A Study on the Oraon Tribe of North Bengal

John Breakmas Tirkey

The term 'ethnicity' has its origin in the distant past but it has acquired new significance and dimension in recent times, which, in broad sense, encompasses a form of social organization, sense of kinship, group solidarity, language, tradition and culture, identified objectively and subjectively. The present paper attempts to study the cultural dimension of ethnic identity of the Oraon tribe of North Bengal, which is one of the largest and the earliest inhabitants among the tribal communities in the region. The Oraons have a very rich stock of cultural heritage and tradition- real and mythical, which forms the basis of their ethnic identity, which has acquired a new significance in recent times in the new world order.

Keywords: self-ascription, cultural property, mythological origin, bonding mechanism, solidarity, ethnic consciousness, cultural specificities, symbolic association.

North Bengal, consisting of six northern districts of West Bengal, bordering Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet, is the home of many ethnic groups, each having its distinct social and cultural features. Each ethnic community exhibits its own distinct identity in terms of their cultural features - language, dialect, dress, food, habits, customs, traditions, origin and self-perception. Among the various ethnic groups inhabiting in the northern region of West Bengal, the Oraons constitute the dominant ethnic community. However, before entering into the discourse on the subject 'ethnic identity', it requires some definitional clarifications for a broader understanding of the terms 'ethnicity', ethnic identity and ethnic group.

The origin of the term 'ethnicity' goes back to 1950s in English language and over the periods several interrelated terms and concepts such as 'ethnicity', 'ethnic identity', 'ethnic category',

'ethnic group' etc. have been used to denote socially and culturally distinct human groups. The term 'ethnic' is adopted from Latin *ethniscus* and Greek *ethnikos* (in early 15th century), meaning nation or national.

In Handleman's perception the ethnic group is marked first by perceived cultural differences between the group and the outsiders and a sense of boundary between them and second, by maintaining a network where there is regular interaction between ethnic group members (*cf.* Hutchinson & Smith, 1996).

Schermerhorn considers ethnic group as a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of shared historical past with focus on cultural elements while dealing with the theories of ethnicity (Hutchinson & Smith, 1996). Shills (1957) attaches importance to certain kind of social bond, personal and primordial. Geertz (1963) attaches importance to religion, blood, race, language as the bases of ethnic group formation. Nash Manning (1996) takes cultural categories such as language, dress, tradition etc. as the building blocks of ethnicity. Enloe (1996) observes that both subjective and objective cultural elements are very vital for formation and continuance of ethnic identity. Ethnicity requires a sense of belonging, group solidarity and awareness about distinct boundaries between members and non-members. From anthropological perspective ethnicity can be defined as social classification used to create groups on cultural features such as religion, language, dress, food, family and art. Roy Burman (1990) observes that an ethnic group consists of those who conceive themselves as being alike by virtue of their common ancestry, real or fictitious, and they are to be so regarded by others. They are united by emotional bond. However, there is no consensus as to what constitute ethnicity or ethnic identity. Despite differences there is a growing agreement on ethnic group of people whose members identify with each other on some common attributes such as common tradition, language, common culture and religion.

The question of ethnic identity has drawn serious attention of the scholars for its wide-range social and political implications. In the present paper I have discussed the social and cultural dimensions while keeping the political aspect aside. I reckon, ethnicity develops primarily as a result of a group's anxiety to protect its cultural

identity. It conveys a sense of belongingness to a definite group of people with common origin and ancestry, distinct cultural, linguistic and religious traditions with which the members of the groups identify.

In the present paper the term 'ethnic identity' is used to refer to group identity of the Oraons living in different districts of North Bengal. The Oraons living in the region nurse a strong sense of belongingness and express solidarity with the fellow members of the group since they share a distinct way of life, or culture, tradition, and common ancestry. One can thus focus on the cultural properties, symbolic and objective, which distinguish the Oraons from other ethnic groups, even from other tribal groups of the region.

The present paper on cultural dimension of ethnic identity is based on the observations and discussions that I had with the members of the Oraon community. I carried out a fieldwork in the rural areas of Bamangola Block in Malda District covering 494 Oraon households where the working members were either cultivators or agriculture labourers. I have also used the preliminary findings of a recent study on 60 households in Hatighisa village, in Darjeeling District, where the working members are unskilled labourers in tea plantation and partly agriculturists.

The Oraons under study are an immigrant community in North Bengal. They constitute one of the major tribal groups that inhabit the Chota Nagpur plateau in central India region consisting of the contiguous areas of the states of Bihar, Jharkhand (their main concentration being Ranchi, Hazaribag, Gumla, Simdega, Lohardaga, and Palamau districts), Orissa (mainly in the districts of Balasore, Sambalpur, and Sundargarh), Madhya Pradesh (in the district of Jashpur, Raigarh, and Surguja) and Chattisgarh state. Outside central India they are found in large number in Assam in the North-East. The main concentration of Oraon population in North Bengal is in the districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur and Malda.

Numerically, the Oraons constitute the dominant immigrant tribal community amongst all ethnic groups in North Bengal. They nurse a rich cultural heritage in their native place Chota Nagpur in the central India. However, in the process of migration and adaptation

in new and unfamiliar places, where life and neighbours are substantially different from what they had in their native place, they have lost many of their culture traits and acquired many new ones. The migration of the Oraons was not just a physical movement, it has also been a process of drifting away from the socio-cultural features that gave them an identity and a sense of solidarity.

Some scholars of antique try to identify Vanara followers of Ram Chandra with the ancestors of Oraons (Risley, 1998). It is believed that they had a long association with more civilized Dravidians from whom they learnt cattle breeding and agriculture, and use of metal implements. After a long wandering in northern India they established their suzerainty and named the country *Karus-desh* under their chief *Karakh* and finally took possession of the North-Western portion of Chota Nagpur plateau (Roy, 2002, 2004; Risley, 1998). Thus the Oraons had a long tradition prior to settling down in the Chota Nagpur plateau in central India to which the immigrant Oraons in North Bengal associate themselves both subjectively and objectively. The subjective association here denotes a sense of belonging and attachment to their mythological origin, myths, folklore, ancestor worship, nature worship, religion, language etc. The objective aspect of their association denotes various rites and rituals, songs and dances, musical instruments, land, agricultural implements, and so on.

The Oraons call themselves *Kurkhar* and their language is called *kurukh* (Oraon language). *Kurukh* is classified as Dravidian language (Risley, 1991) the mythical origin of which is the mythical hero-king *Karakh*. This Oraon kingdom had an ancient name *Karus-des*, which was located in the present Sahabad district. The *kurukh* language of the Oraons thus has a mythical origin. Thus the Oraons distinguish themselves as *Kurkhar*. The language has had a unifying impact on its members. However, *kurukh* language is finding it difficult to maintain its purity and distinct identity amidst influence of lingua-franca 'Sadri' and the 'mainstream' language Hindi. This crisis has generated an urge among the Oraons of North Bengal to preserve their linguistic identity.

By tradition the Oraons are animistic. Their religion and religious life centers on the beliefs in numerous gods and goddesses, deities, ancestor worship and so on based on their own belief system. Belief

in village deity is a part of their religious life which is propitiated to seek blessings for the well being of the entire village community, cattle and crops. The notion of ancestor worship, called *khunt deota*, is another distinctive feature of their cultural and belief system. The ancestor worship is a cultural practice that brings all the clan members together from far and near and cements the community solidarity.

Cultural properties serve as the base of self-identity and self-awareness which ensures the continuation of their ways of life. The Oraons associate their distinct identity to the material and symbolic aspects of their beliefs, ritual practices, customs and traditions. There are numerous folk tales, dance forms and songs which are unique of the Oraons. The traditional musical instruments (locally called *mandar*, *nagara*, *dhak*, etc.) are used at different seasons with different tunes and rhythms, which symbolise the change of season. The dance forms and tunes of songs vary along with change of seasons. After migration to North Bengal the Oraons live in a new social, ecological, occupational environment, which is significantly different from the social and natural setup of their native land. In such new environment many of the past cultural elements, rituals and practices have become outdated but are not completely forgotten. For example, people living in tea plantations do not have much scope to observe rituals and festivals related to agriculture since they do not own land and do not do cultivation. However, they maintain subjective and symbolic association with their customs and traditions. The uses of traditional musical instruments in social events, festivals, and marriage ceremonies are also to some extent losing their importance among younger generation. Differences in cultural practices and belief system are also observed between Christian and non-Christians sections of the Oraons. However, Christian Oraons retain much of the Oraon traditional cultural practices as their Hindu counterparts do. The Church also supports the cultivation of the traditional cultural symbols. It approves retention of tribal names, clans, and surnames. A common symbolic structure of the Hindu and Christian Oraons helps maintain the distinctive Oraon identity, different from other tribes who also have migrated from central India. The immigrant Oraons are aware of the culture, traditions and customs of the native land and associate themselves with those at least symbolically. The Oraons are asserting their

ethnic group identity not in a massive but a relatively small way, through conscious revival of their cultural properties.

The Oraons in their place of origin had been agriculturists and they developed a culture over many years and generations that was land-based. Agriculture had different seasons and different crops and the Oraons practised different rites, rituals and festivals at different stages and seasons of cultivation. Some of these agriculture related festivals are *dhanboni* (sowing of seeds), *dhangari* (rituals, festival connected to transplanting of seedling), *khalihan* festival (festival related to paddy threshing floor specially) etc. The ownership of land is also an essential component of Oraon identity. Being settled cultivators for generations the Oraons had emotional and material attachment with land. Land, for them, is not only a means of livelihood but also offers symbols of ethnic identity. The Oraons collectively value land in a particular way; land gives them identity and status. In my study in North Bengal, I have found that over the years the Oraons of North Bengal, particularly outside plantations, have lost their land to the non-tribal neighbours. The alienation of tribal land, which has been done violating the law and by fraudulent means, has affected not only their livelihood but also the self-identity of the community. Losing land the Oraons face serious livelihood and identity crisis. Their traditional culture, which was primarily land-based, is also faced with a crisis.

Observance of community festival is the hallmark of Oraon identity. It constitutes an important aspect of common culture which involves a set of shared symbols rituals, norms, worship of common set of deities, and ancestors of mythical origin. Festivals are associated with religion, agriculture (planting and harvesting season). The cattle are also considered to be a part of their livelihood. Of the various festivals observed by the immigrant Oraons the most important are the Sarhul (in Sadri language) and Khaddi (in *Kurukh* Language), which symbolise the marriage of God with mother earth, called '*Dharmesh*' (in *Kurukh* language, meaning the supreme God) the purpose of which is to pray for fertility of earth and good harvest. The Karam or *karma*, which is rooted in mythical tradition, is the most important and the oldest festival of the Oraons, which gives them distinct ethnic identity; this festival, like other ones, helps maintain ethnic solidarity. The festival of *Karam* is named after the name of a tree called *Karam*

(*Nauclea Parvifolia*) which is believed to be sacred and hence venerated. In recent times one can notice a kind of cultural revival in observing *Karam* festival in a grand scale both by the Christian and non-Christian Oraons. This adds solidity to ethnic identity and consciousness. Although at present they do not observe all the rites and rituals of the historical past they preserve them in their memory as a part of their mythical tradition.

The Oraons observe all the festivals collectively. The community celebration of social festivals helps reproduction of a common identity, a community that shares a common culture and a shared history. Numerous festivals represent cultural specificities or elements providing substance to it and ultimately promote continuation of customs, tradition and culture. Their culture and way of life foster ethnic identity and a sense of group solidarity. Observance of their traditional cultural practices rituals is seen as symbols of their ethnic identity. What is important is that the Oraons in a new geo-social setup in North Bengal are open to new forces of change and yet they take care in preserving the core elements of their culture and a sense of community (ethnic) solidarity. Treating ethnicity at the political level one may come across divergent voices from within the community.

Conclusion

The Oraons, one of the earliest immigrant settlers, inhabit two different socio-spatial conditions - one tea plantations and the other agriculture-based villages, both in rural areas of North Bengal. The other intra community division is based on religion; some of them claim to Hindu while a majority of them are Christian. Notwithstanding these differences their culture seems to be the binding force that gives them one common Oraon identity. They maintain a cultural (language, customs, traditions, clans, rituals, names and surnames) boundary with the other tribes who also have migrated from central India. One of the major concerns of the Oraons is the preservation of their culture, which under changed circumstances are open to multiple forces of change. The progressive loss of land has come as a challenge to their culture which was agriculture-based. Loss of land means they have to try some unconventional occupations and move to different places, which also can have an unsettling impact on their way of life and

solidarity. On the whole the new challenges create an urge among the members of the community to fall back on their culture and work for ethnic solidarity. Among Christian Oraons also conscious efforts are there to preserve their culture and foster a sense of ethnic solidarity. The community feeling and consciousness, language, religion, and numerous festivals have become increasingly manifest in recent years as symbols of ethnic group identity.

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Gandhian Method to Peace

Saikat Roy

At a time when peace is threatened by violence at the individual, group, social, national and global levels it is time that we explore the essences of Gandhian philosophy of peace and practice them in our lives for the sake of a better philosophy and life and work for a world order that would be free from violence.

Keywords: peace, Ahimsha, Satyagraha, violence, Vyakti, global peace, utilitarianism.

I

For long, peace has been an ideal that has been universally preached by individuals and religious groups. Now it is taken up by organizations specially formed to promote peace. The 20th century was the most violent period in human history. More people have suffered and have been killed by organized violence than any other time before. The wars, the genocides, the weapons of mass destruction have created such an enormous mass misery and agony that it is difficult to find any trace of hope. Therefore, Gandhi's vision of peace is most relevant today. If we wish to be nonviolent and work for peace within ourselves and in the world, there are numerous avenues of self-examination and exploration that would bear fruit, if we are courageous and patient enough to follow through. Gandhi stands as an exemplar of truth and non-violence who continues to inspire those who seek peace. Gandhi has become a synonym for non-violence and peace.

The *International Peace and Disarmament Directory* has listed down more than 350 periodicals working to promote peace. 'Peace' does not mean merely the absence of overt violence, but also the eradication of its roots, such as social and economic exploitation, corruption and concoction, injustice and inequality, political domination and manipulation. Peace should not be judged by

negative yardsticks of absence of hot war, explicit violence, control over armaments and banning of all destructive actions. The 'peace' should be defined more positively. A peaceful world should provide and create conditions where individuals can lead fuller and richer lives i.e., a balanced development of human personality in its social, cultural, political and economic aspects. Predominance of one aspect would not be conducive for peace amongst individuals, small groups, nations, states and the world community at large. It should provide for rapport between the individual and the social order and permit peaceful socio-economic changes consistent with changing times and aspirations of the people. Initiative and leadership should remain with individuals and small groups. In such an order conflicts at individuals and small groups, national and international levels will be reduced significantly. In cases where conflicts still persist there should be efforts to resolve them by peaceful means.

War appears so natural to man. Even a superficial study of history of the world reveals that it has been the aim of every monarch to wage war, expand his dominion with a view to establish an empire. Wars have been also fought for wealth and riches i.e. to loot and plunder other's territories for material profit. Even the twentieth century has seen the treacherous greed of nations and their leaders to conquer and rule over others. With the advancement of science, wars have become more and more brutal and devastating. The attempts for abandonment of wars and establishment of peace are also found in history. Gautama Buddha preached the message of ahimsa and compassion. Asoka, one of the greatest emperors, had followed the Buddha's teaching in giving up war and treading on the path of peace. Jesus Christ is described as the prince of peace. He lived and preached the message of love, forgiveness and peace. In contemporary times Gandhi has relentlessly voiced the importance of peace in human life.

II

Gandhi's concept of peace is broad-based; for him peace is rooted in the way of life. It is intimately linked with justice, development and environment. The well known peace researcher Johan Galtung has acknowledged his indebtedness to Gandhi in formulating his concept of structural and cultural violence. His advocacy of ideas

such as self-reliance and models of development focused on basic needs also have a strong Gandhian imprint. Gandhi's influence could also be found in the ideas of Bjorn Hettne who has tried to focus on the relationship between models of development and peace.

In order to grasp Gandhian concept of peace one should begin with a careful reading of his seminal work *Hind Swaraj* which he wrote in 1909, where he criticized the modern model of development as inherently violent. One who scrutinizes Gandhi's speeches, writings and actions will understand his deep commitment to the cause of peace and non-violence which was apart from his philosophy of life and his world view. In the ideal society of Gandhi's vision the organization and relationship of the members of the society must be based on the law of non-violence or love. The real task before those who dream of a peaceful and non-violent society is to practice the ideals of peace and non-violence. Gandhi has always emphasized on the transformation of the existing society into a peaceful non-violent one.

The key to understanding of the Gandhian perception of peace, and his principles, is to comprehend in depth his revolutionary mode of action which he called *Satyagraha*, and his challenging goal of *sarvodaya*, meaning the welfare and good of all. This precisely means a fuller and richer concept of people's democracy than any we have yet known. The central figure in all this is the individual, *vyakti* (in Sanskrit), the human being of spirit (soul), mind, and body - the three dimensional being who is never static, whose 'being' is intrinsically linked with his/her 'becoming'. Therefore, individual (*vyakti*) is the one supreme consideration, with his/her conscience and will, together with his/her reason to effect change.

In an age of conflict within a given nation, and in the international world, Gandhi believed that the individual must rediscover the right mind, because there are values without which he/she cannot live in society. He worked for the rediscovery of that right mind which would reach out to unity, love, peace, emphasizing that there always are, and will be, certain eternal values - ethical, spiritual, universal, which human beings need universally. Consequently, we human beings are now, in a way, unequipped to face life in a fully humane manner, and are inevitably heading towards destroying our own selves. Lauding Gandhi's views

Bharata Kumarappaun has said: 'While pacifism hopes to get rid of war chiefly by refusing to fight and by carrying on a propaganda against war, Gandhiji goes much deeper and sees that war cannot be avoided as long as the seeds of it remain in man's breast and grow and develop in his social, political, and economic life. Gandhiji's cure is, therefore, very radical and far-reaching. It demands nothing less than roots out violence from oneself and from one's environment' (Kumarappa, 1949).

The 'right mind' Gandhi envisioned is non-exclusive; it is inclusive. It is not a mind of intolerance, of accusation, or of division. Rather, it is a mind of unity, a mind that understands, a mind that has infinite love working for harmony, for peace which is a way of life, not just a cessation of war, or a recess between wars and violence; it is a spirit that heals division, which positively works for harmony within and without. Gandhi knew the reality of hatred and in-tolerance because he had experienced them in his own life in South Africa, in colonial and caste-ridden India of his time. He was convinced that no peace could be built upon exclusion, upon absolutism with a mind either in a vacuum, or filled with wrong values which must be the result if individuals made no efforts to rediscover the 'right mind'.

Gandhi argued that peace cannot be built on theories, slogans or pious programmes. There can be no peace on earth without the kind of interchange that restores human mind to the fact that all life is one, emanating from universal self. The fact of interdependence between peoples, between nature and human society, between co-existence and survival, is accepted in today's world as an imperative, in an age when scientific advancement, modern inventions, and technological progress are bywords. All forms of necessity can contribute to human freedom - material and economic need, intellectual need and spiritual need. Gandhi believed that the greatest of human needs is the need to be free from evil and untruth that are in one's own self, and in society.

