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TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the Editor

Dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure to present the sixth issue of *Explorations*. The present issue consists of two papers published under the 'Articles' category, one Review Essay and two papers under the 'Research in Progress' category.

The first article, titled *National Register of Citizens: Politics and Problems in Assam*, by Sanjay Barbora discusses the updating process of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam which entailed elaborate use of technology, law and the bureaucracy to determine citizenship. While acknowledging the benefits derived from the use of technology, the article emphasises on transformation of citizenship debates through a closer, nuanced attention to ethnographic details about other contingencies, such as floods and climate change, which greatly influences the habitats of a large section of the population.

The second article, titled *Skill Development and Youth Empowerment Schemes in Sikkim: a Gender Perspective*, by Yumnam Surjyajeevan and Sandhya Thapa identifies the skill development and empowerment schemes of the government for the youth of Sikkim and evaluates how they are responding to such schemes. Further the article makes a critical assessment of the achievements and gaps of these schemes. While doing so, it has also taken into consideration the gender dimension.

The next article, titled *Select Ethnographies on Water in India: a Review*, by Kanaka Himabindu Pottumuthu and Haripriya Narasimhan is a review essay on select ethnographic studies on water from different disciplinary perspectives, viz. anthropology, geography, urban studies and cultural politics. Based on such studies in both urban and rural India, the authors argue for increased attention from social scientists working in and on India to ethnographically capture people's interactions with a resource like water that is of considerable political, economic and social significance.

The first paper under Research in Progress by Sapana Devi Karam is titled *The Next Resistance or Change? Manipur in the Neo-liberal Era*. This paper examines the changing cultural attitudes and tastes, especially in the context of material and

symbolic culture, among the rising middle class in the wake of the growing influence of the neo-liberal economy in Manipur. The paper also focuses on the activities of the non-state actors towards restriction of the mainstream Indian culture, and argues that in the face of the emerging consumerism among the middle class the strength of such resistance is on the wane.

The second paper under Research in Progress by Aashish Khakha is titled *Adivasis, the Fifth Schedule and Urban Development: a Study of Greater Ranchi*. This paper looks into the various contestations surrounding the urban development of Greater Ranchi area in the tribal state of Jharkhand. The paper recounts how such development initiatives result in blatant violation of the various laws for the protection of the tribal people (Adivasis) and examines its impact on the tribal society living in that area.

Explorations invites your contributions for future issues of the journal. We will appreciate your feedback or suggestions on the journal.

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National Register of Citizens: Politics and Problems in Assam

--- Sanjay Barbora

Abstract

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam has raised several issues pertaining to citizenship, migration and political mobilisation throughout the region. An administrative exercise of this order that uses technology, law and the bureaucracy to address historically contentious grievances within a region of a country is an interesting phenomenon for social scientists working on citizenship in the 21st century. This is more so since approximately nineteen lakh persons from various walks of life and ethnic heritage have been left out of the rolls, leaving every stakeholder (including the ruling party in Assam) disappointed with the outcomes. While there have been great benefits derived from the use of technology, this article argues for closer, nuanced attention to ethnographic details about other contingencies – such as floods and climate change – that influence the process, especially since the process is being promoted for the entire country.

Key words: Assam, Bureaucracy, Citizenship, Climate change, NRC, Technology

Introduction

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) has occupied a prominent position in political discourse and mobilisation in Assam for the 2014 and 2019 parliamentary elections. The process can be seen as the culmination of years of political unrest and negotiations between civil society organisations and the government. In 2013, the Supreme Court of India took cognisance of two writ petitions filed by non-governmental organisations from Assam and ordered the state and central governments to update the NRC adhering to the Citizenship Act of 1955 and the (amended) Citizenship Rules of 2003. After two rounds of publication of drafts of the register, a partial one on December 31, 2017 and a final draft on July 30, 2018, the final list was published on August 31, 2019 (Barbora, 2019)[i]. The NRC has polarised public opinion, at least among those who question the norms and rules of citizenship. Many commentators and advocacy groups in Assam see it as a much-needed solution for a long-drawn

issue of immigration from different parts of the subcontinent but with a greater public focus on migrants from neighbouring Bangladesh. Yet others raise caution about the excesses and shortcomings of the process, where bureaucratic overreach, advocacy overdrive and technological failures have led to tragic consequences for thousands of women and men in the state. The fact that senior representatives of the recently elected government (in 2019) have called for NRC to be extended to all states of the country has made the issue more deserving of sociological inquiry and attention.

In this article, I focus on the social and political outcomes of the NRC process and examine the contradictory and contentious politics of citizenship in Assam. In this article, I draw from my two-year engagements with a *char*-related advocacy group, humanitarian relief agencies, journalists and government officials involved in ascertaining the status of those left out of the NRC. I argue that the NRC issue forces us to revisit old questions about citizenship, while engaging with challenges that are peculiar to the 21st century. The challenges I refer to, such as climate change and conflict-induced displacement, have a universal impact on the planet, though communities around the globe feel their effects differently. As a sociologist working on agrarian change and human rights in Assam, I am drawn to extend the NRC debates with questions that animated social science research in the 20th century. How is farming organised? What is the role of the peasant, the small farmer, or subsistence farmer in the farming process? How much control are they able to exercise over political decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods? The subject of these questions was rooted to the soil, primarily in agriculture and on whose behalf various modes of political mobilisations had taken place in the 20th century in India (Weiner, 2016).

These questions have been central to the development of sociology (and social anthropology) in India, with a significant number of scholars basing their empirical work around issues of equity, representation and rights (Desai, 2019; Dhanagare, 1983). Indeed, for a better part of the 20th century, national liberation struggles, socialist revolutions and civil wars, were waged on behalf of the figure of the downtrodden peasant/farmer (Alavi, 1965; Wolf, 1966). With the emergence of a world order that was characterised by bounded nation-states that were free from their former European colonisers in the middle of the 20th century, the peasant/farmer became a paradoxical but foundational image for postcolonial states and political leaders (Verwimp, 2000). The peasant, though backward and rooted in the past, was still seen as the moral grounds upon which a new

citizenship regime would emerge in postcolonial societies (Deutscher, 1971). Hence, many of the arguments for the enforcement of the NRC process are actually based on permanent settlement, adult franchise and ownership of property. Those individuals and organisations who oppose the presence of immigrants on their soil, do so because they (immigrants) appear to disrupt the continuity of the social and economic fabric of the land, taking over farming activities from indigenous groups, controlling petty trade and businesses, and eventually the political sphere as well (Bhattacharyya, 2018). The immigrant, in this schema, is seen as someone who takes away the entitlements from the citizens – especially those that work the land – who expect the state to protect their interests.

Yet, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) point out in their seminal work *Empire*, as we move into the 21st century, the figure of the citizen, with its sureties of rights and entitlement, is not as stable a category as it used to be. In its place, we have a host of other, equally compelling identities to contend with – refugee, displaced persons and so on. The authors argue that under specific conditions of capitalist and technological globalisation, the nation-state's capacity to exercise sovereignty has declined in many fundamental ways. Writing specifically about the turn of the experience that shaped politics in the United States and West Asia, they pointed out that individual nation-states (like Iraq and Afghanistan) had had their sovereignty rescaled, retaining hollowed out institutions that worked in favour of global capital. This form of sovereignty, they add, is acted upon a mobile subject that is forced to serve the needs of capital. In celebrating the eventual triumph of this subject, they see global labour moving across boundaries that were earlier bounded within nation-states by capital, creating the multitude and rendering redundant older concepts of national citizens. While there have been critical readings of *Empire,* a contrarian fact that is important for this essay sticks out in their analysis. Even as technology and capital take on 20th century national borders, the national-territorial form has reappeared, as one that is capable of politically excluding others. As the NRC process shows, judicial advocacy built on populist struggles against 20th century colonial settlements have converged with technology and bureaucracy to create an exclusionary regime for thousands of persons. Most of those excluded belong to rural, agricultural communities that saw political violence and displacement throughout the last quarter of the 20th and the first decade of the 21st centuries. How then, I ask, are we to read something as polarising as the NRC, as an object of sociological enquiry for the 21st century?

Since the announcement of the draft on July 30, 2018, one has had to confront the fact that more than four million people had their names excluded from the list, leading many to commit suicide (Saikia, 2019). This has divided civil society and public opinion vertically. Many student unions and political parties, as well as the administration attempted to show that there would be no violence in dealing with the aftermath. Other members of civil society and political opinion have pointed out that the exercise itself was faulty and the rhetoric that pushed it was divisive in nature. Political commentators, advocacy groups and public intellectuals have spent considerable time and energy in persuading those who disagree with their view of the soundness of their positions. Since then, the final list of the NRC was published on August 31st, 2019 and it left out more than nineteen lakh persons, leaving a wide cross section of civil society, political parties, political parties and the ruling party unhappy with the outcome (Barbora, 2019).