Gandhi has often been described as an apostle of peace, which he certainly was. He strove and died for peace. He advocated 'peace but not at any price' (Power, 1960: 128), for his philosophy was a philosophy of commitment; it was based upon the concept of moral responsibility which underlay his ethics of intention. Gandhi's philosophy of peace is to be sharply distinguished from the

conservative plea for 'peace at any cost', which is in essence a peace for the maintenance of status quo. Peace, he advocated, is integrally related to justice. As Gandhi wrote: 'peace must be just' (*Bombay Chronicle* 18.04.1945).

One may argue that the Gandhian declarations on peace contain some practical difficulties in the present day world. But Gandhi would not countenance such a practical difficulty. He would counter pose saying: 'if an individual can practice non-violence, why not all groups of individuals and all nations' (Power, 1960: 85-86). The Gandhian concept of world peace should be viewed as an integral part of his philosophy of life and one should try to appreciate his attitude within the general frame work of his philosophy of ahimsa that is non-violence.

III

The Gandhian way of peace lies in the conviction of the efficacy of love i.e. non-violence. While conceptualizing non-violence, he was heavily influenced by the writings of Leo Tolstoy. Gandhi expresses himself as being overwhelmed upon reading Leo Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is within You* and he called himself Tolstoy's humble follower. The Gandhian way of peace springs from the basic concept of non-violence. Gandhi is of the firm opinion that war can never end wars, since violence breeds only violence. For him, the search for peace should be made through non-violence alone. Gandhi effectively used obtaining Swaraj through non-violent revolution. He said: 'I suggest to the friends of peace for the world that the Congress in 1920 took a tremendous step towards peace, when it declared that it would attain her own Swaraj by non-violent and truthful means. And I am positive that, if we unflinchingly adhere to these means in the persecution of our goal, we shall have made the largest contribution to the world peace' (Gandhi, 1929). He had no doubt that non-violence was the only means to bring peace. He said: 'The cry for peace will be a cry in the wilderness, so long as the spirit of non-violence does not dominate millions of men and women' (Gandhi, 1926).

While clarifying the conception of non-violence, Gandhi said in *Young India* (1921):

... to hurt someone, to think of some evil unto someone or to snatch one's life under anger or selfishness, is violence. In contrast, purest nonviolence is an epitome in having a tendency and presuming towards spiritual or physical benefit unto everyone without selfishness and with pure thought after cool and clear deliberations. The ultimate yardstick of violence or non-violence is the spirit behind the action.

His concept of peace and non-violence is integrally linked to his world view. Gandhi evolved his world view from a concept of 'self' and human nature. Acknowledging the inherent goodness of human beings, Gandhi emphasized that all human beings have an inherent capacity to develop their full potential of non-violence. The path of violence was seen by him as a downward path away from our humanity while the path of non-violence was closer to humanness. He believed in the unity and oneness of all including the sentient and non-sentient beings. He believed that all human beings are part of the divine and they are interdependent and interrelated. If one person gains in non-violence, the entire humanity gains with him. In such an interrelated and relational framework, nonviolence becomes the cardinal principle governing human relations.

Gandhi's concept of non-violence is closely linked to his understanding of the above interrelatedness or wholeness. Truth was fundamental in his philosophy of life. He also wanted to make discovery of truth as the principle around which the differences among human beings could be sorted out. Throughout his life he was experimenting and perfecting his notion of truth. For him truth was a sovereign principle and it includes numerous other principles. Gandhi called truth realization as the realization of the God. This quest for truth can be carried out not by any means. Violence is based on a notion that the person who employs it has the sole possession of truth. Gandhi was of the view that the truth known to human beings is never absolute but relative. Therefore a seeker of truth has to adhere to the path of non-violence or else he will not be able to be receptive to the notions of truth held by others. Gandhi wanted that all struggles and conflicts should be approached as a contestation between the notions of relative truth held by the conflicting parties. Only through a non-violent means one would be able to pursue a struggle of this kind because in it truth contestation

becomes a joint effort of both conflicting parties. In other words, it is always a joint search for truth by the conflicting parties.

For Gandhi, non-violence was a creed or an article of faith. His complete adherence to non-violence was based on principles rather than opportunism or any cost benefit considerations, although he was not unaware of its strategic value. For him, it was not a weapon of expediency. It was a spiritual weapon and he successfully employed it at the level mundane everyday life and in politics. He made it clear that it is not a weapon of the weak and the coward. The application of this principle needs greater courage and moral strength. He believed that Ahimsa or Love has a universal application and it can be employed in one's own family, society and the world at the larger level. Through the technique of non-violence a seeker of truth tries to convert his opponent by the force of moral character and self suffering. A practitioner of non-violence has to undergo suffering to penetrate into the heart of the opponent. Gandhi looked upon self-less suffering as the law of human beings and war as the law of jungle. Life based on utilitarian calculation, a counterpoint of Gandhian philosophy is the core of the liberal thinking of the West. Suffering for a worthy cause in non-Western cultures is often seen as liberative, even if it emerged as the result of the application of violence against an oppressor. The redemptive character of self-suffering was emphasized by Gandhi and it constituted a key element of his Satyagraha technique. Gandhi's commitment to non-violence evolved also from a careful reading of history and its interpretation. He came to the conclusion that it is non-violence that has sustained the world so far and will sustain it in future too. Gandhian non-violence challenges the notion that the principle is applicable in interpersonal relations and has no value in the public world. Gandhi emphasized that the law of love operates at all levels, and for him public life and values should be an echo of private life.

An integral part of Gandhi's philosophy and life's work is the notion of *ahimsa*, which literally means 'non-injury' or 'nonviolence.' For Gandhi, *ahimsa* was the belief in the sacredness of life and the refusal to do harm to living things, an interpretation that was based on the deep-rooted Hindu tradition of not doing harm. *Ahimsa* was vital to Gandhi's peace building efforts for several reasons. First, *ahimsa* means not harming others either in thought or deed.

Second, Gandhi viewed *ahimsa* as also having a more dynamic and positive state which is love (Gandhi, 1951: 109). This love serves as the means to get to the ends of truth. Third, a means which uses nonviolence to reveal truth has advantages to Gandhi because only relative truth can be attained for certain. Given this human limitation, the nonviolent means to realize one's goal guarantees that individuals will not hurt any adversary in a conflict who might be closer to the absolute truth than they themselves are. Excluding the use of violence is best, because humans are not capable of knowing the absolute truth and therefore are not competent to punish (Nakhre, 1982).

For Gandhi, a genuine process of peace building had to involve the use of nonviolent *means* to secure a sustainable satisfaction of human needs of security, identity, self-determination, and quality of life. His most serious challenge to the dominant Hobbesian discourse of power becomes apparent in his conscious break with the assumption that the nature of political power was to be found in the capacity to unleash violence, and thus, that the exercise of political power inevitably involved employing violent means of physical coercion. Instead, he offered a compelling rationale for why the principle of *ahimsa* might constitute the core of an alternative model of power. Gandhi also emphasized on the importance of passive resistance in attaining the real essence of non-violence. Passive resistance or Satyagraha, according to Gandhi, [It] is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the Government of the day has passed a law which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If by using violence I force the Government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of the self (Gandhi, 1963: 18-21).

One of the most important ingredients in *ahimsa* is the notion of self-suffering, a refusal to submit to injustice, and the acceptance of personal discomfort and tribulations. Gandhi says: 'Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering' (Gandhi, 1920). He further says: 'suffering injury in one's own person is ... of the essence of non-violence' (Gandhi, 1925). While describing the importance of self-suffering in human life, he says,

'suffering is the law of human beings; war is the law of the jungle. But suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason ... Suffering, not the sword, is the badge of the human race' (Bose, 1957). According to Gandhi non-violence is the most effective and greatest force that man has been endowed with. In his words, 'non-violence has proved to me that it is the greatest force in the world. It is the surest method of discovering the truth and it is the quickest because there is no other... It is the one constructive process of nature in the midst of incessant destruction going on about us ... But this non-violence is impossible without complete self-effacement' (Gandhi in his message to World Tomorrow written in 14th November, 1924 emphasized on the non-violence as the greatest force).

While talking about non-violence Gandhi laid down five simple axioms (Gandhi, 1935):

- a. Non-violence implies as complete self-purification as is humanly possible.
- b. Man for man the strength of non-violence is inexact proportion to the ability, not the will, of the non-violent person to inflict violence.
- c. Non-violence is without exception superior to violence, i.e., the power at the disposal of a non-violent person is always greater than he could have if he was violent.
- d. There is no such thing as defeat in non-violence. The end of violence is surest defeat.
- e. The ultimate end of non-violence is surest victory- if such a term may be used of non-violence. In reality where there is no sense of defeat, there is no sense of victory.

While arguing that peace cannot be achieved without no-peace Gandhi emphasized on self-purification by which true peace can be realized and this is the way by which the mantra of peace that is the creed of non-violence can be established (Gandhi, 1938). He felt that without self-purification, the observance of the law of non-violence is an empty dream (Gandhi, 1956).

Gandhi, while showing the relevance of non-violence, insisted that the only path to the world peace is a radical break in habitual

reliance by the governments on violence to achieve order. He had an optimistic view of the development of civilization for he believed that human nature had been ever working upward, that is, from violence to non-violence. Non-violence, for him, is a universal phenomenon having its relevance and significance for the past as well as the present and the future. It has been very effective and instrumental in solving all kinds of conflicts in society. However, its result depends upon its understanding and proper application.

IV

Gandhi did not consider nonviolence merely as a matter of tactic, although it certainly was effective in liberating India's people from an alien rule; as it enhanced the black movement in the USA, under Martin Luther King, Jr., in the 1960s, or as it became the basis of the liberation of the under-privileged movement under the leadership of Danilo Dolci in Italy in recent past. Between 1955 and 1968, a black-led civil rights movement swept the United States, which found in Martin Luther King, Jr. a leader capable of transforming millions of inchoate aspirations into an engine of peaceful social change. In his autobiographical essay, 'Pilgrimage to Nonviolence', Martin Luther King, Jr. tells how he 'came upon the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi' and 'became deeply fascinated.' He wrote:

Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. For Gandhi, love was a potent instrument for social and collective transformation. It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and nonviolence that I discovered the method [for social reform that I had been seeking [or so many months...]. I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.

On the 27th of September 1984, while addressing the U.N. Assembly the then President of America Ronald Reagan remembered Gandhi saying: 'all problems could be peacefully resolved, if adversaries talk to each other on the basis of love and truth. All through the history the way of truth and love has always won. This was the

belief of Gandhi and his vision and its remains good and true even today.' After the demolition of World Trade Centre US President, George W. Bush, remembered Gandhi. After the said tragedy a new youth organization named 'We want Peace not War' in the US. There is another organization known as, 'Seeds of Peace'. Wolfowitz, U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary has suggested and advised that Palestinians should adopt Gandhian principles saying: 'If they adopt Gandhian way, they could in fact, make an enormous change very quickly. I believe the power of individuals demonstrating peacefully is enormous.'

Some years back the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has signed a peace accord with the Shanti Bahini of Chittagong Hill Tracts ending two decades of insurgency lodged by tribal people living in the area. The accord was hailed both in and outside Bangladesh. The crux of the peace accord is that it was accomplished without any outside mediation and interference. The peace accord was possible because the then Government of Bangladesh believed in non-violence and also wanted to develop the hill areas of Bangladesh in a peaceful atmosphere.

Peace is an outgrowth of respecting life of others. Peace demands participation of people valuing each other and having mutual respect, regardless of class, caste and creed. The present global situation demands the total participation of the people in identifying problems, designing solutions, implementing those solutions and evaluating the outcome of the actions for peace for creating a sensible human situation. The Gandhian philosophy of peace can come handy in this task at hand.

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Ground Reality of Welfare Measures: Voices from Below

Nandini Basistha

In spite of age-old Brahmin or upper-caste domination on the eco-socio-political life of Uttar Pradesh, we saw huge success of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in 2007 Vidhan Sabha election. It becomes the only National Party of India, which captures power for Bahujan, with Bahujan and by Bahujan. Ideologically, BSP wants 'Social Transformation and Economic Emancipation' of the Bahujan Samaj, which is comprised of the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs), the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Religious Minorities such as Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Buddhists. In a Press Release in 2009, the Party announced that the State Government of Uttar Pradesh is giving priority to the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and declared many schemes to achieve its objectives. This raised hopes among the so-called 'backward' and downtrodden classes of this province. But, how far these welfare programmes were effective was still to be proved. To unravel the ground reality, we had done an empirical survey on the awareness and impact of the welfare schemes of Uttar Pradesh on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In this paper is an outcome of the survey.

Keywords: Bahujan, upper caste domination, backwardness, welfare. Other Backward Classes.

Introduction

In spite of age-old Brahmin or upper-caste dominance on the eco-socio-political sphere of Uttar Pradesh, we saw huge success of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in 2007 Vidhan Sabha election. It became the only National Party of India, which captured power for Bahujan, with Bahujan and by Bahujan. As per the ideology of BSP, it wants 'Social Transformation and Economic Emancipation' of the Bahujan Samaj, which includes the Scheduled

Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs), the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Religious Minorities such as Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Buddhists. In a Press Release in 2009, the Party announced that the State Government of Uttar Pradesh would give priority to the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and declared many schemes. Obviously this raised hopes among the so-called 'backward' and downtrodden classes of this Province. But, the question to probe is whether all of these welfare programmes have brought about the promised 'welfare' to the targeted groups of people. To unfold the ground reality, we had done an empirical study on the awareness and impact of the welfare schemes of Uttar Pradesh on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by the BSP led government in UP.

The BSP is not the only political party that talks about the upliftment of the backward castes and classes in the country. The Government of India, since independence, has taken many measures for the development of the weaker sections, especially Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Some such schemes are Scheduled Caste Scholarship Scheme, Scholarship Scheme for the Families Living Below Poverty Line, Old Age Pension Scheme, National Family Benefit Scheme, Financial Assistance Scheme for the Families Living Below the Poverty Line for Marriage of their Daughters and Treatment of their Family, Financial Assistance Schemes for Victimized Scheduled Caste Family, Pre-Examination Training Center, Swarn Jayanti Rural Self-Employment Scheme, Indira Housing Scheme, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, M. P. Local Region Development Scheme, M.L.A. Local Region Development Scheme, Adolescent Girl Potency Scheme, Mahamaya Poor Girl Blessing Scheme, Healthy Diet Programme, Common Man Insurance Scheme, Girl Glory Scheme, Information, Education and Communication-related Scheme, Integrated Regional Development and Water Management Programme, Draught Area Regional Scheme, Integrated Fallow Land Development Programme, Clean Toilet Scheme, Clean Water Scheme, Agriculture and Residential Land Distribution Scheme, National Rural Health Mission, Janani Suraksha Yojana under National Rural Health Mission, Saubhagyawati Yojana under National Rural Health Mission, School Health Programme under National Rural Health Mission. Some of them are specifically for SCs or STs and so on. As a large number of SCs and STs are poor,

they qualify for many schemes meant for the poor. But, whether they are aware about those schemes or get benefitted is a question that we examined in our study.

Field of study

According to 2001 Census, Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in India with a population of over 166 million, of which a considerable section (21.15 per cent) belongs to the category of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes constitute 0.06 per cent. Both of these groups lag far behind other groups in terms of development index. To secure SC and ST vote bank, almost every party of this region has identified welfare of these groups as a main objective in their declared programmes. This raised hope for development amongst the so-called 'backward' and downtrodden classes of this province. A large number of welfare schemes, funded both by Central and State governments, were meant for the upliftment of the SCs and STs.

I took Allahabad district as my study area. It had a population of 4936105, out of which 24.56% (2900526) was Scheduled Castes and 0.098% (4273) Scheduled Tribes as per the 2001 Census. Male-Female ratio was 52.8: 47.2% among the SCs and 52.35:47.65% among the STs. Most of the SCs (rural-urban ratio was 85.4: 14.6%) and STs (rural-urban ratio was 86.9:13.1%) lived in the rural area. Therefore, we selected ten villages with concentration of SCs and STs in eight Blocks of Allahabad district.

The main objectives of the study were:

- a. To search the common awareness about the welfare schemes for SCs and ST
- b. To assess implementation of several welfare schemes
- c. To find out the level of upliftment of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes through welfare schemes, and
- d. To give suggestions for better implementation of the welfare schemes for more upliftment of SCs and STs.

Keeping in mind the dependent and independent variables, I framed a structured questionnaire with 74 questions, which were divided in the following seven categories.

- a. Awareness about the Welfare Schemes;
- b. Level of Awareness about the Welfare Schemes;
- c. Medium of Awareness Generation;
- d. Problems of Implementation;
- e. Discrimination;
- f. Level of Upliftment; and
- g. Suggestions for better Implementation.

Methodology

This paper is based on primary data, collected through sample survey technique, using structured questionnaire. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 400 SCs (containing households and public representative). The size of the sample was based on total population of SCs in Allahabad district. We conducted the survey on the SC households in the villages in eight Blocks of Allahabad district. The villages were Tiyyara and Pipalgaon of Allahabad Block, Raini and Parasinpur of Phulpur Block, Khatangi and Garaba of Bara Block, Khain and Dhanuha of Karchana Block, and Misarpur and Bhatauti of Meja Block. We did quantitative analysis involving statistical analysis, especially descriptive statistics (involving a particular group). Beginning with tabulation of data and grouping into class intervals we did measurement of central tendencies and cross tabulations. Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used for the purpose of analysis.

Findings

The majority of the respondents (84%) in the sample population were in 18-59 age group. But a sizeable number (16%) were aged 60 or above. Most of the respondents were married (96.8%); 37.3% had BPL Ration Card; only 14.3% had Antodaya ration card; and 32.4% had APL ration card. We had 55.3% female and 44% male among our respondents. In terms of occupation most (65.3%) were labourers, 34.3% included farmers, employed, businessmen and unemployed. Majority (50.9%) of the respondents had income

between Rs 24000- Rs 360000 annually while the remaining 49.1% had an earning between Rs 3000- Rs 21600 annually.

We have examined the general attitude as well as awareness of the respondents about the welfare scheme and the implementation status of 34 welfare schemes. Being asked whether they have interest in government-sponsored welfare schemes (q.n.1), only 9%, (36 respondents out of 400) replied in the positive; 71.3% and 12.5% of the respondents showed minimum interest and no interest. This attitude found reflection in the responses to question number 47 (Do you think that villagers lack awareness about welfare schemes?). While only 8.8% responded saying they have interest while 49.8% said they are not aware of such schemes.

According to our survey, very few people got benefitted from the welfare schemes. Scheme-wise beneficiaries among our sample population was as follows: Scheduled Caste Scholarship Scheme 22.3%, Scholarship Scheme for the Families Living Below Poverty Line 5.3%, Old age Pension Scheme 13.3%, National Family Benefit Scheme 2.5%, Financial Assistance Scheme for the Families Living Below the Poverty Line for Marriage of their Daughters and Treatment of their Family 3.3%, Financial Assistance Schemes for Victimized Scheduled Caste Family 1.3%, Pre-examination Training Center 0.8%, Swarn Jayanti Rural Self-employment Scheme 0.8%, Indira Housing Scheme 15%, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 22%, M.P. Local Region Development Scheme 0.8%, M.L.A Local Region Development Scheme 0.8%, Adolescent Girl Potency Scheme 0.8%, Mahamaya Poor Girl Blessing Scheme 0.5%, Healthy Diet Programme 5%, Common Man Insurance Scheme 2.5%, Girl Glory Scheme 1.8%, Information, Education and Communication related Scheme 0.3%, Integrated Regional Development and Water Management Programme 1%, Draught Area Regional Scheme 2%, Integrated Fallow Land Development Programme 1%, Clean Toilet Scheme 7.8%, Clean Water Scheme 5.5%, Agriculture and Residential Land Distribution Scheme 1.3%, National Rural Health Mission 2.5%, Janani Suraksha Yojana under National Rural Health Mission 6.8%, Saubhagyawati Yojana under National Rural Health Mission 4.8%, School Health Programme under National Rural Health Mission 2.8%, Mukhyamantri Gramodyog Yojana 1%, Pradhanmantri Gramodyog Yojana 1.5%, Antodaya Yojana

15%, Samagra Awaas Yojana 0.5%, Mahila Swayamsiddha Yojana 1.5%, National Health Insurance Scheme 3.5%.

So we can identify some welfare schemes, which had more than 5% (20 persons) beneficiary. This finding needs a clarification. We had selected one respondent from one family questioned to one representative of one family and while counting the number of beneficiaries we included all the members of the family who had received the benefits. Thus the number of persons covered in the survey would be much more than the sample population; about 1600 persons if we presume that every family had four members on an average. Most popular 10 schemes we had identified are Scheduled Caste Scholarship Scheme (22.3%), Scholarship Scheme for the Families Living Below Poverty Line (5.3%), Old age Pension Scheme (13.3%), Indira Housing Scheme (15%), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (22%), Healthy Diet Programme (5%), Clean Toilet Scheme (7.8%), Clean Water Scheme (5.5%), Janani Suraksha Yojana under National Rural Health Mission (6.8%), and Antodaya Yojana (15%).

We recorded the level of awareness about the welfare schemes. We particularly covered the days of employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. Among our respondents 45.8% had said that they worked for 100 days in a year. But most of them did not know the details about Mahamaya Poor Girl Blessing Scheme and Health Training Programme; 78% of the respondents don't know '*How much financial assistance has been provided in Mahamaya Poor Girl Blessing Scheme?*' and 53.3% did not have any information about any male worker, female observer and public health nurse under the Health Training Programme.

We had asked the villagers the medium from which they got the information about the welfare schemes. 48.3% of the respondents said that they had it from administration, 47.5% mentioned newspaper as the source of information, 31.8% mentioned radio and television. A majority of the respondents (52.8%) had chosen Gram Panchayat as '*the most effective medium for spreading awareness about government welfare schemes.*'

As high as 72% of the respondents said welfare schemes are well-implemented, while 21.5% had no knowledge whether welfare

schemes were implemented properly or not. This shows the general ineffectiveness of the public audit system where government officials are bound to announce details of every scheme in a public meeting at the village level. A large number of respondents (46.8%) said they are not satisfied with the implementation procedure of the Central or State Government-sponsored welfare schemes. Only 29% villagers were fully satisfied with it.

About the problems of implementation the responses were as follows: late implementation of schemes (44.8%), unavailability of sufficient financial resources (6.3%), absence of sufficient effective regulatory system (12.3%), demand of bribe at various levels to provide benefit of schemes (11.3%). A very high percentage of respondents (44.8%) recognized '*late in the implementation of scheme*' as main problem. 48% of the respondents identified '*lack of education*' as the most influential obstacle in the implementation of schemes. Majority of the respondents (60.3%) had chosen '*the level of publicity of the schemes*' as the most problematic phase in all mentioned schemes. For 79.8% of the respondents the absence of the right guidance was the biggest obstacle in implementation of the schemes. Asked, '*Do you think that there is lack of cooperation by government employees/officers in the effective implementation of welfare schemes?*' 51.3% respondents said, '*Too much lack of cooperation*'. Only one per cent said there is no lack of cooperation on the part of government officials. Majority of the respondents (52.8%) said corruption is the biggest problem in the implementation of the schemes. On the basis of their performance the respondents ranked the government departments as follows: *Social welfare department* (62.8%), *rural development department* (21.3%), *Child development and healthy diet department* (5.3%), *Ambedkar Gram Sabha development department* (5%), *Medical, health and family welfare department* (1.3%), *Land development and water resource department* (0.3%). None mentioned about *Khadi Gramodyog department* or any other departments.

Majority of the respondents (58%) said women get greater share of benefits from the welfare schemes. While only 16% respondents said that government welfare schemes do not favour the females of their community. Only 13% of the respondents said that government schemes do not benefit their community while a large majority (60.1%) said that Government welfare schemes have

brought benefits to people belonging to their community. A large majority (74.4%) of the respondents thinks that caste/political party- groupism affect the implementation of welfare Schemes. Majority (60.3%) thinks that villagers lack a sense of unity and 59% think that the welfare schemes get affected when the Government changes.

While 46.8% of the respondents think that living status of rural people has been lifted up as a result of the welfare schemes 36.3% think otherwise. 49% think that welfare schemes play an effective role in the upliftment of living status of rural people and 42% think that welfare schemes have added pace to the development process. However, 37.3% of the respondents think that welfare schemes have not brought them any benefit.

Majority of the respondents (78.3%) have said that the government should do *mass publicity of schemes* to make welfare schemes more effective, 9.3% said *Role of influential groups should be minimized*, 7.5% said *delay in delivering the benefit should be avoided*, 4.8% said, *Implementation of schemes should be transparent*. We received various suggestions for removing the problems in the implementation of welfare schemes. These are: (1) The welfare scheme should be implemented through Panchayati Raj system (19.8%); (2) Fixation of more accountability of officers and public representative (16.5%); (3) Sufficient financial support should be provided for the implementation of schemes (8.3%); (4) Effective evaluation and controlling system for implementation of schemes (8%); (5) At the level of implementation, it should be made sure that the person more needy get the benefit of scheme (7%); (6) Effective controlling system should be arranged to control corruption (6.3%), and so on. A large majority of the respondents (82.1%) think that the schemes conducted by different departments should be integrated, and 79.2% think that the welfare schemes need improvement at the level of policy making. 43.5% of the respondents think that a separate implementation system should be established for implementing the welfare schemes.

Concluding observations

A notable feature of the study has been that a majority of the respondents were illiterate, impoverished, Scheduled Castes and

we encountered a lot of difficulties in communicating with them and in seeking their articulated opinions on the welfare schemes that the government undertake from time to time. In this study we have noticed that there is a general lack of interest and lack of awareness about the government schemes, although some sections have acknowledged the benefits brought to them by the welfare schemes.

Some schemes, like, Scheduled Caste Scholarship Scheme, Scholarship Scheme for the Families Living Below Poverty Line, Old age Pension Scheme, Indira Housing Scheme, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Healthy Diet Programme, Clean Toilet Scheme, Clean Water Scheme, Janani Suraksha Yojana under National Rural Health Mission, and Antodaya Yojana are found popular amongst the villagers and have largest number of beneficiaries. But other 24 ongoing schemes, namely, National Family Benefit Scheme, Financial Assistance Scheme for the Families Living Below the Poverty Line for Marriage of their Daughters and Treatment of their Family, Financial Assistance Schemes for Victimized Scheduled Caste Family, Pre Examination Training Center, Swarn Jayanti Rural Self-employment Scheme, M.P. Local Region Development Scheme, M.L.A Local Region Development Scheme, Adolescent Girl Potency Scheme, Mahamaya Poor Girl Blessing Scheme, Common Man Insurance Scheme, Girl Glory Scheme, Information, Education and Communication related Scheme, Integrated Regional Development and Water Management Programme, Draught Area Regional Scheme, Integrated Fallow Land Development Programme, Agriculture and Residential Land Distribution Scheme, National Rural Health Mission, Saubhagyawati Yojana under National Rural Health Mission, School Health Programme under National Rural Health Mission, Mukhyamantri Gramodyog Yojana, Pradhanmantri Gramodyog Yojana, Samagra Awaas Yojana, Mahila Swayamsiddha Yojana, and National Health Insurance Scheme are not much successful. Respondents were largely ignorant about the existence of these schemes.

A significant section of the respondents have said that the administration have done some good arrangement to provide information about welfare schemes. Most of the respondents got information about the welfare schemes from newspaper, radio or

television. The respondents identified that Gram Panchayat as the most effective source of information and they think that Gram Panchayat be given more power for effective and speedy implementation of the welfare schemes.

A large number of respondents are not satisfied with the implementation procedure of the Central and State Government-sponsored welfare schemes. Majority of the respondents recognized *delay in the implementation of the schemes* as the main problem. Other problems identified are - unavailability of sufficient financial resources, absence of sufficient effective regulatory system, demand of bribe at various levels of releasing the benefits, and so on. Lack of education, absence of publicity of the schemes, and absence of the right guidance has been identified as the major obstacles in implementation of the schemes. Among other impediments the respondents have mentioned of *lack of cooperation* by the government employees/officers, and corruption in the officials. Despite all these problems the respondents have identified the *Social welfare department as the best performing department*. They have ranked the Rural development department is in second position followed by the Child development and healthy diet department, Ambedkar Gram Sabha development department, Medical, health and family welfare department, and Land development and water resource department. None seemed to be aware about Khadi Gramodyog department or any other departments. The respondents have also said that the women receive a greater share of the benefits, which is a positive development.

Members of the underprivileged communities generally think that the governmental welfare schemes have brought them some relief although caste/political party-groupism affect the implementation of the welfare schemes. Lack of a sense of unity among the villagers has been another impediment to the better utilization of the schemes. People in general think that the nature of the schemes changes with the change of guard in the government since the ruling parties show a clear community bias. Since the respondents differ widely in their assessment of the efficacy of the development schemes it appears that the benefits do not reach them equally and the party in power may be selective in choosing the beneficiaries. Majority respondents think that welfare schemes.

The villagers gave us a good number of suggestions for removing

the problems in the implementation of the welfare schemes. Some of the suggestions are as follows: (i) the welfare scheme should be implemented through Panchayati Raj system; (ii) responsibilities for implementation and accountability for the lapses should be fixed for the officers and public representative; (iii) sufficient financial support should be given for the implementation of schemes; (iv) effective and periodic evaluation of the schemes should be in place; (v) care should be taken to make sure that the most needy person gets the benefit of scheme; (vi) there should be an effective mechanism to control corruption; (vii) the non-governmental organizations should be given a greater role in implementation of the schemes; (viii) a separate implementation and controlling cell should be constituted at district level; and (ix) the role of public representatives should be increased while cutting down the power of the bureaucrats.

The present study thus reveals what the beneficiaries of the welfare schemes think about the schemes and how such schemes can be made more effective. The suggestions they have put across, based on their direct experiences can go a long way to rethink the process of charting out and implement the development schemes.

Globalisation and Identity: The Case of the Lepchas in Sikkim

Vandana Kumari

The process of social change in India under the influence of external forces like Westernization, modernization and the globalization has produced vast sociological literatures covering the philosophical understanding of Indian society encountering with the political economy of modernization and globalization. The process has provoked a wide-range debate among the academic community on the issues of national character, the idea of nationalism and romanticisation of fragmented identities. The journey of democracy, development and the celebration of plural identities in postcolonial India has paradoxical in character in which both the resistance and co-operation between the local and national is the reality. This paper is an attempt to conceptualize the nature of identity formation, the value of cultural symbol and the local subsistence as found in case of Lepcha Movement in the state of Sikkim, particularly when the country is passing through a process called globalization.

Keywords: global ethics, mythology, market, development project, globalization, subsistence ethics, naturalism.

Introduction

In Nehruvian India there was a conscious effort to base Indian national identity as a unified identity which was to be composed not only of the cultural institutions but of symbols and representations. Up to this period the cultural construction of national identity was based on the construction of meaning which influences and organizes both the actions and the formation of national subjectivity which Benedict Anderson termed 'an imagined community'. The end of Nehru regime has been the starting point of India becoming a fragmented nation due to the development of certain micro-level identity movement following the line of caste, religion language and region. The coming of

globalization has further strengthened these socio-political identity based movements. Globalisation has forced intellectuals to have a relook at the established definition of the term 'Indian national identity'; they are now trying to examine the factors that have left a dislocating impact to the vision of Indian national unity. What is happening to cultural identity in late- modernity?

One can define globalization as a complex process, operating on a global scale, which cuts across national boundaries, integrating and connecting communities and organization in new space- time combination, making the world in reality (Appadurai, 1997: 291, 299). Fragmentation of Indian society had started especially after the emergency period in mid-1970s and it received a boost with the adoption of the Mandal Commission report. Since then a new politics began on the basis of caste, language, region, religion etc. People started questioning the founding secular principles of Indian democracy. Lately globalization is playing a significant part in strengthening these fragmented identities in the sphere of economy, polity and society. Now market has become the focal point to conceptualize individual identity. Due to the influence of global market, micro level movements have begun to fuel new discourses on democracy and development. With the influence of the globalization the subaltern groups of people have become conscious in raising their voice for securing political power and new self-identity; they have started movement against the negative fallouts of globalization. The new movements take the shape of ethnic and tribal movements, movements by the environmentalists and so on to protect their identity. Globalisation as a process of social change refers to multiple cultures interacting with each other within a single territory. The boundaries of society have expanded from local community, through states to global order.

According to Arjun Appadurai (1997), globalization can be defined by looking at the relationship between five dimensions of global cultural flow which can be termed as, (a) *ethno- scape* (b) *media- scape* (c) *finance- scape* (d) *idea- scape* and (e) *techno-space*.

Ethno scape: With globalization, there has been a constant flow of people throughout the world. They can travel across countries and continents. A large-scale special movement of people is taking place, which leads to the continuous contact with different groups of people at the global scale.

Finance scape: There is a free flow of finance and capital beyond the national territory. Although it was not new for India, (in the colonial period British had established the East India Company in Kolkata) it established an order based on one-sided exploitation.

Idea scape: The idea scape is composed of elements of the enlightenment worldview which consists of concatenation of ideas, terms and images including freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, representation and the master term democracy. Due to globalization the integration between peoples of different civilizations is increasing and these increasing interactions intensify civilization consciousness.

Techno scape: The global flow of finance leads to the free flow of technology and scientific equipment all over the world in a disjunctive manner.

Appadurai argues that due to the removal of barriers and boundaries, peoples now encounter cultural homogenization. This global cultural flow leads to the process of intensification of interaction among peoples across territories. The 3rd world countries, which celebrate multi-culturalism, look at the process of homogenization as a serious threat to their identities and cultures. Due to the declining authority of the state a process, what David Harvey calls *detritorialisation*, has come into force. In the Indian context, the state earlier had the power to give license for the establishment of any industry or business enterprise but after globalization the global powers can exert enough pressure for a free entry of global capital.

Many sociologists and scholars have tried to understand the impact of globalization in their respective ways. Roland Robertson (1992) has talked about convergence vs. divergence. He argues that every society has to face the phase of convergence at different speeds but moving towards the same point mainly due to the result of the overriding emergence of industrial man. On divergence, he stated that the idea determines people's perception towards modernity, which varies from one person to another. On this issue Baum (1974) argues that societies are converging in some respects like in terms of technological and economic sense and on the other hand diverging in terms of social relation. Actually he has brought in the issues of societal continuity into the debate. Basically the term

globalization encourages or involves homogenization vs. heterogenization and universalization vs. particularization, and the whole process is very complex.

Marshall McLuhan in his book *Exploration in Communication* (1960) introduces the idea of 'global village' keeping in view the compression of globe. He emphasizes on the media and television which help consolidate the idea of the global community. Another sociologist Wallerstein (1974) argues that the term globalization is related to the time-space reality. Giddens (1990) says it's a trend to think of 'time-space distanciation' the condition under which time and space are organized so as to connect presence and absence. Giddens talks about the idea of the disembedding of action from 'local' contexts, as an aspect of the move into 'modernity' and then 'high modernity', under the process of 'globalization' (Robertson, 1992: 14). Manuel Castells (1997) argues that, globalization and strengthening of various cultural identities (religious, national, ethnic, geographical and gender among others) have occurred over the last 15 years side by side. Some scholars view that globalization requires a global, cosmopolitan cultural homogenization of the world while others criticize the process. Yet another group of scholars feels that globalization will overcome local and historical identities (ibid: 56). Hall (1996) observes that globalization has forced the social scientists to reconstruct their knowledge about culture, identity and practices across the globe.

Identity discourse in global era

According to Asish Nandy (2004), the national identity in pre-globalization period was defined as *Homo Psychology* where the individual defined their identity in relation to the culture of the nation. In the opinion of Margaret Mead (1953) it creates a *National character*. This *homo psychology* was produced through a Durkheimian understanding of *Social fact* where the individual's action is taken to be guided by a strong set of rules and regulation of the society.

This kind of Identity is on the decline now with the declining power of state or territory. For example, world war of 1914, there was the violence or war with one homo- psychologicus to other which prompted movement of people from one territory to another, which

shows the strong homogeneous feeling about their own territory. Even the people on the move tried to preserve collective identities. This is because they feel alienated from a state that no longer represents them or helps them building meaning in their lives. They therefore tend to build these identities on historical foundation. Now the feeling of homogeneous identity is on the wane. In this respect, people crave much more than just market economics. For a Marxist, even the state can be said to be an agent of globalization rather than of the people. The reaction to this is an alternative construction of meaning based on identity (ibid: 62).

Hybridity of culture has been one of the outcomes of globalization. Arjun Appadurai observes that in global world people have recognized themselves as a 'global citizens'. The process of globalization also creates an instrumental identity in and between the existing nations. Alongside the rise of global citizenship and hybridization of culture one can also notice the growing assertion of ethnic identities. With 'global cultural flows' and homogenization there is also a growing tendency towards micro-narratives and local cultural movements opposing the dominant order (Appadurai, 1998:43; D'Souza, 2006: 70-71).

In other words, globalization is not simply about the rise of global culture that all people of the world supposedly share, but it is also about how people are responding to this possibility of a global cultural flow and how they are increasingly forming local cultural traditions and identities as a response to general global trend (Berger, 1998: 305). The main difference between pre-globalisation period and globalisation is that, in first one there was power relation between state and other people but in globalisation period, all sections of the people like subaltern people, women, Dalit, ethnic groups have got an alternative to explore and got power to resistance and started questioning their given status by the hegemonic social order. The 'culture of silence' got the new voice to rise for protection of their culture. Globalisation has a different effect on upper class, upper middle class and middle class on the one hand and poor and other subaltern on the other. At the time of new landscapes of globalisation, Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community' can be extended to 'imagined world'.

Under the process of globalization state and the national culture is gradually losing its power and in the language of Eric Erikson,

most of the societies are facing the newly emerging challenge called 'identity crises. This trend of identity formation in the era of globalization has produced the postmodern subject conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity. Identity has become a movable feast, formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways 'we' are represented or addressed in the cultural systems surround us (Hall, 1987: 277). Now we have 'pluralisation of identities'.

In the context of globalization, Fredric Jameson (1984) has recently used the term 'nostalgia for the present', which is one of the central ironies of the politics of global cultural flows. Using global media and sophisticated communication technology people across the world collect news about the important events in their country of origin, like Independence Day, Republic Day, and *holi*, Diwali, Id etc. they feel very happy and also feel that they are in touch with their culture. The people away from their homeland are always nostalgic about their past and take care in reproduction of their culture. Turner points out that nostalgia in its literal meaning as homesickness- a feeling of melancholy, weeping, anorexia and despair. Turner has emphasized that the notion of homelessness as a basic form of estrangement or alienation. It is something like what Erich Fromm says that the cultural root and relatedness of individual or a group of people have a certain kind of attachment with their home called nation having the feeling of oneness to feel about our cultural value system. Turner and Straut argue that there are four main presuppositions of the nostalgic paradigm: the idea of history as decline, the sense of a loss of wholeness, the feeling of the loss of expressivity and spontaneity, and the sense of loss of individual autonomy. Media images that are enshrined and heavily coded with local cultural meanings beam out to new places to find their home in the television sets across continents. These are some forms of expression of the feeling of localization (Robertson, 1992: 156-157).