For many political commentators in Assam, the NRC was seen to be the legal and political way to address the two issues that have influenced political mobilisation in Assam since the mid-20th century: (a) autonomy and (b) social justice. Autonomy demands have been central to political mobilisation in Assam after 1947. Starting from the Naga and Mizo insurgencies in 1950s and 1960s, the province also saw the assertion for separate statehood in Meghalaya in the 1970s. These movements reflect the desire for territorial control over land, as well as political aspirations of indigenous communities who were part of the 'light-touch' administrative set up under British colonial rule (Chaube, 1968; Goswami, 2012). Movements for social justice centred around demands of social justice reflect an insistence on citizenship and equality under constitutional law, especially among socially marginalised groups like the tea workers and immigrant communities who had come from various parts of colonial India (Guha, 1977). Both issues – autonomy and social justice – have had a very tense relationship with one another. They have led to decades of violent conflicts, where the state has used a combination of military subjugation and co-optation of voices of dissent to deal with the situation.

Occasionally, certain events highlight the tensions in the political project for social justice among those who feel excluded by the NRC. Even though people from various walks of life, religious and language speaking communities were affected by the NRC, some were doubly disadvantaged because they were Muslim and of Bengali heritage. Drawing attention to this experience, poets like Hafiz Ahmed write:

Write

Write Down

I am a Miya

My serial number in the NRC is 200543[ii]

These lines, as also the efforts of a few other poets who assert that they write 'Miya' poetry (as opposed to Bengali or Assamese), were enough to warrant the filing of First Information Reports (FIR) in various police stations in Assam by people who felt aggrieved, as the poems had painted the entire Assamese community in bad light[iii]. This is where the community, land, homestead begins to show deeper fissures within the social fabric in Assam. Sections of Assamese speaking people and organisations that represent their interests have gone on to use the local state machinery to further exclude persons from the NRC. Anthropologist Ghassan Hage (2003) alludes to similar processes of moral panic that is happening on a global scale, where local communities find cause for conflict with those perceived as outsiders in their space. His work on settler-colonial paranoia about immigration in Australia might not have an exact equivalence in Assam, though the roots of both fears are associated with entanglements between three processes: (a) colonial history, (b) ethnic identity and (c) control over resources (Barbora, 2019). Each of these processes have had an impact on the other, nowhere more so than in the claims over land, which has been marked by tragic conflicts between many communities since 1983 (Barbora, 2018).

However, in order to have a better empirical understanding about the issue, I proceed to introduce three sections that will describe and analyse the complexities confronted by social scientists who wish to study and comment on the NRC process in Assam. In the first section, I draw on field data from one rapidly transforming rural block in Barpeta district to engage with Hardt and Negri's theory that the 'multitude' has the possibility of making a political breakthrough in their fight against the 20th century state that promotes capitalist development. Here, I draw from a growing research among social anthropologists that assert that human existence is irrevocably linked to climate change and to the myriad ways through which other non-human factor impact politics in our time (Crate & Nuttal, 2009). In the second section, I focus on the role of the bureaucracy, specifically the manner in which it has enacted the NRC process on the ground, to

understand how it exercises rationality by emphasising on procedures over deeply complex social and political realities. Here too, I draw on the growing literature around state practices of enumeration, documentation, exclusion and expansion of welfare activities of the state (Sharma & Gupta, 2006). In the third section, I analyse responses from various civil society actors in Assam to understand how concerns about citizenship are interwoven with claims over natural resources, land and identity.

Floods, Climate Change and Being from Barpeta

Mozidbhita is a *char*[iv] that is close to Balikuri non-cadastral (NC) village in Mandia block in Barpeta district. It is, in many ways, a typical settlement of the itinerant poor in Assam. According to the 2011 census figures, Mandia is the largest rural block in Barpeta district, which covers 587.06 square kilometres. It is also one that has the most number of households at 65,511. It has a national highway (NH 427) that runs through it. There are no major industries in Mandia and of the 109,270 workers enumerated in the census, a little more than half are engaged in agriculture. There are no major industries in the block, so most of the predominantly male working persons are engaged in daily wage work and petty trade (Census of India, 2011). Situated approximately 20 kilometres west of Barpeta town and across the Beki River, Mozidbhita (in 2018-19) had 208 households, a significantly smaller number than the 296 who had moved to the current char around four years ago. The families had moved due to the erosion of their land and homesteads by the river. They had come from four neighbouring villages: Mozidbhita, Tapajuli, 4 No. Bhera and Balikuri NC (non-cadastral). In the summers, monsoon rains along the flood plains and in neighbouring Bhutan always bring vast quantities of water to the district. In 2004, engineers and administrators of Bhutan's Kurichhu dam, situated upstream on the River Beki, had released water causing unprecedented floods in Barpeta[v]. The annual monsoon-induced floods make it imperative for government departments and aid workers to recover such civil engineering related data for their work. Mozidbhita would qualify to be included as a part of the increasingly vulnerable spaces of human habitation that is likely to be affected by rising levels of water on the planet, both due to climate change and human-induced follies like construction of faulty embankments and dams (Arnell & Gosling, 2016; Hirabayashi, et. al, 2013).

Houses in the chars like Mozidbhita are built on elevated land that is usually raised with extra soil from elsewhere. The materials used to build the houses are a combination of bamboo, mud and corrugated tin. This makes them extremely cold in the winter and unbearably hot in the summer. However, such material is easy to come by and once the earth has been adequately raised, members of the community construct the houses. Although there are three primary schools in the area, one was lost due to land erosion in 2018. Children are taught in Assamese, most struggle to complete high school as they have to go to nearby Balikuri or further to complete their middle elementary and higher elementary levels. Most families in the char grow *bao* rice and jute during the summer, and vegetables and lentils during the winter months. In the past four years, the local families have had access to high yielding variety (HYV) seeds and fertilisers for their winter vegetables and some families use both abundantly. Almost every existing household has cows and buffaloes, which they often used to sell in times of distress but are not able to now, as the price of cows have decreased since the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed a government in 2014. There are three shallow tube wells that are used in winter to grow the vegetables. However, during the summer rains, they are almost always inundated by floodwater from the Beki River. In winter, the Beki is situated 200 metres away, a distance that is rendered redundant in the summer when the river spreads across the plains in every direction, making settlements like Mozidbhita look like tiny, marooned rooftops and homesteads waiting for relief and rescue. The families in Mozidbhita have two major sources of income: daily wage and from the jute and vegetable farming produce. The plant-based and daily wage incomes are seasonal. In some years, certain families earn more doing daily wages than from farming. The average income for a family of five would be approximately six thousand rupees per month, but this is never steady and expenses for medical needs are very high. Social scientists use a variety of terms to describe the motivations of people who live in such adversarial spaces. Most often, they are seen to be people escaping the reach of the State (Scott, 2009); or those who are given to deterministic fatalism, for wanting to risk their lives in the face of natural disasters of calamitous proportions (Baqee, 1998). Both descriptions come to mind during the floods, as the jute plants struggle to stay above the surging water, livestock scramble to the cramped raised land, and shallow pumps and latrines disappear under the water.

One of the most stable and safe buildings in the area is the Parag Kumar Das Char Library, named after one of Assam's best-known journalist and human rights

activist, who was assassinated by a death squad for his forthright views on the right to self-determination for the people of Assam. For many Assamese intellectuals, Parag Das embodied a fiercely autonomous political spirit that was symptomatic of struggles for self-determination in the region (Baruah, 1999). It was started in 2015 by left-leaning activists from the area as a statement of their political beliefs. During the floods, the raised earth provides refuge to cattle and people alike. At such times children are not able to access the library, nor do they see the need to refer to the eclectic books on display. The activists had requested their comrades and sympathisers in urban Assam to donate books that would be useful for children, with an expressed request for material that had been published in Assamese. Instead, many of the books on the four wooden shelves are in English and range from children's novels to computer software guidebooks. They are stacked against corrugated tin walls, where there is a bullhorn microphone dangling on a shelf, 'to warn people when the river starts breaching the banks at night', according to one of the activists who lives in the area.

The activist group has been working in the area since 2015 and have among them graduates of social work and other humanities subjects. Educated in some of the reputed universities and institutes in Assam, they zealously promote development of the char areas and focus mainly on education, health and livelihood issues. Other than English, the activists are keen that children in the char area learn Assamese, a language that frequently lands older, unlettered residents vulnerable when they travel to parts of upper Assam to work in the brick kilns. Their inability to speak a particular tonal form of Assamese allows local student groups to exercise everyday acts of micro aggression on the migrant communities[vi]. This kind of humiliation rankles the activists, driving them to focus on issues of poverty with greater passion. Their internal discussions and debates with other groups of developmental NGOs have made them concentrate on the flood as a particularly universal experience for the people of the char, one that requires a similar collective remedial effort. Raising the plinth of the houses is an obvious engineering innovation that they feel will help reduce a cascading effect on vulnerabilities for the people of Mozidbhita. In 2019, only a few homes survived the rising waters of the Beki despite having raised plinths and once again, many families were forced to move towards the highway and neighbouring areas where they could live in make-shift camps until the waters had receded.

'It is difficult to access these areas', said Rajib[vii], a social worker employed with a non-governmental organisation working on developmental issues and based in

Guwahati city (situated approximately 100 kilometres away), on July 19, 2019. He and his team were surveying the swathe of land that had been inundated by floodwaters and were distributing tarpaulin sheets, drinking water and medicines to hundreds of families who had to leave their homes and come to higher ground. Rajib and his colleagues had been worried about the outbreak of disease and high mortality of animals during and after the floods. The camps, they say are necessary for survival. Nevertheless, they are also testimony to a series of damaging side effects on those who are forced to live in them for weeks. For people of the chars, the camps are disorienting places where they have little control over their lives. It takes a mental and financial toll on women and men alike, as they spend weeks without work, access to their jute and bao rice and livestock. Women are especially vulnerable as they adjust to a life with strangers with whom they have to share toilets and living space. Rajib's colleagues, like the activists in Mozidbhita, are always concerned about the rising levels of dropouts and child marriages among the char dwelling communities. These have a bearing on the NRC process. Working with the local activists of the library, Rajib shares his concerns about the numbers of children and women whose names had been left out of the NRC and wondered if char habitation had anything to do with their exclusion from the first draft.