In the present scenario, we can understand the situation of the third world countries, especially India, through Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996) and Appadurai's *Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in the Era of Globalisation* (1998). Both the works point to how and why different kinds of fundamental movements are taking place and what have been their modes of resistances.

Basically, globalization has created great divisions among human groups and contributed to the spread of cultural conflicts. Huntington argues that Nation- states will remain the most powerful actors in the world affairs but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and group of different civilizations. The people of any region or country deeply care for their culture and civilization. A civilization is cultural entity and it gives identity to the groups on the basis of language, history, religion, customs, and institutions. Huntington states that due to globalization the world is becoming a smaller. The interactions between peoples of different civilizations are increasing and the increasing interactions intensify civilizational consciousness and awareness about difference and commonalities between civilizations. These awareness and consciousness in turn find expression in different movements related to culture, language and identity. Some close home examples are movement by the Lepcha community in North Sikkim, Gorkhaland movement in Darjeeling hills, and various kinds of environmental movements.

The process of globalization has created a debate among the academicians around the world on the question which kind of identity that different societies and peoples are having in this contemporary time? The continuous interaction between global and local culture has produced three types of identity based on the processes like cooperation, resistance and assimilation. It seems many things are happening simultaneously which can be summed up as (a) deterritorialisation of identity, (b) localization of identity and (c) hybridization of identity.

a. Deterritorialisation of identity

The 'deterritorializing' character of the globalization process refers to the creation of a global identity going beyond the socio-geographical location of the cultural experience of people. One way of understanding this is to think about the places we live in as being increasingly 'penetrated' by the connectivity of globalization. The idea of deterritorialization, then, grasps the way in which events outside of our immediate localities, or 'action(s) at a distance' become increasingly consequential for our experience. It is argued that the modern culture is less determined by location because location is increasingly penetrated by 'distance'. The more

obvious examples of this sort of penetration of localities are in such areas of mundane cultural experience as our interaction with globalizing media and communications technologies, television, mobile phones, email, the Internet, or in the transformation of local into increasingly 'international' food cultures (Tomlinson, 1991).

What is at stake in such examples is a transformation in our routine pattern of cultural existence which brings global influences and outlooks into the core of our locally situated life world. Television news brings distant conflicts into the intimate spaces of our living-rooms, 'exotic' tastes become routinely mixed with domestic ones, assumptions we make about the health and security of our families now routinely factor in an awareness, however vague, of global contingencies such as environmental risk or stock-market stability. But we can add to these a more subtle example of deterritorialization, precisely, the reach of the institutional-modern form of identity into a global cultural life. It is basically related with cultural power, which is the reflection of homogenous identity (such as McDonaldization)

b. Localisation of identity

As a counter trend of the global cultural identity is the dramatic rise of social movements based on identity (such as gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, nationality) across the world. These cultural sources of resistance to the power of globalization in contemporary times go a long way towards getting this power in perspective. The localization of identity in the present time is absolutely a political one which is based on the polarization of people on their primordial identities to transform them into vote banks. Other major cause of the growth of local identity is the fear of losing ethnic culture because of the onslaught of global culture and the forces of homogenization. Thus various grass roots movements are emerging now to preserve their own culture, language and environment. This trend can be seen also a resistance towards the cultural hegemony of the western world in the name of globalization. The drive towards 'globality' combines logic of capitalist expansion with the rapid development of deterritorializing media and communications technologies. But this drive is opposed by various processes and practices expressing different orders of 'locality'. Amongst these we can count the

cultural identity movements that Castells focuses on.

c. Hybridisation of identity

The term hybridization is now a buzz word in social sciences in discussing the cultural identity of different societies under the era of globalization. Whereas the concept of deterritorialisation and localization refers to the two extreme point of macro and micro identity formation, the term hybridization refers to the mixing of the macro culture *i.e.*, global culture and the micro culture *i.e.*, the local culture. Intellectuals like Baudrillard emphasizes on the hybridisation of identity where people both accepts the global cultural flow while preserving their emotional attachment with local cultural experiences. The identity thus formed can be termed as hybrid identity. Hybridization as a process of culture change is not new in India. From the period of Mughals to the present time, Indian society has been through a process of acceptance and rejection of different cultural patterns introduced by the Muslims, British and the others. D. P. Mukerji, in this context has observed that Indian social change is not a complete transformation of one culture to another culture; rather it's a synthesis of Indian traditional Hindu culture (thesis) and the British culture (anti-thesis). In the same tune Yogendra Singh has termed Indian social change as modernization of Indian tradition, where the Indian tradition is smoothly adjusted with the modern culture. This nature of Indian social transformation has been conceptualized by Dipankar Gupta as 'mistaken modernity'.

One can say that globalization has also not completely transformed the Indian cultural identity into a new one rather it has created more space for the coexistence of different cultural identities. The modernization process appears to be one dimensional approach to the study of change in Indian society through the Western imagination. The main agent to reorder the Indian traditional socio-cultural identity into the western individualistic attitude is the Indian state. But globalization is not a one dimensional approach nor does it say that the Western culture is more rational than Indian culture; rather it renders equal value to all cultures. This ethics of globalization do not authorize any culture to leave a homogenizing effect.

The rationale of this study is to examine how the Lepcha community of Sikkim responds to the forces of globalization and regroups itself for survival as a community while preserving the essences of their culture. Data have been collected through an intensive fieldwork by using interview schedule, unstructured questionnaire. Ethnographic method has been applied in the study. The case study of Lepcha movement as a field has been taken to examine how the process of localization works. For some years the Lepchas, the indigenous tribe of Sikkim, are organizing themselves to preserve their sacred lands and holy mountain where, they believe, their ancestral spirits reside. They have launched an organized protest against the construction of dams over the Teesta River.

Unequal citizen in global era: the Lepcha movement in Sikkim

Human conduct is always established in a particular space or place. The interaction between man and environment and the associated practices form the basis of social organization of space and place. Such practices range from human beings' struggle for livelihood to its involvement in cultural practices. These interactional competencies and embodied practices find expression in the form of what in common parlance is understood as 'surrounding', 'environment', 'landscape', 'territory', and so on. The landscape and the territory provide a social relationship between man and nature which evokes a sense of belongingness in the land and nature.

The space and surrounding environment are perceived by local people as sacred. We can explore the relationship of man and environment from various perspectives. In this context, some relatively unexplored spaces are (1) Sacred Forest/Grooves, (2) Traditional Pastureland, (3) Sacred Mountains and Hills, and (4) Sacred Water bodies.

The Lepchas in Sikkim are now categorized as minority group although they were the original inhabitants of the state. Over the years they have progressively lost their control over the resources and power as they have been the victims of political and economic developments. They have accepted their marginalization generally without much protest and movements. However, in the recent

past they have reacted in an organized manner against the mainstream development paradigm sponsored by the state especially in Dzongu area, which is reserved for the Lepchas. The Lepcha community has raised the question over their identity and rights over the nature and environment. The movement has taken a 'value' turn as they consider the area as their sacred land, which cannot be polluted by the outside agencies. The idea of 'subsistence ethics' shapes their social action in everyday life. This ethnic identity based on the beliefs of 'naturism' has prompted a collective consciousness in the form social movement when a number of NHPC Hydropower Project were introduced over the Teesta and Rangeet River in the name of 'development'. The anti-project movement took shape since the Lepchas perceived that if constructed they would destroy their nature and livelihood. Their harmonious relationship with Teesta and Rangeet Rivers, which for them were sacred and had religious value, would be destroyed. This movement is unique in a sense that it combined environmental, ethical, mythological, and religious rights issues while opposing the setting up of the hydro projects.

One can illustrate the point as to how they attach value to their land and nature and the mountains and assert their exclusive rights over the sacred Dzongu area. They call themselves as 'Mutanchi Rong Cup' - beloved children of Mother Nature and mount Kanchenjunga, observe traditional nature worshipping festival of *tendonglho-rum-faat* where the Lepchas pray to this hill which save tribes from flood etc., they perform *Mutrumfaat*, or *shikari puja* at the time of harvesting period, perform *sakyourum-faat*, giving thanks to the god after harvesting, perform *amyarum-faat* at the time of making roof, perform *kumrum-faat*, handloom *pooja* and so on.

The movement illustrates how modernization and development process help arouse ethnic and environmental consciousness and movement. The mega-hydroelectric projects in Dzongu area are largely perceived by the Lepchas as threat to their culture. While labeling the projects as 'a violation of a sacred Landscape' the Lepchas of Sikkim started the anti-dam movement after a convention in Gangtok in 2006. The convention in Gangtok was a turning point in the battle for their land, their culture and narratives (Little, 2008: 16).

The movement for protection of Dzongu represents a case where

the traditional values related to ecology and environment is in conflict with the mainstream perspectives of the development. Here the dominant discourse on 'development' does not match the perceptions and interests of the ethnic people. The development in the form of setting up hydro power plants is primarily aimed at serving the interest of the rich and powerful who need a favourable infrastructure for new areas of capitalist explorations and adventure. According to Habermas, this mode of development, which does not care for the environment or the downtrodden, is prompted by the 'system world' and the instrumental action of the people, which may be linked with state politics or the technologically advanced global order. The environment where the Lepcha people maintain their livelihood constitutes their life world, which, they think will be threatened if the hydropower projects come up in their sacred land.

In the field I could locate myself with the people and their locality and engaged myself with them. Through the ethnography method, we conceptualize the things sociologically and perceive peoples' perceptions of their life through the eyes of the people or the respondents. In the field I interacted with teachers, old people, members of young generation, shaman or *boongthing* and some social activists who work with NGOs. They clearly expressed their concerns about the probable fall-out of the up-stream hydroprojects. They apprehended a mass-scale chaos and unwelcome interference into their religious sentiments. My guide, Mr. Kachu, a lecturer of college in Sikkim, introduced me with the local people. Two men, Rengzone, 38 years and Sonam Lepcha 48 years, gave an introduction about their landscape, their local beliefs (which mentioned above), ecology and environment and how the Lepchas in the area perceive the recent intervention in the name of development. They talked about Dzongu or Lingtham and what value or sentiments are attached to the area by the Lepchas. They told that earlier there were around 20 villages, people were engaged in cultivation of paddy crops and large cardamom and the production was only for the consumption but now their livelihood is threatened.

One of the *panchayat* heads of the village, Kenjaang, said that he was in favour of Hydro power project because it would provide employment to the unemployed. As a preparation 30 people were

sent to the area of NHPC for training. In middle Lingtham, we met a man who was working in monastery and some teachers of middle and primary schools. Here they were all against the NHPC project. They showed courage and awareness to protect their culture and Dzongu land. One school teacher said that they took efforts in sensitizing students about the adverse effects of so-called modern development projects and the need for initiatives to protect their indigenous culture, their code of conduct and indigenous knowledge.

The informants were largely against the project; they showed me that in Dikhchu region the houses, the river, the mountain and the plants faced destruction due to the construction of the project. One of the farmers, Nemkoth Lepcha, favoured the construction of road but not the dam. One government school teacher, Oungchuk Lepcha, 35 years, said that in the year 1989 and 1992 government of Sikkim sanctioned funds for the construction of roads but they opposed the construction that time. But now they realize how badly they need new road for better communication. Another teacher said: 'the children are the future stars and our indigenous knowledge system, culture, mythological beliefs, Lepcha language and local folk dances will be in the hand of these children. They will preserve the homeland. We want to educate our students for this task'. From 2001 they have made arrangements for training for the children in handloom work, which is a part of folk culture of the Lepchas. This field study shows that a large majority of the Lepchas wanted to preserve their land and culture against the onslaught of the post-colonial development projects initiated by the state. In the part of the upper Lingtham, I met Miss J.J Lepcha, a 42 year old lady school teacher as well as social activist, who had elaborated how she worked for the empowerment of women and the protection of Dzongu. She was working for protection of Lepcha language, and training the youth in Lepcha crafts like making of Lepcha caps, weaving of traditional cloths etc. Thus she emphasized on the need to preserve the traditional knowledge system linked with the livelihood and culture.

Conclusion

The paper shows how the modern development discourse is

perceived as a threat by the ethnic communities like the Lepchas of Sikkim, and perceived as a threat to their shared belief system, habitat and livelihood. The intrusion of the exogenous forces makes them aware of preserving their livelihood, ecosystem, beliefs and sentiments. This perception of threat of development prepare them for a movement on ethnic line against the state supported development project like setting up of hydro power projects in the upper streams of the Rivers Rangit and Teesta. The Lepcha resistance to the state sponsored development model highlights the character of a new social movement in contemporary time based on the conflict between indigenous knowledge vs. scientific knowledge. The resistance movement in Lepcha dominated areas speaks for a narrative of life, nature and culture opposed to the modern development discourse. From social science perspectives, the cultural ethics of indigenous people like Lepcha has logic of practice which finds expression in their everyday life, the idea of happiness and subjective meaning of nature and culture. In sum, the minorities in the mainstream development discourse do not have a say in defining what would be their course of development; they are only the recipients of the state and market sponsored development discourse. What is important is to create an ambience of an enlightened dialogue between the stakeholders, which at the moment is not in sight.

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Life of Street Children in Howrah Station

Subrata Mukherjee

This paper is based on case study of some children staying in both new and old complexes of Howrah Station. It examines how family pressure forces them to leave their house and what kind of ordeal they go through while staying in the station compound. The paper also discusses the problems they face in rescue homes once they are sent there and points to the limitations in the law and public attitude towards the street children. The prime finding is that once the station children get into the delinquent culture it becomes very difficult to get out of it.

Keywords: Street children, rag pickers, addiction, abuse, deformity, misery, bourgeoisie, lumpen proletariat, dehumanization.

Introduction

The phenomenon of street children is not new in India. Many scholars have written about the street children and their miseries. Different nomenclatures, such as Rag Pickers, Homeless, Bhavaghure, Bejanm (Busterd), Haghare, runaway, thrown aways etc. are used to address them. In developing countries, like Kenya, they are called as Parking boys, in the Philippines they are known as Pogeys-boys, in Brazil they are called as Pivets. Interestingly, in Peru they are popularly known as Pajaro-frutero meaning fruit bird, and in Colombia they are called Gamin, meaning kid having negative connotation. In Zaire, these children are called as Moineaos meaning chicks (Behura and Mohanty, 2005: 3-4).

The UNICEF (1988) defines street children as ‘...those for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, i.e., unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc...) is more than their family, has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults.’ The relationship with the family is very important to categories the street children.

A survey report of United Kingdom Committee (1980) for UNICEF shows that 75 percent of the street children maintain contact with families. They work on the street and stay at their home with their family at night. Some 20 percent spend all the days and some nights on the streets or in public places. Their families have not abandoned them, nor they have abandoned their families, but poverty, violence, and sexual abuse have forced them out of their homes. These children are increasingly vulnerable to the abuse and exploitation of street life and often develop a very negative view of them. Rest five percent are orphans, runaways, refugees. They do not have any family. They stay on the street and suffer from deep emotional disturbance.

The present paper is based on a study of street children in Howrah Station. Two categories of street children have been covered in this study. The first category includes those who stay in their houses at night with their parents but come to Howrah Station and its adjacent areas for work and other reasons in the morning and go back in the evening. They contribute whatever they earn to their family. These children mainly collect empty bottles or work as hawkers, collect coins at Gangaghat or do vegetables collections at *sabji* market near Howrah Bus stand. In the second category there are children who have left their families at their native places; they do not visit home on regular basis but kept contact with their families. They earn money in the station area by collecting empty water bottles, newspapers; do stealing, snatching and other delinquent activities. Some children, who are without family, live at the station premises permanently; they include the abandoned, orphans, refugees, lost children and so on.

Homeless and street children are found in large number at Howrah Station. Due to urbanization and associated pull factors, many rural poor usually come to the city in search of job. Howrah is an industrial city and places like Tikiapara, Belilious Road, Panchanantala, Salimar, Shibpur, Pilkana, Salkia, Uluberia, Phuleswar, Chengail, Bauria, Belur, Bali and Sankrail are famous for Iron, Jute and Paint Industries. Many families from the neighbouring states as well as neighbouring districts come to the city to work in those industries. Some of them get a permanent place to stay mostly in the slums and many of them do not find a place to stay and live on the pavements and railway platforms.

The presence of the families with children in and around the Howrah station is quite conspicuous.

Railway Platforms provide them with more than a home; it provides a livelihood. Some depend on the informal mobile economy in running trains. Many of them steal, beg, sing songs, dance, some of them assist the official vendors, in return for a scrap to eat or a meager amount. Some children may even make a semi-permanent living on these platforms. Platforms are thus a means of their living place, and a possible source of livelihood. The children who get into this system develop a way of life or culture of their own, which is significantly different from the 'normal' social order.

Data for the paper have been collected through observation, case study and interview method. I have done case study of twelve street children and interviewed police, old platform boys, Station Master, Porters, and Shop Keepers for different types of information. Nine of the children are 'street dwellers' who have been abandoned by their families, and the remaining three have the experiences of living in the Children's Homes. The children covered in the study age between 6 and 15 years. In the text I have used fictitious names of the children.

Howrah station

Howrah is now in the grip of rapid urbanization. Recently administrative headquarters of the state has been shifted to Nabanna near 2nd Hooghly Bridge, which is close to Howrah Station. Construction of new multistoried buildings and shopping malls has caused displacement of slum dwellers. There was a big dumping ground near the Tikiapara Railway station which was 15 minutes away from Howrah station. Many families were dwelling over there. Most of them were from Bihar. But presently that whole dumping ground has been transformed in to the Belilious Park and shopping mall. Like this many slums were transformed into big buildings and multistoried flats by many big companies like Rammingtones and others. Many of the displaced families now live close to the station premises and draw livelihood from the station area.

Howrah Station which has imperial origin has grown in size and in terms of service. Hundreds of trains cross through the station and lakhs travelling every day and this widens the opportunity for the downtrodden and the homeless make a living based on the station, the trains and the people who travel. The children who stay in the station premises live a carefree life, away from family control. Howrah Station is the earning place for them. Children collect food from the train without expenses; many of them also get food free of cost from different NGOs. They collect drinking water from the taps available in the station complex. The Hooghly River is there to take bath.

Life of the children in Howrah Station: case studies

Amur is a 13 year old Hindi speaking Muslim boy whose native place is Agra in Uttar Pradesh. He has been coming to Howrah Station for the last five years everyday, spending the whole day in the station premises. He is a dendrite addict. When I met him in platform 12 his legs were trembling. He was sucking from a piece of cloth full of dendrite glue. 'What are you doing here?' I asked. He thought I was from police and tried to escape from that place but could not escape as he was addicted. He sat on stones and concrete slabs of the railway track. I convinced him that I was not police. A fat middle aged woman proceeded towards me and asked 'what happened? I told 'nothing.' She told me 'I am Amur's mother.' If you want to know anything about him, you may ask me. I asked her 'are you the real mother of Amur?' She answered 'No. I am his foster Mother.' She went on saying: 'Amur stays with me in a rented house with me at Uluberia which is about 50 Kms. away from Howrah Station. Amur helps me collect empty disposable drinking water bottles. Early in the morning, Amur and I reach the Station. Whole day we spent over here. We eat together. We return to our rented house at night. Amur calls me Ma. I purchase clothes for him and take the necessary care.'