Chars are partly the outcome of a colonial history of raising embankments in agricultural lands that were rich in revenue earnings, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. Historian Rohan D'Souza draws on archival material from the period to show how the draining of rivers and diversion of water by civil engineers was key to the creation of a particularly oppressive feudal order in eastern India (D'Souza, 2015). Following the transfer of power in 1947, the newly independent government of India dedicated resources towards expanding irrigation and protecting agricultural and grazing areas from flooding. In Assam too, changes in hydraulic flows led to far-reaching changes and conflicts in a wider area – causing floods in some, aridity in others and always resulting in the gradual movement of people from one place to another (Barbora, 2018). Swiss geographer Christine Bischel noted similar conflicts following the collapse of the legal and political order in the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. In her detailed account of the conflicts in the Ferghana valley, she writes about the pressures that local communities have to endure, once the centralised water-sharing regimes disappeared and were replaced by antagonistic communities that acted as if on behalf of their national governments (Bischel, 2009). The aridity of the Central Asian region and the water-soaked ecology of

the South Asian chars, therefore, have one feature in common. They force their inhabitants to be resilient, where people are constantly adapting to their landscapes in order to make a living and where water determines the production cycles of the land. In the chars however, water remains the most significant source of wealth as well as the biggest threat to human life (Lahiri-Dutt, 2014). Significantly, they become part of a regional and global debate on climate change, especially with regard to how little say they have in decision making processes in their engagement with the adaptive regimes (Paprocki, 2018). This poignant point is most visible during the floods, when people are forced to leave home and flee to a higher ground. In 2019, newspaper reports from Assam noted that many people refused to leave their inundated homes for fear of losing documents that would jeopardise their NRC status[viii].

Documents, Bureaucracy and Technology: Rolling out the NRC

The headwaiter of the rice hotel near the Public Works Department (PWD) and District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) is patient and forthcoming about the day's menu with individuals who have an air of urgency about them. They are usually bureaucrats and NGO officials who visit town for flood-related work. In the summer of 2019, the numbers of officials working on the NRC were added to the existing one. As he took orders, the headwaiter would inquire: 'Baan paani ne NRC?' – flood or NRC – eliciting a response either way from the officers. He would proceed to ignore other customers, seating the officials first, regardless of a waiting group of persons. In 2019, the citizenship issue was entangled with flood and climate change issues in many discursive ways. Both processes have created unprecedented pressures on local bureaucracy. In Assam, almost all government officials, including teachers employed in government colleges, have had to report for NRC duty. At the district-level, all departments too have been involved in NRC work. During the floods, their tasks have diversified to include relief and rehabilitation of affected persons. The NRC demonstrates the state's ability to categorise and penalise citizens, even as flood relief demonstrates its ability to provide care, relief and rehabilitation. How did these different practices, especially those related to categorisation and incarceration following the NRC process come about and did ordinary people have ways to counter this? Do personal views of local officials play any role in an activity that is both driven by technology and supervised by governmental machinery and embodies rationality and impartiality? In order to understand the

importance of both questions, one has to focus on the NRC timeline and the political environment within which it was resurrected in Assam.

The first NRC followed the 1951 census and appeared in government circulars issued to reassure agitating groups in Assam that the immigration issue would be addressed by the administration. This meant taking recourse to laws like Foreigners Act, 1946 and Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 1939. Such a process was in marked contrast to the upheavals of the tragic transfer of people between India and Pakistan in the west, where these laws were put aside to accommodate people escaping violence in West Pakistan. This difference between the two partitioned sectors of British India is important, as it alludes to the different ways regional governments responded to the humanitarian crisis. Drawing attention to the government's unwillingness to address the movement of people in the east, as well as the persistence of civic efforts to raise the issue of immigration, Sanjib Baruah (2009; 2008) underlined the different ways in which the partition narrative appeared in Assam and showed how it continues to have an impact on contemporary debates. He highlights the contentious identity and resource politics that led to the Assam Agitation (1979-1985), the Assam Accord (1985) and subsequently, three decades of insurgency (1979-2009). Baruah's arguments about the Indian state's deleterious policies in subverting democratic institutions and processes in Assam are backed by evidence of the government's policies of using military coercion to deal with dissenting political opinion in Assam. In his recent writings on the NRC, he addressed the government's lack of preparedness in conducting such a process, drawing attention to the manner in which key South Asian neighbours like Bangladesh, were not informed of the outcomes of this process, especially when political rhetoric was directed towards a historically specific population from the neighbouring country (Baruah, 2018).

In the recently concluded NRC in Assam, the government sought to minimise these shortcomings in two ways: (a) by throwing in the entire state machinery, including all departments of the government of Assam, the Registrar General of India and the Supreme Court, into the process and (b) using technology to iron out human frailties that are attributed to the everyday workings of the state in developing countries. The 2015 edition of the NRC required individuals to show their legacy data that included having a family member's name in the 1951 NRC and/or having the individual (or a direct family member's name) included in the electoral rolls as of March 24, 1971, a day after the Bangladesh liberation war was formally announced. In case a person was unable to find her/his name in the

legacy data, the administration allowed for twelve other documents that could be shown as evidence, provided they were granted before March 24, 1971. These were: (i) land tenancy records, (ii) Citizenship Certificate (iii) Permanent Residential Certificate (iv) Refugee Registration Certificate (v) Passport (vi) LIC Policy (vii) Government-issued License/Certificate (viii) Government Service/Employment Certificate (ix) Bank/Post Office Accounts (x) Birth Certificate (xi) Board/University Educational Certificate (xii) Court Records/Processes. These documents have an aura of middle-class respectability to them. They attest to a person having ownership of property, access to education, jobs and documents that allow her/him to travel at will. However, many itinerant working people – who constitute Assam's unorganised labour sector – were unable to produce these documents. Every person had to take these documents to the nearest NRC Seva Kendra, a government building designated for the purpose of gathering documents of individuals and loading it on to a database. For many trying to register their names in the database, this was their first encounter with computers and information technology. Hence, they were also daunted by the finality of the exclusion, when it happened, since there seemed to be no human error, or authority that could be chastised for failures. As a bureaucratic network of officials and staff, the NRC process was grafted onto the local administrative structure of governance as a time-bound project that had external support for a specific period of time. This allowed the state coordinator of the NRC to deploy various officers (and offices) to ensure a smoother functioning in places where human interface with potential technological shortcomings seemed inevitable.

In most cases, the diligence of individuals and groups meant that most people were able to provide documentation. Years of activism had built into the system some checks and balances that could ensure a process of redress, as well as a human interface that people could appeal to. Therefore, when one's name was excluded from the NRC, a person could appeal to a Foreigners Tribunal (FT), a body that was originally constituted by the government in 1964 and later amended in 2019, specifically to deal with the cases that had come up after the exclusions of 2018. With support from the central government, the government of Assam recruited 1000 members (as those judging the cases under the FT are called) into the FTs. Any advocate between the ages of 45 to 60 was eligible to apply and would be considered for a contract of 2 years, where they would be employed by the government of Assam. An interesting, but leading criterion for their recruitment was stated early on. The government notification stated that the

person (applying) should '… have a fair knowledge of the official language of Assam and its (Assam) historical background giving rise to foreigner's issue'[ix]. Such conditionality has severe consequences for people who do not speak standardised Assamese, who are char dwellers and who are itinerant as they are already seen to be interlopers in the region. They were also most likely to be summoned to the FT members to answer questions about their missing documents and irregular data.

'Let me explain how this technology works', said Dhiren, a humanities lecturer in a government college just outside Guwahati city. He had been inducted as a disposing officer (DO) in the early months of 2019. The DO worked within a particular circle area and was the first – or last – human line of verification of the claims and objections that were filed by those who had failed their meetings with the FT. They reported to the Circle Registrar of Citizen Registration (CRCR, a circle officer in the administrative set up), who reported upward to the District Registrar of Citizen Registration (DRCR, a district commissioner in the administrative set up). Dhiren had been involved in the autonomy movement among the Karbi and Tiwa communities in the 1990s and early 2000s, before he got his job as a lecturer in 2013. He continues to be involved in cultural and social issues among indigenous communities, especially in the wider Kamrup, Morigaon, Nagaon and Karbi-Anglong areas. His work as the DO had kept him away from college, a fact that caused him some irritation. However, despite his personal misgivings about the nature of his work, he was all praise for the kind of technology that was being deployed in the NRC process. 'Once the field-based work got over last year (in March, 2018), things started getting a shape', he further explained about the family tree verification (FTV). As our conversation got into specifics, I had to keep track of the almost objective type, algorithm-based tenor of his descriptions.