Amur is short in height and black in complexion. At the time of Interview, he was wearing a half banyan and black half pant, both dirty. His eyes were black but swallowing. He looked malnourished. He does his breakfast out of the food stuffs left by passengers in the trains. He loves eating Puri-Sabji and bread and banana. He takes lunch from his own money, which he earns

money selling rags in the market. Evening time he goes back to Uluberia. He eats two dendrite tubes every day. His whole income is taken away by his 'mother'.

Amur's father is an auto driver near Agra station. He has his real mother, four brothers and one sister, all live in a rented house near a red-light area, close to Agra Station. Amur suspects that his elder sister is involved in prostitution. He did not like the home atmosphere and left Agra. He loves his family but does not want to go back to Agra. He loves his so called mother and wants to stay with her.

Sanjiboni is a 15 year old Bengali girl, who hails from Champahati of South 24 Parganas. She came to Howrah Station for the first time five years ago. Since then she has been living here. Occasionally she goes home. She loves to stay at Howrah Station. She is mentally partially inert. She sells cigarettes and Ghutka in the station premises to the moving passengers. She visits one NGO office for free mid-day meal. At evening time she sells all those tobacco related products.

Sanjiboni's parents are alive. She has brothers and sisters but she does not like to stay at home with them. I asked her 'how do you live here since you are grown up, don't you feel insecure?' She only smiled and did not answer me. That time a 24 year old boy, appeared to be a porter, came to the place and asked Sanjiboni if she would want to have Chowmin? The girl left the place with the man.

Talking to other station inmates I came to know that Sanjiboni was a call girl. She is fond of eating but cannot afford the kind of food she wants. Taking advantage of the situation many porters abuse her sexually. Sanjiboni seems to have accepted her life in the station and does not want to go back and try something else.

Sriman Ghosh is 18 year old Bengali speaking Hindu boy. His father is Laxman Ghosh and mother is Kumbli Ghosh. His father is a rickshaw puller who is addicted to alcohol. His mother is a maid servant. Sriman has been detained by police many times because he is a heroin addict. When asked 'why did you leave home?' he said: 'four years back when I was 14, I first tested Heroin. For some time I used to take seven *purias* a day, each *puria*

costing Rupees twenty. I studied up to class V. My neighbours are not good. My address is K Road, Belgachia, Liluah, Howrah. I have one sister and a brother. My sister got married and brother works with her husband. My mother sent me to a Hosiery factory for work. I was earning Rupees five hundred a month. One day police came to my house and arrested me on charge of stealing a bicycle, which I did not do. Realising that the charge was false police released me. After some months I was caught again by the police in connection with another theft case'.

Sriman continued: 'I was misguided by three people of my locality who drove me to stealing. We used to work as a gang; I used to steal iron from the shop in Liluah. I earned money that way. I spent this amount on Heroin. I was also working for a group who used to sell all those drugs. One Kalia was the kingpin of this racket.'

Later Sriman joined with the rag pickers group at Howrah Station. Every day he sells empty bottles that he collects from the trains and the station premises and spends most of his money on drug. He eats the left overs that he collects from the train and sometimes buys food. He said: 'since I am addict I do not feel hungry much.' One day I saw him with the police and asked him what happened? He answered saying: 'sir, I was caught by the Police because Kalia had shot at me. I escaped from there. Please help me.'

Sanjit Debsarma is a 15 years old Bengali speaking Hindu boy. His father's name is Bhatua Debsarma. Earlier, Sanjit was working in his paddy field but after an accident he stopped working there. Sanjit has four brothers and one sister. One of his sisters, Sunita, died at her childhood due to snake bite. He comes from Karan Dighi of North Dinajpur district. Sanjit first came to Howrah Station in 2006. He worked as a hotel boy in a hotel near Ganga Ghat at Howrah Station. He was earning Rupees three thousand per month. Answering why he came to Howrah Sanjit said: 'We are poor. After an accident my father stopped working in the agricultural field. He told me to do something to save the family. I came to Howrah and took this job.' Sanjit studied up to class IV in the Palsai Primary School at Karandighi.

One day he left the hotel job and took up van pulling with his two other friends. He thought that he would earn more in this

profession. He was transporting fish and other goods that the carrier trains bring to Howrah Station from different parts of the country. He hired one van from Barabazar paying a rent of Rupees five hundred per month. He sleeps in his van. He earns Rupees two hundred fifty per day.

Sanjit takes tea and biscuit every morning paying from his pocket. He takes bath in the Ganga and use platform lavatory paying Rupees two per use. He buys his lunch and supper from his own money. He is addicted to Ghutka and Khaini. He also takes Heroin sometimes, which is easily available at Howrah Station. One puria costs Rupees one hundred twenty. He puts the drug in cigarette and smells it. He feels sleepy after having it. Sanjit visits home once in a fortnight. He gives money to his family. His elder brother Bijoy works in Mumbai as a labour. Other two brothers are studying in school. He feels proud when people call him Mutia Walla.

Karan Malakar is a 14 year old Bengali Hindu boy. He has one elder brother and a younger sister, besides his mother in his family. His family members live in a rented house at a place near Dasnagar CTI, Kajoldhighi, Howrah. Karan's elder brother works as a welder in a welding workshop. Karan's father works in Orissa and mother is a house wife. His father does not keep contact with them for many years. Karan studied up to class III. He left school after being humiliated by his friends for scoring zero in one paper. He earned a bad name in his locality for being short tempered. He was also caught several times while stealing and was beaten up. He also picked up the habit of gambling at an early age. One day he quarreled with his elder brother and father and ran away from house. He reached Howrah station without knowing what to do. The first day he had his food from the other children living at the Station. After three days he met a porter who offered him food. The porter, whom he calls Chacha, helped him getting into the life that Howrah station offers.

He is staying near the parcel office of the Sation for last two years. He is a van puller and earns Rupees two hundred fifty per day. He sleeps in his van or at any open clean place on the new platforms at night. He wakes up at around 6 am and goes to Ganga for washing his mouth. In breakfast he takes milk (or tea) and bread. He takes rice with fish for lunch. He also eats *chap-muri* in the

evening. He takes supper with *roti* and *tarka*. He buys his clothes from Mangal Hat. He purchases soap, oil and other necessary items with his own money. After all this, he saves Rupees fifty per day, on an average. He takes bath at Ganga and uses toilet at the new station complex. He has been caught by police several times for his involvement in illegal activities. He is addicted to tobacco, Ganja. He loves to watch movie.

Karan dislikes the rag pickers calling them Kachrawala (rag pickers). They use blade for stealing money from the bags of the passengers and even snatch money and other valuable items. He distinguishes him from this group of rag pickers claiming 'I am good. I am Mutiawala.' Karan goes to Banga Basi Cinema with his friends to watch movie. He said: 'once I went to Mumbai in search of better job with my friends but reaching there my friends started collecting empty bottles. I could not do it because I was not Kacrawala (rag picker). I came back to Howrah. Nowadays I feel like leaving Howrah Station. I need to live with a good image of myself. I want to go back to my family and do some job of dignity with my elder brother'.

Anand Sarkar is a 15 year old Bengali Hindu boy. He spent his childhood with his parents in Assam but could not remember the name of his village. His father passed away at his childhood. He does not remember him. After his father's death, his mother left her in-laws' house in Assam and reached Mainaguri in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. He came to know from his mother that his father was a rickshaw puller. Anand was their only child.

Anand's maternal uncle's house is at Mainaguri. Anand and his mother were living at his maternal uncle's house in Mainaguri after his father's death. Anand was admitted to a school there. His mother had tumour in her stomach. She died when Anand was merely seven year old. His maternal uncle had one son and one daughter. He was a petty trader and his income was low. His maternal aunt used to collect woods from the forest and sell them as firewood in the local market. They deployed Anand for collection of wood from the forest. But Anand did not like it. One day Anand returned from forest without collecting anything from the forest and his aunt did not offer him any food. He was thirsty and hungry. His uncle said: 'if you do not earn, you will not get food. Give me Rupees one hundred everyday for your food lodging.'

Anand was very depressed. He decided to leave his maternal uncle's house and reached at New Jalpaiguri Station. He boarded a train to land at Howrah Station next morning.

In Howrah Station he got in touch with the rag pickers and became one of them. One day at Howrah station when he was checking train to collect food; he got a bundle of Rupees. The other children chased him for this money but Anand ran to Police and deposited the bundle. Police counted it to be Rupees ten thousand. Many people thanked him for his honesty. Asked about the reason for his action Anand said: 'I didn't have a choice; had I not gone to police the other children would have killed me for money'.

After this incident police took initiative to send him back to his uncle's family at Mainaguri. But after one month Anand came back to Sealdah station and started living with the station boys. Later he was rescued by the police and was sent to Kishalaya Home (Government run Home) for his rehabilitation. Later Home authority restored him to his maternal uncle's house again.

After one month again Anand came back to Howrah Station and chose his old profession i.e. rag picking. He also tried his luck in rickshaw pulling but soon gave it up as the income was low. He now does van pulling in fish market and earns Rupees one hundred per day. Anand is not happy with his present job. He said: 'Now I am 15 year old. I want a permanent job in future. I want to leave Howrah Station. I want to escape from this hell soon'.

Amirul Sk. is a 15 year old boy, who lives in the New Complex of Howrah Station. Amirul is widely known as Rajdhani among the station inmates. I know Rajdhani for almost 6 years. Amirul came to be known as Rajdhani from his childhood because he used to check Howrah-New Delhi Rajdhani Express in old complex. A very thin and dark boy of medium height is always busy running to all the platforms of old complex the whole day, collecting food, empty bottles and other staffs left behind by the passengers.

Rajdhani is a Madrasi Muslim. Being asked about his address he said: 'The only thing I remember is that I came from Madras to Howrah by train. I don't remember my address in Madras. I never visited my native place thereafter.' He went on telling about his life: 'Here I check trains and collect foods. I also collect empty

bottles. I am addicted to dendrite. I consume three tubes in a day. I also love chewing Ghutka. I sleep on the platforms at night. I visited rehabilitation centres many times but could not adjust with life there. Eventually I came back to the Station. I like the carefree life in Howrah Station. One day the police sent me to the jail lodging a case against me. I am only 15 and have married two times. My first wife left me. My present wife lives with me and she also collects bottles from the trains. We live at the New Complex of Howrah station. It is called Delhi end of the platform 17. We cook food and eat there. During the Id I go to my mother-in-law's house at Panskura in Paschim Medinipur. I head a team of 12 children who work under me as rag pickers. I help them financially. I also protect them from any problem. I do not want to leave Howrah Station. It's good life here.'

Samir and Sudip. In a winter afternoon on platform 23 of the New Complex I saw two children putting the empty water bottles into the sacks. I approached them asked their names. The younger one, about 10 year, answered 'Sudip'. Sudip wore a half shirt and a full pant, not enough to protect in that winter. The older one, Samir, was about 12 years of age. Samir wore blue colour sweater and black full pant. Both of them were merely four feet height. They are brothers in relationship.

They told me that they will sell the accumulated empty bottles for fifteen rupees a kilo to some fixed traders at the Martin Bridge area near Howrah Station. They together earn Rupees one hundred per day. Sudip told me that their father is alcoholic and does not contribute his income to the family. They came to Howrah Station to earn money as they were left with no other option. Samir and Sudip spend night at their house and come to Howrah station every morning after taking breakfast. They eat some snacks for lunch and go back home at night and take their dinner there. Before taking up rag picking, both the brothers were studying in school close to their house.

Sarup Kumar Das is a 13 year old Bengali Speaking Hindu boy. He lost his father in his early childhood. His Mother Rekha Das then left her in-laws' house and started living at her mother's place at Chaingail of Howrah. After some years her mother married a Muslim man. Sarup has an elder sister and two younger step sisters. Sarup's mother, Rekha Devi, works as a maid earning Rupees one

thousand five hundred per month.

Sarup is staying in Howrah station for the past few years. He stays at different platforms but presently at platform 12 with other children. His friends are Nonia, Raju, Mongal and so on. He wakes up at around 4 in the morning and starts collecting empty bottles from the trains. He continues with his work until 10 am. Selling the bottles thus collected he earns Rs. 50-60 and buys his breakfast out of this money. After that he visits one of the NGOs which run Day Care centers and he stays over there till 4 in the afternoon. He takes his lunch over there. He then comes back to the station and engages himself in rag picking, which he continues till 9 p.m. He spends a part of his earning buying dendrite and some other drugs. He can buy some food for his supper. Again he goes back to the platform and sleeps alongside his friends.

Often the Railway protection force makes arrangement for restoration in his family. Every time he comes back to the station and does the same work. Once I accompanied Sarup to his native place. His place was near Chainmail Railway station in Howrah District. After getting down at the Chaingail station I walked with him and reached his place. It was like a squatters' settlement. Sarup's mother was sitting in front her house. His mother was so happy to see him. But Sarup shouted saying: 'I will not stay here. She is not my mother. My mother has died. I am an orphan.' Sarup Kumar was not in mood to accept the lady as his mother. His mother retorted saying 'You take back this boy. This boy will spoil other children of my family. He takes drug. He has stealing habit.' Sarup jumped out and said: 'I will kill this lady.' Actually Sarup loved his grandmother very much who is no more. He, however, loves his elder sister, who is married. He wanted to take me to his sister's place but I had to return. Sarup was angry because he could not accept his mother's second marriage. This marriage caused a detachment between the two and Sarup grew up without parent's care. His grandmother took care of him but Sarup grew wild after her death. In Howrah station he has received peer-group support. He was abused sexually by the older street boys. After being rescued by an NGO he has been sent to a rehabilitation centre.

Ananth Narayan is famous by the name Appu in Howrah Station. He is loved by others for his sweet, smiling nature. He is 15 years old boy. He can speak Bengali very well. His level of intelligence is

poor compared to his age. The boy was merely seven years when he came to Howrah Station first. He collects empty bottles from trains at New Complex of Howrah Station. He is a part of the gang headed by Rajdhani. Rajdhani helps him in getting cooked food and snacks. In return, Rajdhani gets a part of his income. About himself Ananth said: 'I am from Chennai. When I was five years old, I got separated from my family. I board a train and landed up at Kharagpur Station. I stayed there for a few days. Later I was brought to Howrah by other station children.' He has already forgotten Tamil. He stayed at the Howrah Station with other boys and did all those train checking activities. Ananth could remember his father and mother. He had two brothers and two sisters but he could not remember their names. After a few months, when I went to Howrah Station I came to know that police had caught him on the charge that he had stolen a mobile phone. His friends think that Ananth is an honest boy and the charge is false. Mejo Babu (Second Officer) of Police station knows us. He is a kind hearted man. He understood the problem. He has sent Ananth to a Children's Home. I went to the Children's Home for boys to meet Ananth. Ananth was sitting on the floor. I asked him about his health, food, education and his experience of present life. He said: 'I am confined here. I cannot go to play. I cannot go outside the school. I am often beaten up by the Dada in the Home. I don't get good food...' He asked me 'Can you please get me out of this hell? He also told me 'last week six children escaped from here.' After few days of my visit, Ananth too ran away from the Home to return to Howrah Station.

Prakash was a 15 year old boy who escaped from the Juvenile Home and came to Howrah Station. I met him at the New Complex of the Station. He was very unclean and wore dirty cloths. He was chewing tobacco and walking on the platform in a very lazy mood. Asked why he escaped from Home he said: 'That Chillar Home (Children of Howrah Station used to call children's home like that) is unfit for living. Most of the inmates suffer from malnutrition and suffer from diseases like scabies and jaundice etc. The normal and sick children use same plate for eating food. The quality of the cooked food was very poor. There is no care for children. It was suffocating. Thank God, I managed to escape. I am happy in the station.'

Prakash came to Howrah Station about five years ago. He hails from Patna of Bihar. His father is a mason and mother is a labourer. He has one brother. His mother loves his brother very much. She used to beat Prakash. Prakash did not like this behavior. His father is an alcoholic. One day he decided to leave his house. At the Station Prakash collects empty bottles from the trains in the morning time and collects coins at the Ganga *ghat* at the evening. He earns Rs. 200 per day. He spends most of his money on food and drugs like dendrite, solutions etc.

Moli, a 14 years old girl, was rescued by Santragachi GRPS in Howrah District when she was wandering on the platform. Some passengers saw the girl chatting with a few station boys in the platform; they called the police and requested them to help the girl. Passengers suspected that the girl might be trafficked by others as she was new to the station area. Police took her in their custody and interrogated her. She told the police that she has run away from a Home, but she could not remember the name of the Home. From her appearance it appeared that she was mentally disturbed, if not mentally ill. She was taken to the hospital for the medical checkup and the doctors gave medicines. That girl gave some clues like her father's name, mother's name and her native place, which were not sufficient to trace her family. The girl was sent in a Home in Howrah District. After some time the girl ran away from the Home and came back to Howrah Station, where an insecure, vulnerable life awaits her.

Summing up, the case studies, one can identify these common features: (a) uncongenial family atmosphere ejects children from their own family, (b) addiction, particularly for the boys, acts as a pull factor to remain them on the street, (c) most of the children work as rag picker, van puller and porter to draw a livelihood, (d) the children do not work independently; they work as a part of a system, a gang, which runs on informal but inescapable rules, (e) poverty in the family pushes them on the street, (f) family with disturbed relations and without love and affection makes the children flee their homes, (g) toil and hardships make the children mature early, it is possible that they are exposed to sex at an early age, (h) the carefree life at the station works as an attraction and that is why the children who were sent to Children's Homes have returned to station life, (i) girls are more vulnerable; they can easily

fall into prostitution and get trafficked, (j) the boys are subjected to sexual and economic exploitation, (k) even some boys live a family life on the station platform, and physically in general, (l) while some children work at the station during day time and go back to their family in the evening some others are homeless and they live in the station permanently, (m) children often fall into the trap of the drug traffickers; some of them even sell drugs and police use them as spy and also harass them on charges of theft, (n) children in the station are engaged in delinquent activities like stealing, snatching, bag lifting etc., (o) the station lavatory and the Ganga river come as good amenities for everyday use by the children, and (p) for poor facilities and management the Children's Homes are not considered as a means to rehabilitation of the street children. Overall, the life of the children unravel how poverty, disturbed families and inadequate social support system push a section of children into a delinquent world of station life, which is so much different from normal life that protects the rights of the children and ensures healthy upbringing.

Forms of abuse that the children face

The present study reveals that the children who live in Howrah Station and in Government run and non-government Homes are subjected to various forms of abuse. In this section I have given an idea of the forms of abuse the children face.

Physical abuse: In the case studies outlined above we have seen that child abuse has become an accepted reality. A large number of children leave their own family as a result of ill-treatment by the parents and the close kin. There are Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 and POSCO to protect the children from abuse but the provisions of the Acts are often violated. Reminded of the impact of ill treatment on the psyche of the children the parents responded saying: 'He/she is my child. I can do anything with him/her. Will you give him/her food? Why are you advising me about how I should treat my child? The child is like that. He/she does not care for anything. Many times he/she left home. If you care for him/her, take him/her with you. Then you will understand.'

Asked about abuse of children the police officers said: 'It is true

that parents send their children to Howrah Station to beg money because of poverty. Some children's parents lived their life at the station. Some of them come from the adjacent areas of Howrah Station and some of them are orphans. Those who live at the station are often engaged in criminal activities and we apply our own method to put a check on them. For maintaining law and order we cannot be soft on them; they are criminals. If the situation goes out of control we will be censured by our superiors.'