'We had a domain to allow for second and third generation respondents to make mistakes about the names of their immediate lineage relatives', he stated and added in the same breath: 'but can you forget the name of your own sister?' He claimed that many of the false claims of legacy data resulted from people giving different names for their immediate kin and siblings. He outlined the way in which the software was able to 'capture' the inconsistencies in the manner in which certain persons claimed their family tree. Hence, lack of knowledge about immediate kin in an extended bilateral descent family would cause the software to determine that there was something amiss in the data provided. Dhiren was

convinced that the software could not have got anything wrong, as far as catching on to the inconsistencies of personal narratives. Instead, as he explained the unfolding of a particularly poignant human drama, it was almost as if the software – in this case DOCSMEN – had begun to unravel family secrets into the public domain. When there was a mismatch in the family legacy (assigned an algorithm under the Legacy Data Code, or LDC), especially in the cases where two families claimed the same person and yet did not know anyone from the other family, they were asked to explain how the family trees for the same assigned LDC could go so wrong. In many cases, explanations attested to the frailty of human relationship: an aggrieved father who might have disowned a daughter for marrying against his wish, a man with a family in two towns that did not know one another and so on. Others, Dhiren continued, were harder to let go. It was even more so when officials higher up the administrative chain had already verified the claims and objections at the investigative stage. In that case, the DO became the last human to deal with people who wanted answers from the executive body of the government.

This is where the role of small, committed local advocacy groups becomes very important. In Mozidbhita, the activists, who began the library, had worked with the community in order to ensure that they were included in the draft. This meant ensuring that the people of the char had all their documents in order: a government receipt as a beneficiary for some scheme, or even an old court document that showed a person's permanent address to be the seasonal char, were all part of a repertoire of documents that were being produced as evidence that would be taken to the NRC Seva Kendra. It is important to remember that a person could file their NRC papers through either their mother's or their father's legacy and if one set of documents did not add up, they would not be able to change their lineage. This could lead to a lot of anomalies and difficulties for those who attempting to establish that their claims for citizenship were correct and that they had been excluded due to a combination of technological errors and human prejudice[x].

Journalist Arunabh Saikia's story about a woman, Kadbhanu, lays bare the tragedies that are involved in such case [xi]. Kadbhanu's husband Hitmat Ali committed suicide because he was unable to bear the legal costs of trying to get her included in the NRC. The officials who were verifying her claim, refused to believe that Kadbhanu was her father's daughter. Being unlettered, she requested her *gaonburah* (village headman) to validate her claim that she was indeed her

father's daughter. As one might expect from functionaries of small, face-to-face communities, the gaonburah signed a certificate that had the state's emblem embossed in the middle. This, the tribunal claimed, was unauthorised. Moreover, the gaonburah had also not appeared in person. Hence, Kadbhanu's Kafkaesque experience of the threat of incarceration began because of the local official's unwillingness to accept her document. Saikia had another poignant story of technological and human error in the case of Rupa Dutta, whose father started the Tinsukia Commerce College in 1972[xii]. She decided to claim her legacy through her mother's LDC but found that the NRC authorities were not convinced that her mother had genuine papers. As it turned out, the mother got a matriculation certificate from Gauhati University in 1955, while her citizenship papers were processed over the year and she became a citizen in 1956.

The NRC process as it was rolled out in Assam relied on the convergence of technology, administrative efficiency and political will in order to achieve its goals. However, as media reports show, there have been instances where Bengali-speaking persons have been subjected to unprecedented harassment for not being able to provide documents that could have made it through the NRC software[xiii]. Often, as middle- and lower-level officials and part-time officers employed to conduct the NRC will attest, there has been pressure from political organisations and mid-level civil servants, including those in the courts of law and appellate bodies like the FT. In such cases, documents (and software) have the ability to strip away the context in which local interactions have become aggregated in the NRC process. They present a dilemma for students of social sciences who wish to research issues of citizenship. 20th century citizenship research looked at the various ways through which an individual entered into a political and social relationship with the state that included economic welfare and civil rights (Marshall, 1950), protection of cultural rights of minorities (Kymlicka, 1996) and an overall protection of the sanctity of personal freedom that emanated from Kantian ideas of universally applicable rules that allowed individuals to be free. In a relatively short span of time since the Supreme Court instructed the government of Assam to conduct the NRC, one has been confronted by a different order of issues. For social scientists then, the idea of generating data from a big, government and software driven data gathering process is daunting. However, this is also the moment when one sees a greater need to put this data into a context. One needs to allow a plurality of narratives to emerge that challenges the current situation where the state's narrative is considered superior to that of the neighbour, friend and relative (Dourish & Cruz, 2018).

The state's capacity to conduct a process of this scale on the basis of documents that attest to property, occupation and proof of residence have increased manifold since 1951. To paraphrase social anthropologist Annelise Riles (2011), some projects are too big to fail. These embody a process by which the state finds itself exposed by oversights and failures but continue to hold sway because in the moment of crisis the various ideas and political strategies reveal their interdependence[xiv]. In the context of the NRC in Assam, a similar argument may be made about the need for infallibility that has been attributed to the convergence of technology and bureaucracy, in their dealing with matters that evoke historical evidence in deeply contested political time. However, as anthropologist Matthew Hull has pointed out in the context of the bureaucracy in Pakistan, there is no clear correlation between an administration's ability to document and how people respond to such demands (Hull, 2012). Most people who need to negotiate with the state know that there are theoretical (and practical) ways to create the kind of documentation in order to finish a job. There are forms to fill out, windows to present them at and officials to meet in order to be permitted to do something, or to be counted for one of the schemes that is being employed by the state. In classical sociology emanating from Max Weber, this is the bureaucratic work at its best – impersonal, rational and uniform. Yet, as Akhil Gupta argues, bureaucratic mechanisms and procedures used by the Indian state systematically produce arbitrary outcomes whose consequences can be catastrophic (Gupta, 2012). Gupta's work focuses on the routine manner in which government files, forms, procedures, complaint mechanisms and inspections have the ability to normalise structural violence upon the poor in the country, even as there is a paradoxical effort by the government to ameliorate their condition.

In many parts of the country, even as the state goes through various methods of calculating the risks of the poor and vulnerable, while making sure that they receive adequate care, the poor are hardly able to access the institutions of the state. The poor experience bureaucratic apathy far more intensely and with more intimacy than others, especially since their ability to preserve documents and follow through legal procedures is very weak. Hence, even though the government has to continue with some degree of welfare for the poor, the current political climate around the world and in India point towards an increased fear of the immigrant as an undeserving object of social anger (Kymlicka, 2015). How then are social scientists supposed to respond to the ideas propounded by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) referred to earlier in this essay: in the eventual analysis, the contradictions between bourgeois liberal nationalism and capitalism

will result in the rise of a multi-dimensional order of the dispossessed – the multitude.

Reactions to the Citizenship Debate

Ugandan anthropologist Mahmood Mamdani (2001) draws one's attention to the weight of history, politics and the colonial encounter in the kind of views one asserts about brutal, polarising events. In his book *When victims become killers,* he showed how routine matters of governance have the ability to be twisted to malicious extent. Those who advocate such intent are able to bestow some kind of warped political logic on atrocities that are committed by one section of people upon another. Perhaps there is something similar happening in India, where the example of Assam is pertinent. People, ideas and political positions swerve towards selective readings of the past, especially when it comes to the disruptions caused by colonialism. In this process, some histories are privileged, while others are relegated to the margins.

In the following section, I look at the manner in which colonial history has created different political spaces for communities in Assam. I do so in order to underline the importance of ethnicity in the control over resources and territory, since all three are very important to understanding the NRC process. In addition, I discuss some of the possible outcomes of the citizenship debate, specifically within Assam, but also in relation to its impact on a wider region. This is particularly important in light of the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Bill[xv] in the Brahmaputra Valley by organisations and individuals who were supportive of the NRC. Interestingly, those who opposed the NRC in the Barak Valley, especially organisations representing Bengali-speaking Hindus, came out to support the Bill. Therefore, when angry Assamese students shout slogans like 'Bangladeshis go back', they confuse many outside the region who wonder why then are they opposed to the Citizenship Bill? It is harder to explain that 'Bangladeshi' is not a religious category, but sociological shorthand for a historical process that has muted regional specificities in nationalist debates. For those who have been excluded from the list, the bureaucratic process involves a lengthy process to seek legal recourse. Those who wish to appeal (their exclusion) will have to do so to the Supreme Court mandated Foreigners Tribunal (FT) in four months from the receiving the notification of their exclusion. The government has also announced that it would not detain those who have been excluded; at least not until the FT have had a chance to review their cases[xvi].

The NRC process provides an analytical moment to assess the range of issues that are aggressively inserted into citizenship debates in contemporary South Asia (and across the world). Recent scholarship on outmigration from Northeast India has focused on the conditions of militarisation and lack of opportunities that have forced indigenous communities to move away from the homelands that were being sought for in the 1990s and 2000s (McDuie-Ra, 2012). Furthermore, Kikon & Karlsson's (2019) work on the lives of Northeast migrants to other parts of India and their return home offers us a complex picture of the impact of affective labour on politics and policy making in the region. These works eschew the binary view of settler and indigenous ideas of belonging that have been foundational to 20th century nationalism and national territory-centric growth of capitalism. Against this bleak backdrop is what Irish poet Seamus Heaney in his Nobel acceptance speech called 'the abattoir of history', with a past full of violent expressions of identity.