The children who draw their livelihood from the station and trains work as members of different gangs and each gang has an agreed upon jurisdiction. But, gang fights can take place when a gang intrudes into another gang's territory. Each one has separate platform and separate boggie for train checking. The gang members generally follow the agreed upon rules but the incidents of gang fight is also not uncommon. Some boys said: 'we are not allowed to enter in the compartments or trains meant for another gang and if we enter those compartments we get beaten up'. The shop keepers in the station premises said: 'these boys disturb the customers. They beg from them when they come to our shop. We feel bad because our business suffers. Customers complain us about them. When we are too annoyed we beat them up or give them a heavy dose of scolding.'

Some porters said: 'yes, it creates a lot of problems. Many passengers and vendors use their labour paying a meagre amount or just by giving them some food. Thus we lose income. These children are addicted to drugs like solution, dendrite, *ganja*, charas, heroin, *sharab* (alcohol), cigarette, *biri*, *gutka* and so on. They steal food, money, mobile phone and other materials from the passengers and even from our shops. We do not want them here. They are kangali (penniless). We gave them good thrashing when we get an opportunity.' Asked about the station children the chairman of the Child Welfare Committee said: 'they have formed criminal gangs in the station and do the organized crime.'

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse is another matter about which it is very difficult to obtain information from the children directly. But with closer observation, daily contacts, good rapport one can get a sense of sexual abuse and sexual behavior of the children. Police only records the incidents of rape or murder in the station premises. Sexual abuse occurs mainly in the families, among the children

who live in the station and even in juvenile Homes.

One boy told me 'with money you can buy kiss. We get 10 kisses from Rinki for Rs. 10.' The other boys confirmed the information. Rinki is a 10 year old girl, who stays with her mother in the station and does rag picking. There have been incidents of sexual abuse of male children by other males, especially at night. Each girl living in the station has a boyfriend who provides her security and that girl is often sexually exploited. The illicit relations may result into pregnancy and birth of a child. I know a 17 year old boy called Japani who is a rag picker and leader of a gang. He married a girl who also was a station girl. They had two children. After some years the girl left him and went away with a porter when Japani was in jail for some criminal activities. Now Japani has come back and married another girl Pinki who was the ex-wife of another station boy.

Most of the Juvenile Homes has no arrangement for protecting the children from sexual abuse. The older boys often sexually exploit the younger ones who sleep in the same room. There is no separate living arrangement for the street children, lost children, or ran away children. So it is always a heterogeneous group where there could be children who had already been sexually abused. They carry on with the habit while living in the juvenile Homes. It is possible that those who have been sexually abused in course do the same with the younger boys and girls.

Solvent and drugs abuse: Almost all the children staying in the Howrah Station are addicted to solvent like dendrite, solution (adhesive used for cycle repairing), iodex, nitrogen ten tablets, etc. These products are generally used as the adhesive and commonly available in the station premises or in the shops close to the station. Drugs like heroine, charas, *ganja*, and alcohol are also available close to the station premises. Most of the children shared their experiences with me stating that initially some of the older boys who were already drug addicts induced them to taste one drug or the other and they took it as adventure. But gradually they became addict. This seems to a peer-group effect and the station children cannot escape it. There are rackets that run the drug trade. The children justify their addiction saying: this reduces our hunger and helps forget the harsh reality of life'.

Economic abuse: The children who work as rag pickers sell their collection to the traders who operate from areas close to the station. The boys say they earn between Rs. 150 and Rs. 200 per day. I visited a shop near the headquarters of Detective Department of Howrah City Police, located at the crossing of Tikiapara Road and Bye pass. It is very small room of 8/ 4' size. Empty bottles are stock piled within and outside the rooms in sacks. A middle-aged man sitting in the shop said: 'they (street children) bring the empty bottles and we buy their collection. A child can earn Rs. 40 to Rs. 100 in a day. A child can collect 5 Kg. of bottles on an average; 15-16 bottles make one Kg. The children keep changing the shops where they sell their collection, according to their convenience. The children generally use the money to buy drugs and food items. They usually come either at noon or in the evening to sell the bottles. For one Kg. of bottles without cap they get Rs. 20 to 25 and for one Kg. of cap Rs. 15. If the bottles are clean the rate can be marginally higher. Most children spend their money on food and drugs; they can hardly save any money for their future. Indirectly they do provide cleaning service to the Station and thus save money for the railways authority. This shop owner told me that he sells all these bottles to a middle man, who, in turn, takes them to factories for recycling.

Concluding observations

The railway station provides opportunities for the children of impoverished and disturbed children some opportunities for income and for living a life of subsistence. Some even live a family life on the platform. The station children provide different kinds of services to the society while working as porter, van puller and rag pickers. Thus they not only provide labour to the informal economy but also provide free cleaning services and help recycle the used bottles and plastic. Thus, they indirectly provide labour for the big industries that produce plastic-based commodities in exchange of a very meagre amount. The street children are very much a part of exploitation network (production relations) of the bourgeois system.

However, they get into a different life world where the rights of the children are often violated. The children below the age of 14 have to work, do many delinquent activities like stealing and drug

taking. They also become sexually active at an early age. The growing girls are the most vulnerable sections of street children. Taking advantage of their poverty they are subjected to various forms of sexual abuse. They can even be trafficked to different cities. The boys are also sexually abused by the older street children and the cycle continues. The boys lose their children at an early age. They marry before the permissible age and have children. The rag pickers work as part of a gang under a gang leader and each gang operates in a particular area to avoid conflict with other gangs. The conflict among the gangs is not uncommon. Thus the station life has its own informal rules. The boys and girls who make a living based on the station are often taken into custody by police for various delinquent behaviours. The police also make efforts to rescue them and send them to their families or rehabilitation Homes. But they station boys and girls come back to their station life.

Weak family ties, uncongenial home atmosphere, poor economic conditions, peer pressures, influence of vested interests, drug addiction, unbearable conditions in rehabilitation Homes, the care-free station life, easy sex – all these block the possibility for these children getting out of their present life. The weaknesses in our social system thus allow children, the future of nation, spoil their childhood, and choose a life that reproduces delinquency. The system subjects the children to different forms of abuses and allows rampant violation of their rights.

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Fractured Ethnic Space of Rabha Tribe of North Bengal

Surajit Kumar Pal

In recent time North Bengal is turning out to be the seedbed of social unrest as different ethnic groups are out to establish their own ethno-political space. The Rabha, a small indigenous tribal group, who inhabit the forest and non-forest villages, were a single united group in terms of their socio-cultural system in the pre-independence period, but in post-independence period they seem to be a fragmented lot. They are fragmented along political and religious lines; the entry of Christianity, in particular, has brought about boundaries within the ethnic community.

Keywords: ethnic group, Rajbanshi, Rabha, forest village, conversion, Christianity, Hinduism.

I

While a section of the Rajbanshis of North Bengal are in movements for establishing an ethnic state of Kamtapur or Greater Cooch Behar the smaller tribal groups (the Rabha, Mech, the tribes of Chotanagpur origin) seem to be indifferent to this statehood movement. The present paper explores how the Rabha, a minority tribe, define their ethno-cultural space and how do they respond to the ongoing political processes in the region.

The Rabha, one of the indigenous small tribal groups of North Bengal, belong to the Mongoloid race and are mainly concentrated in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts of West Bengal. In terms of population, they have greater presence in Assam valley. In North Bengal they are concentrated in some villages (11) of Tufangunj block of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts. They are also distributed in some forest villages (23) of Cooch Behar and Buxa forest divisions; and in some revenue villages (13) of Kumargram block of Jalpaiguri district. As far as their population distribution

in North Bengal is concerned, they, by and large, are in the midst of two distinct ecological settings - the forest and the non-forest areas.

Earlier, the Rabhas were a matrilineal tribe. But now the non-forest section of them has already become patrilineal while the forest section is in the way to patriliney. The members of this community aspire to ascertain their own ethno-cultural distinctiveness in a larger socio-political milieu, dominated by the Rajbanshis, Bengalis and the immigrants and the tea garden tribes. In recent years several socio-religious and political developments in North Bengal have impacted upon the Rabha society making it difficult for them to maintain their unique ethno-cultural identity.

The two most important factors that have intruded into their socio-cultural space are (a) conversion to Christianity, and (b) Hinduisation. These two developments have left a destabilizing effect on this otherwise homogenous community. Historically the geographical space of North Bengal was occupied mainly by the people of Mongoloid race (like Rajbanshi, Koch, Rabha, Mech and other indigenous groups), and was ruled by the Koch kings. During the British rule and after Independence this sparsely populated tract has accommodated immigrants from different directions. A significant section of these immigrants came from Chotanagpur region of central India to work as tea garden workers. The tea garden tribes are called *Modesia* although they do not constitute a homogenous community. The other stream of immigrants constitutes the Bengalis hailing from erstwhile East Bengal/Pakistan (now Bangladesh); they are widely spread over in different districts across rural and urban areas. The Rabhas thus find the Rajbanshis, the Modesias and the Bengali immigrants as their dominant neighbours who can penetrate into their spatial and cultural territory. How do the Rabhas respond to such a situation? What kind of survival strategy do the Rabhas work out? The taking over of control of the resources, especially land and employment opportunities, has opened up the possibility of discord between the 'locals' and the immigrants. Some of the ethnic movements in North Bengal can be looked into from this perspective. The penetration of Christianity and Hinduism has also posed serious challenge to Rabha identity and unity.

II

Conversion to Christianity among the Rabha living in forest villages (primarily the part of Western Duars) is being taken place in recent time. This is being done by the Rabha Baptist Church Union (RBCU), based in Debitola village of Parbatjowar tract of Dhubri district of Assam. Parbatjowar tract is the homeland of many Rabha people (Kocha section, also termed as Koch-Rabha) and the Rabhas who live in North Bengal also belong to the same section. This bears certain advantage to the Rabha evangelists who have been involved in proselytizing activities since late 1970s. In the initial phase (between late 1970s and early 1980s) conversion was confined to a few villages. Later, mainly between mid-1980s and early 2000s, majority of them have accepted Christianity in search of a new identity. Christianity has given the Rabhas an identity and a kind of empowerment since, prior to this process, they were relatively isolated from the neighbouring Hindu and Muslim communities and had a minimal control over resources, human and material.

Prior to conversion the Rabhas were influenced by a new faith named Janjogi (a faith spread by a Nepali monk in different forest *bastees* in 1950s). They kept that faith alive till mid '70s and certain sections still adhere to it. This faith redefined the importance of sun, air, earth and moon in human life and its linkages with their socio-cultural life of the people. Acceptance of *Janjogi* by a section of Rabhas segregated them from the non-Janjogi Rabha. Even when a section of Rabhas accepted Janjogi as its faith they were called Hindu. The Hindutva forces (the Sangh Parivar) in recent years have swung into action to drive the Christian Rabha back home. The efforts of the Hindutva forces to bring the non-Hindu masses back into the Hindu fold stem from a political motive; the main objective is to brush off cultural diversities that India is known for and establish one nation and one culture. The influences of Hinduism were more conspicuous among both indigenous and the tea garden settlers. The agencies of the Sangh Paribar like RSS, Bajrang Dal and the Banabasi Kalyan Ashram (BKA) is active in different areas of North Bengal targeting the tribals in rural areas and tea garden workers.

Although Christianity has spread among a section of Rabhas it has failed to engulf the entire Rabha population; a majority of

them are still Hindu. To counter the spread of Christianity among the Adivasis (both indigenous and immigrant) the outfits of the Hindutva forces have made their base in different forest villages and tea gardens of Western Duars. Acceptance of Christianity by section of Rabhas bears significance since they were kept out of the Hindu caste-fold or Hindu society and were not assimilated into Hindu culture for many years. Thus despite claiming to be Hindu they lived with a strong sense of isolation from the mainstream (caste) Hindus.

The Hindutva forces operate on three basic principles - (a) *samparka sthapan* (making relationship), (b) *samiti* (organization), and (c) *prakalpa* (project) when they target a community. The principal aim is to motivate the non-Hindu masses to come into the Hindu-fold. In Western Duars the Banabasi Kalyan Ashram (BKA), the education wing of the Sangh Paribar, has been working since last few years with the aim of spreading education among the adivasi children, and of course indoctrinating them with the ideals of Hindutva (according to the Hindutva forces it is not religion but a way of life). Besides education these organization do some healthcare and other welfare activities as a part of its mission.

It appears from field study that the Samparka Sthapan Kendras are active in over 50 villages of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts. Apart from this, 11 *Sishu Siksha Kendras*, primary schools, physical education centres (sports centre) etc. are functioning in different Banabasi villages. The Hindutva activists also organize *dharma jagaran* (rejuvenation of religious ideals) and mobilize people for installation of Hindu idols and construction of *mandirs*.

The Hindutva activists have organized the local people, which include the Rabhas, for installation of Shivalinga and Hanuman idols in different tribal villages. This step is eco-oriented and not totally alien to the adivasi cultural tradition. By their neighbours they are treated as Banabasi, meaning forest dwellers, whose livelihood and culture have a direct link with forests. The *adivasis* are by and large the nature worshippers and keeping parity with their cultural tradition the Hindu protagonists have adopted such steps. The Rabhas live in the villages of western Duars and are now divided into two religious groups, Hindu and Christian, and follow the religious practices following their respective faith.

The Rabha of this region came under the influence of one political outfit - Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Gorkha League (ABAGL) in the 1970s and early 1980s. Its activities were mainly confined to the tea garden and forest areas of western Duars. The leadership was in the hands of the Nepalis (Gorkhas) and a few immigrant tribal leaders. The Rabhas of the region have, by and large, refused to side with this political outfit and its goal.

The Rabhas living in Tufangunj and Kumargram Block areas are largely Hindu by religion. In this area the Hinduisation process started in 1930s and continued in the 1940s. In post-independence period, during 1960-1970, the process gained momentum. However, the Rabhas are well aware that they will never be a part of the caste system and will never be accepted by the mainstream Hindus. Therefore, they consciously retain their tribal identity. They are recognized as a Scheduled tribe and get the benefit of reservation.

III

The Rajbanshis of North Bengal (at least a section of them) are demanding a separate state Kamtapur or the Greater Cooch Behar State for several decades. The movement is not confined to North Bengal alone; it is spread out to some districts of Lower Assam as well. The Rajbanshis, who lead this movement, have tried to mobilize the Rabha and other indigenous groups like the immigrant Adivasis who work in tea garden. Barring the Rabhas living in non-forest villages all groups have maintained a distance from this movement. A section of the Rabhas has extended a kind of moral support to the movement, but, at the same time, refrained from active participation in it. Stuck to their tribal identity and socio-political standing they do not want to be a part of a larger ethnic movement.

The leaders of Kamtapur statehood movement tried to mobilize the local masses against the immigrant Bengali population. The Uttarkhand Dal, came into existence in 1969, first demanded a Kamtapur state, consisting of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Malda and West Dinajpur districts of North Bengal. Later three subdivisions of Darjeeling district were kept out of their map of

the state since another statehood movement, or Gorkhaland was going on these. The Uttarkhand Dal later became the Kamtapur Ganaparishad. This political outfit could not make much headway in mobilizing the tribal inhabitants since the latter too do not want to lose their distinctive identity. In mid-1970s the Rajbanshi leaders took fresh initiatives in mobilizing all local indigenous groups including the immigrant tribals under the banner of Uttar Banga Tapasili Jati O Adivasi Sangathan (North Bengal Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Organization - NBSCSTO) for strengthening its support base. As in Kamtapur movement the leadership of this new political outfit was in the hands of educated Rajbanshi youth. But, the Adivasis of the region showed little interest. The Kamtapur statehood movement targeted the Bengali immigrants who, according to its leaders, have taken over the major economic and political capital of North Bengal. The immigrant Bengalis have also turned the local people into a minority. According to them, this has taken place under the direct patronage of the mainstream political parties. In effect, the political power in North Bengal at the level of different democratic and administrative bodies is in the hands of the Bengali immigrants. The Left parties and other national parties had strong organizational presence among all the ethnic communities in North Bengal and they undertook political programmes to retain their support base. The ruling parties in the state do not support the idea of creation of Kamtapur state and they have tried to divide the ethnic communities (the tribal communities) as well. The Rabhas of non-forest setting are not a homogenous political community; they extend their support to political parties like the CPI (M), Forward Bloc, R.S.P, Cong (I) and now Trinamul Congress and so on. The distribution of benefits of various government-run programmes (under rural development schemes), the distribution of land *patta* land etc. can also divide the members of a particular community while selecting the beneficiaries.

The Rabhas living in different locations of North Bengal and Assam (in Rongdani, Maitori, Pati, Dahuri, Kocha and many other places) are trying to be united as an ethnic group by forming an organization called the Rabha National Council (RNC) which was formed in the early part of 20th Century. In North Bengal the organization started functioning only in 1970s. However, it never gained the necessary momentum due to weak leadership and weak

organizational network. It is also possible that the nationalist ideology of the organization did not appeal to the ordinary Rabhas who took a pragmatic approach to politics by siding with the political parties that are dominant in the area. Thus the RNC failed to take off in North Bengal. With this the efforts to ethnic formation in the form of united Rabha community failed.

IV

From the foregoing discussion it appears that the ethno-cultural space of the Rabhas living in North Bengal and Assam has been fractured first along religious line and second in terms of political division. Both Hindu and Christian forces are active to exploit their economic and social vulnerability while converting them in the guise of welfare initiatives and religious activities. The presence of national political parties with their packages of mobilization counters their move for ethnic unity. The ruling parties in particular have enough maneuvering power to draw their support banking on its 'distribution' power. The strong presence of Kamtapur and Gorkhaland statehood movements also has left negative impact upon the unity move by the Rabha ethnic organizations.

Spirituality, Healing and Science

Mallarika Sarkar (Das)

A growing body of literature suggests a positive connection between spirituality and physical health. Despite the strong research evidence that spirituality and health are positively correlated, spirituality has been regarded within mainstream medicine as largely irrelevant to the work of clinical team. In keeping with the growing scientific interest in spirituality and complementary treatments, this article attempts to explore the interface of science, spirituality and healing. The present article addresses the importance of the inclusion of the spiritual history in order to bring about faster healing of the individuals.

Keywords: spirituality, religion, health, healing, alternative treatments, spiritual counseling, psychotherapy.

Meaning of spirituality

The term 'spirituality' is hard to define. It is derived from the Latin word 'spiritus' which means 'breath'. Benor (2006) has defined 'spiritual' as the 'transpersonal awareness arising spontaneously or through meditative and other practices, beyond ordinary explanations, and to which are attributed an inspiring and guiding meaningfulness, often attributed to a Deity'. Spirituality thus refers to the belief of the people in a power which is greater than the human beings; it is personal in nature as each individual experiences spirituality in their own ways; it leads to the creation of higher consciousness and helps man transcend himself/herself into some other world where he/she can find utmost peace; it provides men with the meaning of life and gives them the strength to find against all anomalous situation. Suffice it is to say that 'spirituality' has been described as 'being' where the deeply personal meets the universal; a sacred realm of human experience. A fundamental part of spirituality is thus the thought that all can bond themselves up with and become united with the power present in the universe and its associated mysteries. It profoundly

affects lives of the humans and allows for the growth of a robust sense, which makes him/her realize that life is an essential part, is a gift that must be maintained properly, looked after and cared for.