The triggers of the episodes of violence are many. Regardless of the spectrum of causes of conflict in the region, the recurring binaries that operate (in the conflict) are those of the 'migrant' and 'native'; or 'settler' and 'indigenous'; or 'citizen' and 'foreigner'; or the generic 'insider' and 'outsider'. At the centre of the contestations is the process of migration – or more precisely – of mobility of human beings forced to move by the sheer force of geographic and political considerations not entirely of their making. As the debates around the standard sociological units of analysis – individuals and communities – undergo, and emic change in response to external pressures of climate change and nationalist discourse, there is a need for social scientists to ask critical questions about the manner in which certain forms of knowledge find prominence in debates on citizenship, migration and climate change (Whyte, 2017; Todd, 2016). Here, the voices of the marginalised – in this case both the indigenous as well as the itinerant seasonal migrant – need to be included, not merely as passive data, but as discursive ontological entities that have a historical relationship with each other.

Such political predicaments are not unique to Northeast India. The evocation of fear of the outsider, hence the evolution of a narrative to 'drive out' those who are seen as the mirror opposite, is similar to what transpires in other parts of the world. As different actors use the mediated public sphere to articulate their grievances against migrants/outsiders/foreigners, they simultaneously point to perceptions of anarchy among the actors themselves. Mobility (across national borders) in this case, is seen as a weakness of the state to police its boundaries

(Alexseev, 2006). If the features pages and editorials of vernacular dailies are anything to go by, migrants are seen to have an undue advantage in the mobility narrative (Kimura, 2008). This implies that the host populations are most likely to react to strategies that aid migration, in a manner that is confrontational (rather than reconciliatory). Whether it is the dominant narrative of the All Assam Students Union (in the 1980s), or the campaign for recognition of rights of the people of Terai in the new Nepali constitution, movements in the region have always tested existing notions of citizenship. Sometimes, movements have used the dominant narrative of constitutions; while there have been times when constitutional language has been rejected in favour of innovative alliances that defy prescribed political possibilities. These processes are best captured in the manner in which the national constitutions and laws reflects the concerns of the inhabitants of the region. In India, the government has used the political events and discourse in Assam to amend the constitution and push through a version of citizenship that is marked by blood ties and cultural ascriptions, where it has become harder for a person to be granted citizenship in India even if s/he has lived and worked in the country all their life, unless s/he can prove that s/he has parents or ancestors who were born (here) (Roy, 2016). However, it is puzzling to come to terms with the fact that some of India's most abused citizens, living in one of South Asia's most militarised regions, can in turn seek the disenfranchisement of those they see as their *other*.

Ranabir Samaddar (2018) had a melancholic view of this predicament in his recent article published in The Wire. In positing citizenship and statelessness as inseparable twins, he concludes that the voices of support for the NRC are emblematic of a collective revulsion towards an imagination of mixed lives. Yet, the political discourse, framed as it is around notions of identity and history, do not do justice to the myriad ways in which people have managed to live with each other in Assam. These pathways of coexistence are evident in mundane spaces like weddings, funerals, village festivities during the harvest season and other events that allow for more layered lives to evolve. For those trying to make sense of the contentious politics surrounding the NRC, there seems to be little hope for reconciliation between communities that see each other in adversarial positions over a government-sponsored, advocacy-driven process. It is true that a focus on the NRC process alone can lead one to the conclusion that it's supporters displayed a monochromatic view of society, history and culture in Assam – one that continues to view society through a 20th century lens, where the stable, land-holding peasant is at the foundation of social and political structures. Journalist

Sangeeta Barooah-Pisharoty's recent book on the Assam Accord and its aftermaths points towards the shared suffering of all communities across Assam and cautions readers from assuming that a victim-perpetrator binary can be applied to understand the outcomes of the exclusionary process (Pisharoty, 2009).

If anything, the sociological outcomes of the NRC debate are a reminder that the militarisation of politics and civil society in Assam has led to an untenable reality. Today, it is easier for middle-class Assamese men to reminisce about home and culture in distant places than it is for working class *Miya* women, who have been born and raised in the chars, to find their names in the NRC. Yet, asserting secular ethics and quotidian examples of tolerance will be left to those who have been systematically excluded by the state, especially in its new software-driven environment. The NRC involved colossal expense for the state and civil society in Assam that are financial and political. Political parties (including the ruling party) expressed dissatisfaction about the outcome of the process, pointing towards the presence of many Indian citizens in the list. This almost universal disappointment should serve as a moment to examine the impact that the NRC will have on social science scholarship in the future. While it has disrupted relationships and forced people and organisations to revisit old colonial debates about autonomy and social justice, it has also forced the need to revisit new ones about transformation of the citizenship debates and the realities of climate change.

Notes:

[i] As per a press release from the NRC office a total of 3,30,27,661 person had participated in the updating process of the NRC. Of these, 3,11,21,004 were found to have valid documents to prove their citizenship through the legacy code. This left out 19,06,675 persons (including those who did not file claims following the publications of the two drafts). For more details see: https://www.livelaw.in/pdf_upload/pdf_upload-363869.pdf

[ii] https://indianculturalforum.in/2019/07/01/i-am-miya-reclaiming-identity-through-protest-poetry/

[iii] On 10th July 2019, journalist Pranabjit Doloi filed a first information report (FIR) in a Guwahati police station against ten persons who, he felt, had used Miya poetry to belittle the NRC process, as well as painted the entire Assamese community as xenophobes in the national and international arena. Leaving aside the problematic phenomenon of associating a collective Assamese pride with the NRC process, the reaction to the FIR resulted in several weeks of acrimonious debates in the media. Prominent intellectuals weighed in on what was otherwise a small, creative expression of community pride, as they felt that the timing of the entire controversy was suspect (Gohain, 2019).

[iv] *Chars* are seasonal river islands that are found along the Ganga-Brahmaputra Rivers, especially when they flow in the flood plains. For a better part of the 19th and 20th century, agricultural communities in the Bengal delta region that encompasses present-day Bangladesh and parts of India and Myanmar, were involved in claiming these fertile seasonal areas for winter cultivation.

ᵛ https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/natural-disasters/floods-affect-over-30-000-in-assam-56023

ᵛⁱ Hafiz Ahmed, president of the *Char Chapori Sahitya Parishad*, raises similar concerns in his explanatory interview with journalist Sangeeta Baroooah-Pisharoty in an online journal. Following allegations by Assamese nationalist intellectuals that members of the Miya community – a pejorative term once used for char Muslims of Bengali heritage, which some are now attempting to appropriate – were portraying all Assamese people as xenophobic, Ahmed explained their position in great detail. He speaks about the Miya community's resolute efforts to integrate with mainstream Assamese society by drawing on all manner of real and tenuous links from the past. He also rues the lack of effort among the mainstream Assamese – of every religious colour – to understand the deeper political significance of the Miya community's dilemmas in contemporary Assam. https://thewire.in/rights/hafiz-ahmed-assam-miyah-poetry

ᵛⁱⁱ Names of all interviewees and respondents have been changed to protect their identities (unless otherwise stated).

ᵛⁱⁱⁱ https://scroll.in/latest/930834/assam-flood-victims-go-back-to-fetch-nrc-documents-some-refuse-to-leave-homes

ⁱˣ See Notification of Gauhati High Court dated June 21, 2017:
https://districts.ecourts.gov.in/sites/default/files/Notification-21-06-2017_0.pdf

ˣ Online news and views portal, Scroll.in had done a series of stories based on bureaucratic errors and personal dilemmas of a range of people whose names had been omitted in the NRC. Journalist Arunabh Saikia filed most of the reports under the title *Humans of Assam*. For more, see: https://scroll.in/article/931788/humans-of-assam-do-we-need-to-show-pieces-of-paper-to-prove-that-we-are-people-of-this-land

ˣⁱ   https://scroll.in/article/930649/death-by-citizenship-this-man-killed-himself-anxious-over-wifes-fate-and-he-is-not-the-only-one

ˣⁱⁱ https://scroll.in/article/931382/humans-of-assam-if-they-want-to-send-me-to-bangladesh-so-be-it

ˣⁱⁱⁱ   https://scroll.in/article/932134/worse-than-a-death-sentence-inside-assams-sham-trials-that-could-strip-millions-of-citizenship

ˣⁱᵛ Riles' work looked at the particular ways in which the US stepped in to bail out banks like AIG during the financial crisis in 2008. Riles asked her readers to consider the conditions under which this particular event is made possible. How, despite pressures from politicians on the Left and concerned citizens, the US treasury decided to bail out private parties like the banks, is a matter that pushes us to look at different forms of legitimacy and accountability in the study of markets and the state.

ˣᵛ The Bharatiya Janata Party-led government introduced the Citizenship Amendment Bill in Parliament in 2016. It (the Bill) proposed that citizenship be granted to non-Muslim persons from other South Asian countries where religious persecution was rife. Critics of this bill point to its communal and anti-Constitutional overtones. Civil society in the Northeast also opposed the bill on the grounds that it opens out the possibility for the settlement of non-Muslim Bangladeshis in the region.