Religion and spirituality: the two different realms

Many a times, people consider religion and spirituality to be synonymous, but there is a fundamental difference between the two. It is often by recognizing the difference between religion and spirituality that one can begin to understand what spirituality means to different people. By spirituality we often mean a presence that transcends the individual sense of self. But it should be noted at the very outset that spirituality is not religion. By religion we mean a codified system of beliefs, practices and behaviours that usually take place in a community but not necessarily concerned with the attempt to gain direct experience of the transcendent. The concept of spirituality is inclusive and affects everybody irrespective of the person being in some religion or being an atheist, but unlike spirituality, religion is potentially divisive and adopted only by some. It is always possible that religion may or may not include a sense of the spiritual and spiritual individuals may or may not be religious. As Alan Shelton had put that spirituality is not material in nature therefore, one cannot provide others with proof of being spiritual in nature. It is men themselves who can experience spirituality. It is subjective in nature rather than objective. Therefore, to be spiritual means to rise above the temptations of the body and senses to realize the final truth, and to be religious means to observe rituals and rites.

Exploring the relationship between health and spirituality

Physical wellbeing of an individual is always one of the most desired wishes of any individual. If an individual is physically active he/she can perform his/her social tasks spontaneously and receives appreciation for his work in the society, but once he/she suffers from any kind of pathology or ailment he/she cannot perform his/her tasks properly. Therefore, physical health always occupies the first position in the wish list of any individual. There is enough literature which suggests a positive connection between health and

spirituality. Yet these studies evoke sharp criticism. Perhaps the most frequent criticism is that these studies are metaphysical, radically violating the accepted canons of science, which place them outside the domain of empirical sciences. But however there are evidences that suggest a positive connection between spirituality and health. Neuroscientists have examined how the brain functions during reported spiritual experiences finding that certain neurotransmitters and specific areas of the brain are involved. In keeping with the growing scientific interest in spirituality and complementary and alternative treatments, prayer has garnered particular attention among some behavioral scientists. Thus, the role of spirituality and healing are scientifically proved to be effective tools to promote a healthy lifestyle among the human beings. People nowadays suffer from many kinds of pathologies such as cancer, aids, and many other incurable ailments. A physician too provides people with empathy and respects their spiritual belief when they suffer from any kind of health hazard. Spirituality promotes the concept of meditation, which invariably leads to the wellbeing of the body-mind-spirit of the individual. Health care professionals must be convinced and knowledgeable with the process of spiritual care giving. There are many diseases from which individuals suffer for which biomedicine cannot be the sole solution of providing healing. Religion and spiritual involvement promotes the following things in a health care system:

- a. Affects medical decision-making among the individuals.
- b. Promotes conflicting beliefs in medical care. A few Christian groups believes that instead of taking drugs or receiving medical treatments, it is rather better to pray for healing or perform other religious rituals.

Indeed, the acceptance of the role of spirituality in modern medicine is underway. Evidence suggests that those who follow a spiritual path in their life live several years longer than those who do not follow such path, and that they experience a lower incidence of almost all major diseases. Therefore, the health care professionals must respect the belief system of their patients and must not allow their own biased viewpoints to be imposed upon their patients as that may bring about an adverse result. Therefore, spiritually developed people are proved to have a greater zeal or quality to survive.

The effectiveness of alternative/complementary therapies

Until recently, the Western medical world looked upon allopath as the primary therapy for any illness. But today there is a growing trend of using a variety of alternative therapies. Increasing concern of the people regarding the adverse affects of the biomedicine on the patients while treating them, are making them to choose for an alternative by which they can achieve healing on the basis of their faith with minimal side effects. There are many factors like the socio-cultural and personal (health status, belief, attitude, motivation, etc.), underlying a person's decision to use alternative therapies. One cannot sum up the causes for the growing popularity of the alternative medicine but it can be divided into three main divisions (Pal, 2002) -

- i. Dissatisfaction:** Patients are dissatisfied with conventional treatment because it has been ineffective, has produced adverse side effects, or is seen as impersonal, too technologically oriented, and/or too costly.
- ii. Need for personal control:** Patients seek alternative therapies because they see them as less authoritarian with more personal autonomy and control over their health care decisions.
- iii. Philosophical congruence:** Alternative therapies are attractive because they are seen as more compatible with patients' values, world-view, spiritual/religious philosophy or beliefs regarding the nature and meaning of health and illness.

Therefore, the rise of popularity of the Alternative Medicine in the modern 21st century is enormous. People in spite of being scientific in temper do realize that alternative medicines are also beneficial as they meet their healing purpose as well as their spiritual purpose.

Spiritual counseling and psychotherapy

Psychotherapy and Spirituality are well connected with each other. The psychotherapists of the modern century are taking up the notion of spirituality so that they can connect well with their clients

and promote a better bond of trust. In this way the patients open up and the therapists themselves can treat their clients preserving their religiosity and spirituality.

McCullough (1999) promoted the fact that patients who are spiritual in nature can be treated well if the spiritual course of action to heal them is undertaken. Patients who practice spiritual rituals are believed to talk more about spiritual or religious matters (Rose, Westefeld & Ansley, 2001).

Thus, spirituality provides calmness, serenity as well as tranquility in the minds of the patients thereby affecting their health status. It helps them to heal from within. It creates a strong bond between the patient and the counselor. They feel confident on the methods of counseling and thus the goal of healing the clients is achieved by the counselors.

Spiritual healing in the hospitals

The recognition of the involvement of spirituality in healing has grown significantly over the past several decades. Recent studies have shown a statistically significant relationship between the religious involvement and the better mental health. According to World Health Organization (WHO): 'Patients and physicians have begun to realize the values of elements such as faith, hope and compassion in the healing processes. There are mainly two reasons for the involvement of spirituality as an aid to healing. First, spiritual concern helps us to cope with the challenge with the disease; it often makes us feel better, despite the illness. Second, strengthening our spiritual connection may alter the biological process of disease. As a result of these discoveries, medical schools, often recognized to be the domain of science, now include courses on religion, spirituality and health in their curriculum (Micozzi, 2006). Medical students are beginning to examine their own spirituality as well as that of their clients to learn how to take into consideration a spiritual history, and to communicate better with clients about their spiritual concerns.

Conclusion

Spirituality, healing and science can be looked into as three inter-

related fields even in modern time. Even in this age of science in 21st century, people seek for alternative health systems, as they do not depend entirely on the biomedicine. Spirituality invokes healing within an individual, which helps rapid recuperation of man in the society. Health and spirituality of people in the society are very much connected to each other and the former impacts upon the latter positively. Alongside the advances in science spirituality can help faster healing of individuals.

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Tracing the Roots of Missionary Education in Darjeeling Hills

Niyati Rekha Sharma

This is a brief historical narrative on the Christian missionary education in India, particularly in Darjeeling hills. The article examines whether missionary education was an agent of enlightenment, emancipation or as an instrument of colonial conquest. The history of colonial/missionary education has been examined in the light of Gramscian concept of 'cultural hegemony' and Althusser's concept of 'ideological state apparatus', highlighting the strategies of the colonial governance. Darjeeling, a colonial enclave, more like a private domain to the ruling race then, turned out to be a hunting ground for the missionary, who, among other activities, played a lead role in spreading Western education which continued to shape post-colonial education not only in Darjeeling but in the rest of India.

Keywords: Education, Colonialism, Cultural hegemony, Ideological state apparatus, Christian Missionary.

Introduction

The Western education in India and in Darjeeling hills came as a part of missionary activity and as a part of Western governmentality. The missionary activities in nineteenth-century colonial India had spread along with the consolidation of British Empire. The present paper gives a sketchy account of how missionaries played a pivotal role in spreading Western education in Darjeeling hills as a part of missionary agenda. In a sense, it was the Christian missionary organizations which took initiatives in meeting primary educational needs of the native people.

History of modern education in India

Before exploring the missionary education system it is important

to throw some light on the history of how and when the missionary education had started, for what purpose and who were the beneficiaries. One has to dig into the history of modern education in India to search answers for these questions.

After a few decades of its rule the East India Company felt shaken by the continued resistance by the Indian rulers, although weak and uncoordinated. So it took steps to transform its nature from trading organization to a territorial power; it wanted to be more strategic in order to consolidate its power. As Panikkar has said: 'Colonialism thus sought to project the image not of a brutal destroyer of indigenous culture, but of its preserver and benefactor' (Panikkar, 2007: 10). The British undertook the 'civilizing mission' where they had created a belief among the 'natives' that they would improve their moral and material conditions. The mission of emancipating the 'natives' from their own miserable condition through colonial outlook was considered sufficient rationalization for their conquest in the Indian sub-condition (Panikkar, 2007).

It was for this agenda that the Charter Act of 1813 was introduced and the missionaries were given a freehand in introducing Western education in India. At the initial phase the task of spreading education was assigned to the zealous Evangelicals as a part of their moral obligation and political credence (Laird, 1987). The important to recall here that, in England, 'In former times education was, for the most part, of the church, by the church, and for the church, and it was only as the advantage, or the necessity, of extending it to laity for the purpose of conforming and expanding the influences and authority of the church, was realized, that knowledge was more generally imparted' (Basu, 1934: 195-196). At the time of introduction of East India Company's Charter of 1813, education in England was very much under the control of the missionary church. Hence the framers of the Charter could not think of imparting education in India without the help of missionaries. In this way the colonizers introduced a system of education in India with the veiled strategy of initiating a process of political socialization. Macaulay, one of the Governor-Generals of India, in his Minutes (1835) had written: 'we must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions, whom we govern; to form a class of persons Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, words,

and intellect' (Basu, 1934: 87).

What we can observe here is that the idea of cultural assimilation occupied the center stage of colonial governmentality and education was taken to be an effective organ of the state apparatuses, to make political action more effective in terms of the ruling class interest and as a means to legitimation of its rule. This can best be explained by Louis Althusser's concept of 'ideological state apparatus'. According to him education has a tremendous power; it is where ideologies are generated which ultimately act as a facilitator for the reproduction of production relations (see, Strongman, 2007). So introducing English medium schools at that time was to 'aim at turning (...) the thought and the feeling and fancy of the subjugated people into English channels, to feed and augment English interest, and to direct the ideas and sympathies of the natives towards their present rulers' (Basu, 1934: 52) who were also then owners of the forces of production (like land and capital) and trade (and labour, to an extent). This conforms to the idea of Marx who has said: 'the ruling ideas of each age have been ideas of its ruling class' (Subramanian, 2009: 30). What we can observe here is that 'With the shaping of the ideological apparatuses of the state in the early part of the nineteenth century, the cultural consequences of domination had begun to be experienced. At the same time a large number of voluntary organizations, either independent or set up by the state, had come into being, which became conduits for the dissemination of Western liberal values' (Panikkar, 2007: 8-9). At that point in colonial time the most important task of the state was to raise the larger mass of people to a particular cultural and moral level which would match up to the needs of the productive forces for growth and the interest of the ruling class in power.

One can also fall back on Antonio Gramsci to understand the role of education in modern statecraft. He argued that education cannot be properly appreciated unless one locates it in terms of its functionality in establishing and maintaining ruling class 'hegemony'. He has written in his Prison Notebook that 'every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educative relationship'; he saw school as an active source of political hegemony. Through such institutions ruling class ideology was instilled into the thought process of the subject to win their consent for the need of economic

base (Buttigieg, 2002). So they actually constructed a system of domination in India where persuasion rather than coercion was used unlike in the case of Africa and South America where method of cultural eviction by demolition was adopted (Mackenzie, 1993). We can also say that the moral and intellectual manipulation rather than force was used by the ruling classes to establish hegemony in the backdrop of the colonial rule India. One must not forget to mention here that defying the colonial objective Western education opened up wisdom and enlightenment in many directions as it also lit up anti-hegemonic and anti-colonial ideology and struggle for independence. It helped creation of an ambience where Indian collective mind could enter into a dialogue with global (especially Western) wisdom.

History of missionary education in Darjeeling hills

Unable to cope with the unwelcome Indian hot summer the British established a chain of hill stations in India and built sanatorium, schools, hotels and clubs for the exclusive use of their own race. In the due course the hill station started serving the needs of European business executives working in private industrial and business houses, and also the Christian missionaries (Ramachandran, 1976: 59-69). The reason for which this hill stations continued to be the place of attraction for the Europeans was because of their image of aloofness. The creation of these enclaves had a major role to play for the presence of British in India. It maintained a perfect balance between the public and the private spheres where a sense of community was sustained. It was due to this and many more other reasons that these hilly terrains were outnumbered by women and children in contrast with the demographic pattern of the European population in the plains. Thus schools and clubs were built to cater to the needs of the European population who preferred to live in the hill stations (Kennedy, 1996).

Against this historical backdrop the Christian missionary and their educational activities had started in the Darjeeling hills. In the initial phase, all was interested, only in the education of the domiciled European children; the 'native' children of the hill tract were excluded from this enterprise. It was only with the initiative of a former Church of England some independent Baptists were sent to India and one of them Rev. William Start started the

Moravian mission in the year 1841. Rev. Start is believed to be the first Christian Missionary to come to Darjeeling. With the help of Gossner, Rev. Start under his own expense brought more than twenty German missionaries. They even translated and published some biblical books in Lepcha and Nepali, and distributed them among the natives. A school for the Lepchas was started at Takvar in Darjeeling. After some preliminary ground work Rev. Start retired and went back to England in 1852. C.G. Neibel followed up the missionary activities in Darjeeling hills until his death on 9 October 1865. Christianity and its influence grew with the growing size of European population in the years to follow. To serve this population mostly the cantonment, Anglican English medium church, namely St. Andrew's Church, was built in the year 1843. In the mean time a new sanatorium was established in the hills namely the Eden sanatorium. Here again, good schools in European model were required for educating the children of Government servants or of those classes which could not meet the expenses of the education of the children in their native land (Perry, 1997).

In 1846, the Vicar Apostolic of Bengal Dr. Carew sent some Loreto nuns to establish a Convent school in the hills for the children of the European families. This school was later named Loreto Convent (a Roman Catholic institution for girls). By the end of the 19th century few such schools came up in the hills, namely, St. Paul's School (Church of England) in 1864 and St. Joseph's College (Roman Catholic) in 1888, both for the boys. The schools set high standard since the Europeans wanted to give their children same quality of education as they had back in England in their growing stage (Dewan, 1991)

Another missionary group, namely, the Church of Scotland Missionary Society, came to the hills by the closing decade of the nineteenth century. Unlike some of the earlier Roman Catholic Missions, they had taken up the mission of educating the 'natives' of the hills. Rev. W. Macfarlane led this group of missionaries. It was because of his painstaking endeavour that the Eastern Himalayan mission (EHM) of the Church of Scotland spread its network and activities in Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong, Terai, Bengal Duars, and Sikkim and also to neighbouring countries like Nepal and Bhutan. He had a mission to integrate the natives into

Western civilization en route Christianity and Western education. He opened vernacular schools in many places in the hilly terrain. He also established a normal school to train Nepali and Lepcha teachers who would teach in schools in an around the district; they were given free lesson of Bible as a part of their course work. He took initiative in producing several Christian literatures in Nepali and Lepcha languages. In 1892, another mission, namely, the Scandinavian Alliance Mission (SAM) appeared in Darjeeling. The European missionary groups came to this region also because they wanted to enter Tibet. Several of their attempts to enter Tibet failed and they finally settled down in Ghoom establishing a headquarters there, which was several miles away from the main town of Darjeeling. Following an agreement with the Scottish Mission this group confined their activities among the Bhutias and Tibetians. Some other small groups of independent missionaries also stepped into the hills but they had a limited and short-lived influence compared to that of the Eastern Himalayan Mission (Perry, 1997; O'Malley, 1999). One can notice a common form in the modus operandi of these missionary groups and that is to set up a church alongside every school which is a clear indication that the spread of Western education in an area where illiteracy was universal such means were used to convert the natives of the region into Christianity. As Dewas has observed: '... ever since the advent of the missionaries, they had chosen the pen rather than sword in proselytizing and in disseminating education' (Dewan, 1991:104-105). Looking at the situation in Darjeeling hills now one can conveniently say that it is primarily because of the Christian missionaries that Western education and Christianity have spread in a big way among the 'native' people in the region.

By the year 1905 many schools were established separately for the European and native inhabitants of the hills by the two leading missionary groups. The Roman Catholic mission gradually came out of its shell and started extending its services to the 'native' people, although for its missionary cause. The delay of Catholic mission in opening up its activities among the natives was that the district administration was apprehensive of conflict between the two groups had they been allowed to work in the same region and among the same communities. In the initial phase the Roman Catholic mission had its activities limited only in Darjeeling and Kurseong sub-divisions while the Scotland mission worked only

in and around Kalimpong sub-division (except for the Roman Catholic station at Pedong for the Bhutan mission). Such division of space for two missions gradually waned and they started entering into each other's zones (Dewan, 1991). In the assessment of Basu 'In the days when the East India Company was unwilling to accept a direct responsibility for the education of the Indian people, the Christian missions came forward and established some earliest modern schools and colleges' (Basu, 1974: 3). With whatever motives the missionaries had come to India, of philanthropic and proselytizing or political (colonial) nature the Darjeeling hills and its naïve 'native' population provided a highly fertile, hitherto unexplored 'happy hunting' ground.

Conclusion

The history of missionary education in India is heavily grounded in the imperial rule for nearly two centuries. The British Raj purposefully allowed missionary activities in India as a part of its colonizing agenda masked in a mission for civilizing the 'uncivilized'. Decoding the 'civilizing mission' one can say that it was in reality a mission of the colonial power to create a hegemonic culture by spreading Western education and spreading Christian ideals and thus produce some faithful collaborators of colonial rule.

In the same way, the Christian missionaries had come to Darjeeling hills firstly to serve the children of the European administrators. But in their mission of direct and indirect proselytisation they consciously opened up education to reach out to the natives and pose as their liberators. Some of the missionaries might have done it motivated by philanthropic ideal to serving the native people who were living with a range of ontological problems. But, the natives turned out to not only to be the passive recipients of ruling culture but had actively participated in it. In course of time the European Missionary groups could produce a class of indigenous missionaries who would carry their mission further even after they had left. The end result has been Indianisation of western education and Christianity – a process that continues not only in post-colonial Darjeeling hills but also in other parts of India.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

A Comment on *The Gurkha's Daughter*

Kumar Chhetri

*Although the British colonizers, anthropologist and administrators have produced a bulk of ethnographic accounts, travelogues, military accounts, and research papers there is no sufficient English literary work which centers on the life of the Nepalis. The earlier available works were either based on the life of Nepalis in Darjeeling or on the Himalayan kingdom (Nepal), whereas the present work *The Gurkha's Daughter* by Prajwal Parajuly is unique in the sense that it engulfs the life of the Nepalis both in Nepal and its Diasporas around the world in eight short stories. Despite being fiction the stories carry the social reality of everyday life experiences of the Nepali people and its Diasporas.*

Keywords: English fiction, Nepali Diasporas, Gurkha, gender, caste, refugee, immigrants, society and structure.

The book *The Gurkha's Daughter* has captured my attention since it is for the first time that an Indian Nepali writer has received so much of national and international recognition and newspaper coverage. The *Hindustan Times* describes the book as 'the best short story collection that you read in a while'. The author of the book has become the youngest Indian to sign a multi country deal with Quarcus publisher, London. Another interesting point that struck me is the name of the author - Prajwal Parajuly. He appeared to be a high caste Nepali but I was not sure because among the Hindus similar surnames could be seen in more than one castes or communities. The identity of the author, his birth place, his community, his nationality - all this came to be the points of curiosity. This is because of the Nepalis are widespread over different states and regions of the Eastern Himalayas.