ˣᵛⁱ The government of Assam had sought to employ 1000 officers to the FTs. There are 100 that already exist and an additional 200 FTs were added in September 2019. For more details see:
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/assam-government-to-set-up-foreigners-tribunal/articleshow/71263494.cms

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Skill Development and Youth Empowerment Schemes in Sikkim: a Gender Perspective

--- Yumnam Surjyajeevan
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Abstract

A prime focus among seventeen major global agendas of 2016's Sustainable Development Goals is achieving gender equality and youth empowerment. It primarily aims at providing enabling environment to both men and women, to work together as equal partners, by addressing the challenges created by the twin problem of unemployment and youth bulges in developing nations. Measures toward youth empowerment and gender equality envisage converging and imparting education and skill for enlarging the choices in sustainable livelihood. The SDGs provide guidelines and supportive framework for creating positive political base to create an enabling environment for youth empowerment and gender equality. Contextually locating, the paper seeks to identify skill development and empowerment schemes for the youth of Sikkim and to assess how they are responding to such initiatives by the state. The study is an analytical exploration of few youth empowerment schemes in the state of Sikkim and makes a critical assessment of both its achievement and gaps, also taking into consideration the gender dimension.

Key words: Capacity Building, CMSES, Gender Equality, Livelihood School, Youth Empowerment

Introduction

The record of around 356 million youths, as per 2014 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Report, affirms that India is a youthful nation. It is projected that by 2020, sixty-four per cent of India's population will belong to working age group (Chatterjee & Karunakara, 2016) with 'dependency ratio' coming down to 0.4 by 2030 (Basu, 2007). The abundant human capital is indeed a boon for the country's economy; however, contradictorily, the very blessing can also be the cause of future cataclysmic disaster. Urdal (2006) argued about relative

association between 'youth bulges' and increased risk of political violence. The theoretical plausibility of the argument can be contextualised into the socio-political realities of India, reflected in issues concerning reservation, identity politics, regionalism, and in the extreme forms – Naxalism and secessionist movements. Blackett's work on *Bhadralog* argued that political unrest in India are largely economics oriented and 'a direct and potent cause in creating much political unrest' (Blackett, 1929, p. 42). Similarly, anti-reservation agitation (1985), anti-Mandal agitation (1990), Assam movement (1983-84), and in recent times the Patidars agitation in Gujarat are instances of youth unrest. Comparable situations were experienced in Egypt (LaGraffe, 2012), Ethiopia (Mains, 2012), Nigeria (Tenuche, 2009) and Sri Lanka (Wijesinghe, 1973; Vodopivec, Gunatlilaka & Mayer, 2010). In India, youth problems are further accentuated by regional variations in development, such as lack of industrial development and poor connectivity, as in the case of North-Eastern States (NES) (Nandy, 2014), amplified by preference of government jobs over individual entrepreneurial enterprises (Agarwal, 1998).

Redressal of such structurally induced constraints requires prioritisation in development of life skills through vocational trainings, which can generate a source of sustainable livelihood and employability for youths leading toward empowerment (Urdal, 2006), with gender inclusivity and sensibility. Regardless of the policy initiatives taken at various levels, such as Beijing Conference, UN Human Development, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), etc. for achieving gender equality, inequality persists manifesting in various shades. Malik (2015) underlines how gender component has always been side-lined in policy discourses, and the structural challenges remain true regardless of rural-urban distribution. Therefore, empowerment, with the motto 'Leaving No One Behind'[i], by creating an enabling environment for youth is an integral part of contextual policy discourses as reflected in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2016, which emphasises on inclusive policies and actions to ensure gender equality and empowerment of women. Activists and scholars have also articulated that success of SDGs agendas 'hinged on the empowerment of young people'[ii] and gender inclusiveness is on top priority.

Development, Empowerment and Gender in Perspective

The paradigmatic shift in development discourse gave birth to 'alternative development' focusing on 'human flourishing' which challenged the archetypical

economic growth model of development (Pieterse, 2010). Human flourishment aspires for enhancing the quality of life by means of capacitation and choice enlargement leading to empowerment. This often requires sound cultural and social bases, what Bourdieu (1986) referred to as 'capitals'. Developing and strengthening the cultural base requires a strong supportive legal and administrative framework with equal impetus given on access to knowledge, information and skills, and a positive value system (CS, 2007). Therefore, what is required is dissemination of knowledge through formal and vocational education, since education creates enabling condition and is seen as a 'catalyst of social change', a developmental indicator and a crucial variable in measuring HDI (Dréze & Sen, 2002, p. 143). Whereas, a firm social base is rooted in inclusively participative collective action oriented toward community development (Janssens, 2010), inevitable for sustainability. Martínez, Jiménez-Morales, Masó, and Bernet (2016) pointed that power, participation and education, which are also reflected in SDGs agendas, have transformative and emancipative capacities which are concomitant to empowerment. Idealistically, sustainability is inclusive and a gender-neutral concept, however, under patriarchal social system it embodies andocentric stance in both its approach and method. Therefore, achieving inclusiveness for women becomes a multifarious challenge (Carr, Chen, & Jhabvala, 1996), as women are not viewed as an integral part of economic development process, hence are excluded from development policies and programs (Mehra, 1997). These constraints resulted in differential 'quality of opportunities offered' to women particularly in informal sectors (Kantor, 2002, p. 285).

In Indian context, despite the constitutional enshrinement, gender discrimination is socially legitimised and entrenched in the cultural milieu (Thapa, 2009), proving to be a major barrier in achieving gender equality. This often is reflected in various socio-economic indicators like declining sex ratio, unfavourable literacy rate, health care system, decision making and work participation. In fact, India ranked at 130th out of 146 countries based on United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Gender Inequality Index, and at 108th out of 144 countries in Global Gender Gap Index 2017 (Ravi & Jayaraman, 2017). These facets reflect that there is a serious gap between the policy measures and the manifested ground realities suggesting that gender inequality is inherent in the structural reality of our society.

Contextually, NES are generally perceived as embodiment of egalitarian disposition; however, Mahanta and Nayak (2017) contradicts the opinionated view arguing that women in NES are relatively disempowered and have lower social status, and gender gap in socio-economic and political domain. The prevalence of traditional and customary practices superimposes over their access and control to education, employment and health (Buongpui, 2013; Das, 2013) and political participation (Changkija, 2017). Similarly, Sikkim being a patriarchal society, gender inequality and discriminations are evident in socio-economic and political aspects of the society, such as *Dzumsa* (Thapa & Sachdeva, 2017), state level political participation (Thapa, 2009) and existence of glass ceiling in bureaucratic structure (Thapa, 2014).

Addressing the issue, in consistent with SDGs, UN Women Leadership, Empowerment, Access & Protection (LEAP) framework strategically aims at bringing young men and women to work together as equal partners of gender equality to achieve a gender transformative society. The framework emphasised on three thematic agendas – strengthening leadership of young women, economic empowerment and skills development, and action on ending violence against young women and girls. In perspective with the foci, the state as a stakeholder has the responsibility to create the enabling environment through proper resource allocations, a democratic platform, infrastructure, informational supports and opportunities, and making youth empowerment an integral component of developmental policies and programmes.

In view of the changing social realities and transformations occurring in the state, the study, which is exploratory in nature, seeks to examine how the youth in Sikkim in general and young women in particular are responding to the various empowerment initiatives by the state government. Using both primary and secondary information collected from various concerning departments of the state government and from field survey and in-depth interview with stakeholders, the study critically examines the achievements and challenges of the youth empowerment schemes and its gender dimension.

Youth Empowerment Schemes in Sikkim: a Brief Backdrop

Sikkim, since its statehood in 1975, has witnessed massive structural transformations achieving numerous strides in significant development indicators. The state registered a sharp rise in Gender Development Index (GDI) from 0.445

to 0.528 between 1991 and 1998 (Lama, 2001). In 2006, GDI score increased to 0.659 which was higher than National average of 0.590. Within the same decade, Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) was improved by eighth rank (GOI, 2009). This is primarily due to state's prioritisation toward inclusive development by implementing women centric policies, such as fifty per cent reservation in local self-government and thirty per cent in public sector jobs (Thapa, 2009), making Sikkim among the top six Indian states recording maximum acceleration in terms of Human Development Index (HDI) (GOS, 2015). However, despite the achievements, Sikkim also encounters many social issues related to youth. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2015 Report recorded annual suicide rate of Sikkim to be 37.5 per cent, the highest being among the most productive age-group of 21-30 (24.4 per cent) and 31-40 (17.3 per cent) (Chettri, Gurung, & Singh, 2016); alcoholism and drug uses are also high among the youth (Bhalla, Dutta, & Chakrabarti, 2006; Pandey & Datta, 2014). Additionally, Human Resource & Development (HRD) Ministry's Annual Report 2006-07 raised concerns about high dropout rate (82.30 per cent) among class I-X students during 2004-05, which is far above the national average of 61.92 per cent. During the period, the non-working population of Sikkim constituted 63.68 per cent of the total population (5,81,546), of which 51.94, 40.82, and 7.24 per cents were students, others, and unemployed respectively (GOS, 2006). However, interestingly, the number of unemployed youths in the state was lesser than the number of vacancies[iii]. Subsequently, recognising the conundrum, the state felt the immediate necessity to spell out its policies and programmes vis-à-vis developing and pooling of skilled human resources by imparting both specialised and vocational courses.

Comprehending the socio-economic reality, Directorate of Capacity Building (DCB) was instituted in 2007 to propagate higher education, vocational and livelihood training. The directorate handles matters related to higher education, while its subsidiary unit – State Institute of Capacity Building (SICB) looks after vocational trainings in livelihood skill programmes. DCB also monitors schemes like Chief Minister's Self Employment Scheme (CMSES), trainings for the educated unemployed youth under Skill Development Scheme (SDS) and Comprehensive Educational Loan Scheme (CELS), which are implemented through SIDICO (Sikkim Industrial Development & Investment Corporation Ltd.) and works in coordination with various departments within and outside the state in matters related to Capacity Building. In 2013, the directorate was merged with Human Resource Development Department (HRDD), while SICB was separated

from the DCB to work as an independent livelihood training institution. Presently, these institutions, namely, DCB, SICB, Sikkim Entrepreneur Centres (SEC), HRDD, and Ministry of Overseas Employment (MOE), Government of India (GOI), are tied together at national level under Human Resource Development Mission (HRDM) for empowering the youth through skill development training and placements in suitable jobs.

SICB and Livelihood School

SICB has its footprint in the state's directive towards creation of a pool of human resource capital in Sikkim and zero tolerance towards youth unemployment. The decision was persuaded by the statistical fact presented in the *State Socio Economic Census 2006* regarding the unemployment status in the state. Accordingly, in 2009 the SICB was established at Karfectar, South Sikkim, with the task of implementing and supervising thirty-one livelihood schools[iv] in all constituencies, targeting 'greater empowerment and developing entrepreneurial capability of unemployed persons of the state' (SICB, Resolution No. 6).

The pedagogic principle of the programme is based on 'effective learning through productive work', offered under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. Income being one criterion, it targets mostly the underprivileged unemployed Sikkimese[v] youths. During the training period, financial incentive of Rs. 3,000 is provided monthly as stipend to encourage them[vi]. Training programmes at various livelihood schools are not always pre-designed and selected, rather it is conducted as per the need and requirement of the local people through formal request to and through the Panchayat. Along with it, specialised training programmes are also provided on the request from various departments of the state. For instance, in the past it has trained junior land surveyors of the Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department, personnel of various private security agencies, etc. Successfully trained individuals from the livelihood schools are eligible to avail various financial assistance from the government for setting up micro enterprises.

Various programmes offered under the livelihood school and the programme-wise gender segregated enrolment from 2009-2010 to 2015-16 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Programme-wise enrolment and gender breakup from 2009-2016

Sl. No	Programme Name	Female	Male	Total	Programme wise Participation
1	Agriculture & Horticulture	119078.65%	323 21.35%	1513 100%	15.09%
2	Animal Husbandry & Veterinary	455 69.15%	203 30.85%	658 100%	6.56%
3	Apparel Manufacturing Technology	12 63.16%	7 36.84%	19 100%	0.19%
4	Assistant Work Supervisor	0 0	34 100%	34 100%	0.34%
5	Automobile Repairing	0 0	178 100%	178 100%	1.78%
6	Beautician & Spa	618 95.08%	32 4.92%	650 100%	6.48%
7	BPO & Banking	9 33.33%	18 66.67%	27 100%	0.27%
8	Caregiver	23 100%	0 0	23 100%	0.23%
9	Chef	5 7.46%	62 92.54%	67 100%	0.67%
10	Computer Hardware	110 35.37%	201 64.63%	311 100%	3.10%
11	Computer Software	285 65.52%	150 34.48%	435 100%	4.34%
12	Computer Software/Tally	134 59.82%	90 40.18%	224 100%	2.23%
13	Construction Trade	87 22.72%	296 77.28%	383 100%	3.82%
14	Cutting & Tailoring	236 98.74%	3 1.26%	239 100%	2.38%
15	Driver cum Tour Guide	50 2.56%	1904 97.44%	1954 100%	19.49%
16	Electrical Trade	0 0	197 100%	197 100%	1.96%
17	F&B Services	68 66.67%	34 33.33%	102 100%	1.01%
18	Foreign Language	165 64.45%	91 35.55%	256 100%	2.55%
19	Garment Production Technique for Self-Employment	17 100%	0 0	17 100%	0.17%
20	Homestay Tourism	184 71.60%	73 28.40%	257 100%	2.56%
21	Hospitality	508	293	801	7.99%

	&Tourism	63.42%	36.58%	100%	
22	Integrated Farming	65 83.33%	13 16.67%	78 100%	0.78%
23	Orange Rejuvenation	31 63.27%	18 36.73%	49 100%	0.49%
24	Primary Teacher's Training	113 73.38%	41 26.62%	154 100%	1.54%
25	Retail Management	298 73.58%	107 26.42%	405 100%	4.04%
26	Security Guard Services	75 16.45%	381 83.55%	456 100%	4.55%
27	Souvenir Making	123 82%	27 18%	150 100%	1.50%
28	Spoken English & Personality Development	264 67.87%	125 32.13%	389 100%	3.88%
Total		**5125 51.12%**	**4901 48.88%**	**10026 100%**	**100**

Source: SICB, February 2016

Within the span of eight years, 28 major livelihood training programmes were conducted (Table 1), besides the need based specialised courses. The observation reflects that all programmes offered under the schemes are not equally appealing among the trainees, as some courses are more prospective in view of local job market. Sikkim, known for its growing tourism sector[vii] and having high demand of training on 'Driver cum Tour Guide', has more enrolment (19.49 per cent) as compared to other livelihood programmes. The programme also has high gender segregation, as only 2.56 per cent of women took up the training as compared to 97.44 per cent male. Similar trends are also observed in 'Automobile Repairing', 'Assistant Work Supervisor' courses where 100 per cent male enrolment is evident. While programmes like 'Beautician and Spa' has high concentration of female enrolment (95.08 per cent), so does 'Caregiver' (100 per cent), 'Cutting and Tailoring' (98.74 per cent), 'Garment Production Technique for Self-Employment' (100 per cent), 'Apparel Manufacturing Technology' (63.16 per cent). 'Hospitality and Tourism' programme, which is the third most offered course, also has higher female enrolment 63.42 per cent.

The clear gender segregation in the offered programmes has to be seen primarily in the backdrop of attached traditional values in gender specific role assignment on the part of the trainees. Nonetheless, slight transformations in the programme

preference, which is outside the gender specific stereotypical occupation, were observed in few programmes. 'Construction Trade' and 'Security Guard Services' are such programmes where respective percentage of 22.72 and 16.45 female trainees were enrolled, which primarily is due to the job market with the establishment of numerous organisations like pharmaceutical companies, private educational institutions, etc. which requires female personnel. To an extent, this can be translated as indication of changing worldview among the Sikkimese youths related to gender role assignment, as these two professions were traditionally confined within male domain for their physical prowess and bravery. Comparatively, 26.62 per cent of male were also enrolled in 'Primary Teacher's Training', which is largely preferred by and constricted among women, as it becomes easier for women to balance home and the job and vacation is the incentive. The incursion into the professional domain of one another by breaking the occupational gender barrier is a welcoming trend in a traditional society which is grappling towards self-determination from the shackles of patriarchy.

'Agriculture and Horticulture' with 15.09 per cent is second most enrolled programme where 78.65 per cent are female and 21.35 per cent are male. This observation is noteworthy, particularly in relation to gender dimension, as agriculture and its allied activities in hill economy has been thought predominantly to be the province of man's economic activities, except in the sphere of tea and other plantation industries, where many women are employed. However, an overwhelming number of women are opting to equip themselves with the technical knowhow in agricultural and horticultural practices. This is primarily attributed to the emerging trend of intra and inter-state migration of male towards the urban centres for better job prospects and employment, particularly in secondary and tertiary sectors. The process has created a major gap and challenges in the availability of agrarian labour forces in the rural Sikkim which to a large extent contributed to the plummeting agricultural productivity which Chakrabarti (2010) accounted as 'agrarian crisis in Sikkim'. However, with the recent change in the agricultural policy of the state to be one of the leading producers of organic food items, people are gradually showing their interest in agricultural and allied activities, particularly among subsistent farmers. The prospect, created by the decision of the state government to declare the state as organic state and stopping import of vegetables items from outside the state in a phase manner, induced the women to take up the challenge in schooling themselves in the technical yet practical knowledge in organic farming. Similar trend is also observed in 'Animal Husbandry and Veterinary' training

programmes. This also substantiates what Bhati and Singh (1987) argued about the active participation in the economic activities of women in poor rural areas, particularly in the agricultural sector. Of all the programmes offered, 'Garment Production Technique for Self-Employment' and 'Apparel Manufacturing Technology' are the least enrolled programmes with 0.17 per cent and 0.19 per cent respectively.