The book portrays the 'chronic lives of the Nepali-speaking people

across the world in eight short stories'. It provides a lot of information about the Nepalis and serves as a route map for those who have not been to the Nepali speaking/dominated regions of the world. The author has tried to demystify the non-monolithic national identity of the Nepali speaking community in the contemporary world. He also brings to the fore the issue of otherwise broken ethnic boundaries and tries to differentiate ethnicity from nationality. Though the British colonizers, anthropologists, administrators and others have produced a bulk of ethnographic accounts, travelogues, military accounts, and research papers and so on, there are a dearth of English literary works which centers on the life of the Nepalis.

Among the English literary works, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, the winner of the Man Booker prize in 2007, was based on the life of the Nepalis in Darjeeling. However, for an insider it may appear to be an infamous work because of the negative portrayal of life of the Nepalis, based on the author's limited understanding of the social history and social formation of the Nepalis in India. *Palpasa Café* (translated from Nepali) is another well known novel written by Narayan Wagle against the backdrop of the Maoists insurgency in Nepal. It tells the story of an artist during the height of the Nepalese Civil war. It is regarded as an anti-war novel which portrays the negative effects of the civil war on the countryside of Nepal. There are several other English literary works which are based on the life and culture of the Nepalis by the writers like Tapashyaa Thapa, Goutam Upadhaya and others but they fail to come out of the periphery of the Himalayan Kingdom (Nepal). An autobiographical essay of Prof. Tanka Bahadur Subba gives a critical self-account of an Indian of Nepali origin in the Indian diasporic situation. His other work 'The Nepali Diaspora in India's North East Hill Region in the Current Context', draws a critical analysis and raises several questions on whether the Nepalis of North East India should be considered a diasporic society or not. A Work like *Gorkhas Imagined*, a collection of short stories written by Dr. Indra Bahadur Rai (translated into English by Prof. Prem Poddar, Professor Michael J. Hutt, Anmol Prasad and others) narrate the course of formation of Nepali/Gorkha identity in India.

Looked against this literary backdrop *The Gurkha's Daughter* by

Prajwal Parajuly¹ is perhaps one literary work that portrays the life of the Nepalis both in Nepal and its Diasporas around the world in eight short stories. Unlike other available English literary works, the present book is reflective of the lives of Nepalis around the world in general and South East Asia in particular, which has been thoroughly missing in the earlier available English literary works.

The main character of the first story 'The Cleft is Kali' is a disfigured servant girl who plans to flee Nepal. She was given to a Nepalese lady, Parvati, by her mother for household work because she was having too many mouths to feed in poverty infested region of Dooars². Her mistress uses her free labor just by giving a false assurance that her cleft would be operated upon and she would be sent to Mumbai (India) where she can be a film star. The author has beautifully plotted the story and left a question to the readers whether Kali would be able to flee Nepal to free herself. The expressions used by the author such as 'Your brain is as dark as your face' (p. 2) 'your mother didn't want another girl child' (p. 9) 'you were sick from eating all that mud outside your hut', 'And you didn't have any underwear on', 'You uncivilized being', and 'you are still Adivashi³ in your mentality' (p. 10) narrate the pattern of stigmatization, and subjugation of a black-skinned tribal girl on grounds of class, caste and gender, which precisely represents how a black tribal girl is looked at by the non-tribal privileged people in the region. Her widow mistress Parvati is also not happy with her life and wants to come out of the traditional boundaries but her society does not permit her to do so.

'Let the sleeping dog lie' is about 'a shopkeeper in Kalimpong who faces an impossible dilemma'. It is based on the life of a Bihari-Muslim and his wife who earn their livelihood by running a small *pan dokan* (beetle vines) in a rented house owned by Dr. Pradhan. Munnu, a second generation permanent dweller of Kalimpong, has been excluded by the locals just because of his community identity. He perceives the present place as his own land and he does not have second home outside of Kalimpong. He has always been identified by the locals as a migrant/panwala Bihari Bhaiya⁴ from his Desh (Uttar Pradesh or Bihar). The story has addressed how voices of the marginal people are suppressed by the members of the upper class dominant community. The story talks about

how the upper class people maintain their supremacy over the weaker sections of the society. The story touches upon the fear-psychosis of the members of a migrant, minority community.

'The Father's Journey' is about a father's reflection on 'his relationship with his only daughter'. The protagonist of the story, Supriya, belongs to a high caste, prosperous and well settled family of Gangtok. The story revolves around how Supriya had to sacrifice her beloved, a well educated low caste (Pradhan) young man for the sake of her community. The author succinctly expresses various social problems and the suffering of a young high caste Nepali Brahmin girl through expression like 'Ever since I had my periods, you've become an entirely different person. You locked me in the room for seven days. Mua told me I couldn't see the sun, that I couldn't see a man's face all those days there, I cried. I felt guilty, because I thought I had committed a sin' (p. 76). The present story shows how Supriya had to sacrifice her individual liberty and take sufferings under pressure. Here the author tries to bring in some important sociological issues like how caste relation and socialization processes of a community affect the everyday behavior of an individual. The story disseminates a message to the readers that man becomes great by heart not by caste.

The story, 'Missed Blessing' is about a poor educated but unemployed youth of Darjeeling who has to look after his old grand-mother and cannot afford to move outside for better future. The frustration of an educated but unemployed youth has been portrayed in the story. The author has successfully criticized the burden of the Nepali culture especially the Dasain celebration (major festival of the Nepalis) where a lot of expenditure has to be made. The author has added flavor to the story by bringing in two characters of Christian missionaries who came to Darjeeling for evangelical purpose.

The story 'The Gurkha's Daughter' is about a Gurkha girl who tries to 'comprehend her father's complaints' and crises. It is reflective of the discrimination and subjugation faced by the Gurkha army while serving the Western countries. The story is basically a longing for belonging of the two young Gurkha soldiers who were fighting for the British government. They were hopeful of being granted citizenship rights in the West since they were serving them. The story shows that though the Gorkhas are lauded

as a 'martial race' in reality they are martial race not by their choice but under the compulsions of bread and butter. The present story tries to disprove the martial race thesis which epitomizes the Western outlook for the Gorkhas serving in their army.

'No Land is Her Land' is a socio-psychological story where Anamika Chettri was forced to leave Bhutan, her native place. She had to take asylum at the Bhutanese refugee⁵ camp in Nepal but neither country considered her as 'the daughter of the soil'. The story portrays the everyday life experiences of the Bhutanese refugees in one of the rehabilitation camps in Nepal. They have been treated by the Nepalis as unwanted in their land and this is reflected in expressions like 'Go back to your damn country. Go to Bhutan. No one wants you in Nepal ...' (p.142). This indicates to a process of 'theorization' of those Nepali refugees who speak same language, follow same culture and tradition as that of the citizens of Nepal. The Nepali refugees were thrown out of their native place, Bhutan. The story unfolds how social, political and economic crises faced the Nepalis, and how ethnic Nepalis were made to feel like others, how they were kicked out for no other reason than ethnicity (p. 149). The present work narrates the multi-ethnic character of the Royal kingdom of Bhutan and the genesis of the Bhutanese refugee problem. Anamika saw only one possibility of getting rid of all those problems, that is, to go for 'third world settlement' (America) which is yet to come by. She has both pain and pleasure in her heart and mind because nothing has been certain; whether their settlement ensures more freedom, justice, and meets their minimum basic need or dehumanizes them by making them to fight against the Muslims. She has been subjugated and alienated by her native place and her second husband Ravi because she failed to give him a male child. The title seems to be unequivocal and extends its meaning to signify those Nepali women who are treated as a burden by their family members and as a means for getting a male child to maintain the lineage of the husband. Since they are refugees and unwanted everywhere no land is their land and no home is their home.

'Passing Fancy' is about the kind of adjustments an old couple makes after their retirement when their kids stay abroad. The present story shows the changes that have been brought about by modernity in different social institutions and in the life of the

people.

Two young Nepali speaking immigrants Amit and Sabetri from Darjeeling and Nepal respectively meet at Manhattan, New York, in the story 'The Immigrant'. While Amit is from a middleclass family Sabetri had an impoverished family background. They moved to America in search of better future. Sabetri learnt to live in America in a pitiable condition; she had to adjust with seven people, three of whom were male, in a single bed room apartment. The story demystifies the popular notion that the Western countries provide more comfort and give good fortune to migrant workers. This story shows the struggle of the two young Nepalis in the West for their survival. This story appears to be based on author's own experiences in the West.

The present work is basically a search for a post-colonial identity. It is for the first time that the lived experiences and sufferings of Nepali people of different castes, classes and regions are brought together in a single volume of literary work. Most of the characters have been shown unhappy with their life because their individual liberty and happiness have been put under threat by the structural forces. They have a lot of complaints about the historical and social space in which they live and about the systemic constraints that make their life difficult. It seems that the author has been deeply moved by the socio-economic and political problems faced by the Nepali-speaking people around the world. The empathy of the author for the suffering lot has been transferred in the characters and the stories. I feel that the author has highlighted the sufferings and the negative side of the ethnic Nepalis while ignoring the brighter sides and the successful cases. Had there been one or two stories narrating the achievements and success of the Nepali Diaspora the book would have had a balance in representation. There is however nothing to deny the appreciation that the writer deserves.

The stories in the book articulate the voices of the subaltern, struggling sections of society. The storyteller also touched upon the gender discrimination among the Nepali speaking population. The author deals with the gender issues with great deal of sensitivity. The social subjects that the writer has touched upon include family, community, uprootedness, discrimination, Diaspora, culture, tradition, gender, ethnicity, identity and

nationality which bear high degree of relevance in everyday life of the people and which are the subjects of sociological interest. Despite being fiction the stories in the book have made the characters and their concerns a living reality. Full credit goes to the author for depicting the everyday life experiences of the Nepalis around the world.

Acknowledgements

I am thankful to Prof. Avijit Mitra who encouraged me to read fiction and to my research guide Prof. Saswati Biswas for her constant encouragement and support. I am highly indebted to Prof. Sanjay Roy, Prof. Rajatsubra Mukhopadhyay and Dr. Swatahsidda Sarkar for their valuable guidance. I express my gratitude to my friends Pranay, Smriti, Babika, Pryem, Niyati and Gunjan for their moral support, suggestions and comments. I am very thankful to the Nepali Sahitya Sansthan, Siliguri, for their support.

Notes

1. He is originally from Gangtok, capital of Sikkim (India), who holds a master degree in Creative Writing from the University of Oxford's Kellogg College. Earlier he worked as an advertising executive at The Village Voice, New York. He is also the Author of "Land where I Flee" from Quarcus book, London.
2. Dooars region lies in the Northern part of West Bengal in the district of Jalpaiguri. The ethnic matrix of this region is of mixed types; particularly dominated by the Tribal of Jharkhand origin, Nepalis, Biharis, and Bengalis etc. They were brought by the British Government as the tea plantation laborers. This region witnessed a high rate of women and child trafficking rate due to the closing down of tea estates and under-development etc. (Chakraborty, 2013)
3. The Word *Adivasi* literally means 'aboriginal', 'son of the soil', '*vanabasi*' etc. but its notion among the non-tribal people in the region is different; for them it means a black facial community who are basically uncultured, uncivilized, less-developed and non-rational. These types of notion are also popular among the tribe themselves, for example, who belong to the educated upper section and converted Christians discard their tribal identity, language, culture and tradition.
4. Though the word '*Bhaiya*' literally means 'brother' in Hindi language, it is often derogatorily used by hill people to identify the people of Indo-Aryan origin of the plain such as, Bihari, Marwari, Bengali, Punjabi and people from the other Indian states. A large number of Bihari and Marwari

traders are found almost everywhere in Darjeeling district and Sikkim Himalayas.

5. While going through the present story I felt like I am at *Temai camp* (one of the rehabilitation camp after crossing *Dhulabari*,) where we used to visit with my roommate in our college days (2006-09). Now, he is in New York (third world settlement) but his parents denied going and they are still living there in *Temai camp*. I still remember his identity card in which his address was 'Lost Nepal'. A similar notion that I got while going through an autobiographic Nepali novel (*Nirwashan*) written by Mr. Tek Nath Rizal, one of the leaders of the Bhutan Democratic Front. Prof Michal J Hutt had produced research works on Bhutanese Refugee which also shows a similar notion as the present story of Parajuly.

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BOOK REVIEW

Chumki Piplai: *Migration and Human Variation: A Study on Tribal Tea-Labourers*. New Delhi: Mittal Publication, 2014, 209 pp., INR 750 (hb). ISBN 81-8324-460-2

The book under review is the modified version of the doctoral dissertation of Dr. Chumki Piplai, a physical anthropologist by training. The idea of the book is quite interesting as it brings in a comparative perspective to understand the biological changes, if any that may result from the social process called migration. Piplai situates the problem of the study among the two tribal communities and located them both in tea zone of northern Bengal and also compared the case of biological changes (of one community) by considering the situation of their place of origin. To be more specific the book provides an account of anthropometry conducted on two prototypes: 1) comparison of an ethnic group- the sedente and migrant Oraons, who are genetically similar but were placed in different ecological conditions and 2) comparison of two different ethnic groups (the Oraons and the Tamangs) sharing similar ecological environment and socio-economic conditions.

The author furnished a huge collection of anthropometric data drawing comparisons on the sedente and migrant Oraons and between the two ethnically different migrant tribal groups located in the same ecological condition - the Oraons and the Tamangs. There are eight chapters in this book dealing with the various dimensions of physical anthropology applied to understand the research problem. The introductory chapter is well equipped with a synoptic view of human migration - the major issue the book deals with. She explained how from the time of early hominid (*homo-erectus*) adaptation to various environmental conditions due to migration did take place. A great deal of literature survey has been made on the question as to how human migration leads to the adaptation to new environment and how does change occur to their morphology as an ensuing process.

The author seemed to be quite confident in her proposition that migration does affect human biological traits although the effects

can be both positive and negative. It may affect the demographic traits like fertility, mortality, physical growth, adult body dimension, hematological conditions and even blood pressure. Migration may also affect the adaptive domains of each migrant group on the basis of socio-cultural factors. These aspects though significant from cultural anthropology standpoint, did not figure out much in Piplai's work as her work was conducted from the vantage point of physical anthropology. Based on these arguments the author made modest attempts to examine two particular issues- (i) to identify biological changes which might be the effect of migration to a new habitat by comparing the sedente and migrant Oraons and also (ii) to ascertain whether the biological changes were due to migration or ethnicity. In order to explore the first objective the author compared the sedente and migrated Oraons while for the second she did choose to compare two genetically different migrant tea labourers - the Oraons and the Tamangs - of the Duars region of West Bengal.

The second chapter of the book gives us a glimpse of a short history of tea industry of India in general and of Duars region in particular. Piplai looked into the fact how the tea labour was almost composed of migrant population than the locals because the latter were not ready to work as plantation labourer. She gave a brief account of both the Duars region of Jalpaiguri district and Gulma region of Chotanagpur area covering issues such as history, socio-economic conditions of the people located in both the places. The chapter also dealt with the author's study design which is based on conventional method of comparison of a group in its native habitat with its counterpart in a new habitat, and comparison with another group in the same habitat.

The third chapter presents a vivid description on the demographic aspects of the studied groups. There were several tables containing the comparative figures of the population showing the demographic differentials on issues such age, sex, marital status, multiple marriage, fertility etc. The huge amount of field data was analyzed through numerous tables representing the data in a comparative manner. The methods used for analyzing the data were mainly statistical. Besides chi square test and graphic representation of data the study also involved the methods like age cohort, binomial test and Crow's index.

Chapter four deals with anthropometric measures on a comparative basis of physical growth, adult body dimension, haematology and blood pressure. The discussion of anthropometric measures follows in chapter five where the author placed her findings. The results of the study showed that the effects of migration on demographic traits especially on fertility and mortality were more significant among the migrants compared to the sedente group. However, in case of physical growth the findings of the study did counter the existing trend of research outputs available in this field. Major works on migration studies do reveal that the migrants due to their improved living conditions have better physical stature compared to their sedente counterpart. On the basis of her study Piplai discounted the existing research findings and came to the conclusion that migrant Oraons did reveal lower body mass, short height in children, and children with lighter and lower values of chest girth compared to the non-migrated Oraons (p. 165). The result might be related to various factors ranging from socio-economic, cultural environment of the migrants. However, the scope of her research limits the author to explore the causes of such differential results in a holistic manner. Although, inhabiting the same physical environment the ethnicity related factor of the migrants played a major role in the biological differences they inherited. This was true of the Tamangs as compared to the Oraons in her study. Though these ethnically different groups were situated in the same ecological set up and they shared similar socio-economic conditions yet they inherited certain differences related to their adaptation in a new habitat.

The book was published in the year 2014 but the data used in it were pretty old. The field work (conducted in phases during 1979, 1981 and 1984) done for the study and the final publication of its results in a book form has a gap of over three decades. One may wonder why the author did avoid updating at least the secondary data (gleaned from Census and other sources) used in the book. Unlike the Oraons (of the present field situation) whom the author compared with their place of origin, the Tamangs, who were claimed to be the natives of Nepal (p. 27) were studied in their 'new habitat' alone (avoiding the sedente counterpart of the Tamangs of Nepal) and were compared with the Oraons (whose sedente counterparts of Chotanagpur region were considered by the author). The sub-title of the book gives the impression that it is

a study on 'tribal tea labourers'. However, it is not very clear as to what were the considerations on the basis of which the author referred to the Tamangs as Tribes. This appears to be a matter of serious concern when one finds that the Tamangs were declared as a Scheduled Tribe (only in the states of Sikkim and West Bengal during 2002-03) in the new Millenium only. Assuming that the concern of an anthropologist and the state may not necessarily coalesce especially with regard to the much debated idea of 'who/ what is a tribe' in Indian situation, it was expected that the author would have presented some justifications behind her consideration of the Tamangs as a tribe.

The book is significant for those interested in the migration study based on anthropometry. However, it does serve less to the interest of those who are inclined to look at migration from the stand point of cultural anthropology. This book will be a further addition to Piplai's serious academic interventions, which she had already made (even a cursory look at the bibliography can reveal this) during her tenure of service in Anthropological Survey of India as a trained physical anthropologist.

Babika Khawas

Doctoral Student

Department of Sociology

University of North Bengal, Darjeeling

<estrella.bebika@gmail.com>

SOCIAL TRENDS

Journal of the Department of Sociology of North Bengal University

Volume 2, Number 1

March 2015

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Editor's Note

I am happy that we are bringing out the second volume of *Social Trends, The Journal of the Department of Sociology of North Bengal University*. While the first volume, which was published in March 2014, contained articles exclusively on gender related issues the present volume includes papers dealing with various issues of social importance and contemporary relevance. The present volume is perfectly in line with our declared objective, which was spelt in the first volume out as thus: 'We see *Social Trends* as a good platform for the young scholars where they can try their hands in scholarly writing and gain experience and confidence, which would help them in growing as mature scholars in future'. We have articles written mostly by the young scholars who represent social science disciplines like sociology, political science, economics and history. Alongside the articles by young scholars we have included two articles by two senior faculty of our Department and one senior anthropologist. We have one article by a friend from Chittagong University which has added an international flavor to the journal. Some encouraging signs are noteworthy. First, we have received a very good response from the contributors; second, we have received a book from a Delhi - based publisher for review; and third, we are on schedule in bringing out this volume. I acknowledge with deep sense of gratitude the cooperation that I have received from the contributors and my colleagues, the associate editors, in bringing out this volume.

I, on behalf of the editorial team, would thank the members of the Advisory Committee of the journal for their encouragement and suggestions on matters relating to publication of the present volume of the journal.

Sanjay K. Roy
North Bengal University
March 2015