The overall enrolment in terms of gender and social category suggests the absence of gender bias towards women. Rather, the overall enrolment and participation of female is encouraging and more as compared to male. Since the beginning from 2009 till 2016, a total of 10,026 individuals have been trained, out of which 51.12 per cent are female and 48.88 per cent are male (Table 2). However, at the time of commencement of the courses in 2009-10, the participation of the female (13.64 per cent) trainee was far less than male (86.36 per cent). The gender difference in enrolment ratio in the initial stage can be due to lack of access to information and motivations among the women. However, since 2010-11 there has been steady increase in the number of participation of women from mere 13.64 per cent in 2009-10 to 60.69 per cent in 2015-16. The yearly analysis of social category of enrolment in livelihood schools illustrates that five-social categories excluding the 'General' category are the major beneficiaries[viii]. In overall, 6.26 per cent of the total trainees belong to the SC communities, out of which 51.91 per cent are female and 48.09 per cent are male. The participatory rate among the Bhutia-Lepcha (BL) population is observed to be significantly less (8.66 per cent) compared to their combined population size of 21 per cent (GOS, 2006). Although the BL are classified as separate entity according to historical precedence for various rights and entitlement, however, within the broader framework they are classified under the ST category along with two other communities, namely, Limboo and Tamang. The participatory rate among the STs is 27.94 per cent, if however, the BL category is also totalled with the ST category then it makes a total of 36.6 per cent, suggesting that the STs in Sikkim are in active involvement in availing the diverse benefits under the various schemes by the State. The programme also proved beneficial among the OBC communities, with higher concentration among OBC State List communities (Bahun, Chettri, and Newari/Pradhan) with 29.38 per cent, out of which 49.56 per cent are female while 50.44 per cent male. The OBC Central List communities (Bhujel, Dewan, Gurung, Jogi, Manger, Rai, Sanyasi, Sunuwar/Mukhia and Thami) has total participation of 27.73 per cent, of which 51.22 per cent are female and 48.78 per

cent are male. However, insignificant number of enrolment (0.13 per cent) is observed among the General category.

Table 2: Year-wise enrolment in terms of social categories and sex

Fiscal Year	Female Participants							Male Participants							Grand Total
	BL	G	OBC C	OBC S	SC	ST	Total	BL	G	OBC C	OBC S	SC	ST	Total	
2009-10	0 0	0 0	0 0	3 4.55 %	3 4.55 %	3 4.55 %	9 13.64 %	0 0	0 0	18 27.27 %	10 15.15 %	4 6.06 %	25 37.88 %	57 86.36 %	66 100%
2010-11	67 5.74 %	0 0	195 16.70 %	176 15.07 %	24 2.05 %	120 10.27 %	582 49.83 %	65 5.57 %	0 0	145 12.41 %	188 16.10 %	31 2.65 %	157 13.44 %	586 50.17 %	1,168 100%
2011-12	141 7.84 %	0 0	276 15.35 %	248 13.80 %	44 2.45 %	210 11.68 %	919 51.11 %	117 6.51 %	0 0	269 14.96 %	277 15.41 %	50 2.78 %	166 9.23 %	879 48.89 %	1,798 100%
2012-13	77 3.45 %	3 0.13 %	271 12.14 %	288 12.90 %	65 2.91 %	322 14.42 %	1,026 45.95 %	84 3.76 %	0 0	312 13.97 %	378 16.93 %	88 3.94 %	345 15.45 %	1207 54.05 %	2,233 100%
2013-14	69 3.38 %	0 0	366 17.91 %	311 15.22 %	71 3.47 %	297 14.53 %	1,114 54.50 %	64 3.13 %	0 0	304 14.87 %	270 13.21 %	71 3.47 %	221 10.81 %	930 45.50 %	2,044 100%
2014-15	52 2.37 %	0 0	265 12.06 %	347 15.79 %	83 3.78 %	413 18.79 %	1,160 52.78 %	88 4.00 %	0 0	265 12.06 %	303 13.79 %	50 2.27 %	332 15.10 %	1038 47.22 %	2,198 100%
2015-16	24 4.64 %	0 0	51 9.83 %	87 16.76 %	36 6.94 %	117 22.54 %	315 60.69 %	20 3.85 %	0 0	43 8.29 %	60 11.56 %	8 1.54 %	73 14.07 %	204 39.31 %	519 100%
Grand Total	**430 4.29 %**	**3 0.03 %**	**1424 14.20 %**	**1460 14.56 %**	**326 3.25 %**	**1482 14.78 %**	**5125 51.12 %**	**438 4.37 %**	**0 0**	**1356 13.53 %**	**1486 14.82 %**	**302 3.01 %**	**1319 13.16 %**	**4901 48.88 %**	**10026 100%**

Notes: BL= Bhutia-Lepcha; G= General; OBCC= OBC (Central List); OBCS= OBC (State List); SC= Scheduled Caste; ST= Scheduled Tribe

Source: SICB, February 2016

Analytical exploration of the livelihood school training programme did not reveal significant correlation between gender and social category, as almost an equal number of female-male trainees are represented in each category, with marginal variations except in 2009-10 and 2015-16 batch, which has been discussed. However, in 2015-16 batch, significant gender difference within each category is observed remarkably, as out of total 44 enrolled SC trainees, 36 (81.82 per cent) are female and 8 (18.18 per cent) are male with a Gender Differential Ratio

(GDR)[ix] of 63.64 per cent, followed by ST (only Limboo and Tamang) with 23.16 per cent GDR, and OBC (State List) with 18.36 per cent GDR. The transition to higher enrolment rate among the women, especially in 2015-16 batch, could be attributed to rising awareness about the benefits (both financial and skill enhancement) of the scheme, unrestricted information flow with the advancement in ICTs, change in societal perception, and gender sensitive inclusive policies of the government.

Karfectar Livelihood School

Karfectar livelihood school is an in-house training centre at State Institute of Capacity Building (SICB) headquarter premise, which initially conducted only two training programmes on 'Driving cum Tour Guide' and 'Beautician and Spa' courses. However, recently the centre has also incorporated training programme in 'IT (Tally, VAT, CST, IT, Multimedia)'. During field visit in July 2015, 75 trainees were found enrolled in Driving cum Tour Guide and 56 in the Beautician and Spa programme. As mentioned earlier, the trainees in the Driving cum Tour Guide were only males, whereas in 'Beautician and Spa' all were females. The interaction with the Deputy Director, SICB and the instructors of both the courses revealed that the response of the trainees were reassuringly encouraging. The instructors deliberated that the trainings are orientated towards hands-on practical experiences with fewer theoretical classes. Besides the syllabus intensive trainings, the trainees are also trained in spoken English to widen the scope of their employability. Successfully trained participants are awarded with certificate – a mandatory document in applying for CMSES loan, and placements for industrious trainees. In the case of those efficaciously trained in driving, SICB in collaboration with the Transport Department also equipped them with driving license. In interaction with the instructors, we came across one such faculty in the Beautician and Spa programme who herself is a product of the centre. She narrated that after successful completion of the training she was able to secure placement in Mumbai, while working there she enrolled herself for advanced training, which proved to be productive and helped her in securing the faculty position in the livelihood school, making her able to secure a dignified livelihood. Such cases show how livelihood programmes prove to be a source of empowerment for the youth, especially women.

A critical appraisal of the programme highlighted that welfare schemes like the livelihood programmes are not without flaws. The Deputy Director revealed how

initially, many trainees repeatedly enrolled themselves in different livelihood schools with the sole motive of availing the monthly stipend given under the scheme. Presently, however, with digitisation and centralisation process in the enrolment procedure, the problem to an extent has been overcome. Other concerns which were raised by him were issues related to attitudinal outlook of the trainees, how among the successfully placed trainees, especially those outside the state, there is a higher tendency of desertion of jobs within few months, on the ground of inability to cope up with unsuitable social and physical environment. This implies liability on the part of the SICB vis-à-vis putting future recruitments from outside the state into jeopardy. Further, lack of motivation towards labour intensive works particularly in construction trade is a major concern, although 383 have been trained till 2016 (Table 1), thus involving huge financial liability.

Namcheybong Livelihood School

Livelihood school at Basilakha, Namcheybong, East Sikkim became operational in 2014, with its first and only training programme in 'Agriculture and Horticulture'. It is managed by four instructors from B-ABLE group, which is tendered out by SICB under PPP model. The programme training module is divided into 3:7 ratio, with higher edge apportioned to field exercise as trainees with little or no education. The instructors further elaborated that besides the training in the techniques of organic farming, they are also trained in animal husbandry to enhance their source of livelihood.

The programme was conceived primarily keeping in view the dropout youths; however, it was observed that the age of trainees range from 19-41 years. In 2015 session, when the fieldwork was conducted, a total of 26 trainees were enrolled, of which only one was male, five trainees had already dropped out. The crucial reason for dropout, as revealed by one of the instructors, was role conflict due to familial pressure and maladjustment in the role-sets as a housewife and trainee. Statistically observing, 76 per cent of the total female trainees were married and belonged to below poverty line (BPL) family. In a poverty-stricken traditional household, the role of women gets augmented with multiple role sets, predominantly both as caretaker and livelihood supporter. Therefore, many women trainees opined that adopting a new role, which was not instantaneously productive financially, creates pressure and confrontational role-conflict in the family, despite the knowledge of opportunities and avenues that will be opened to them after successful completion of the training. This reveals the need to contrive

mechanisms for prevention of future dropouts, especially for those women belonging to BPL families.

Gender disparity in the enrolment of trainees was observed distinctively as 96.15 per cent of trainees were women. The phenomenon is not limited to the present livelihood school alone, but it also extends to other livelihood schools, which are assigned in delivering training programme in 'Agriculture and Horticulture'. The consolidated figure from 2009-2016 (Table1) shows that, out of the total number, 78.65 per cent were female, suggesting that women are major initiators in equipping themselves with the practical knowledge of organic farming for future agricultural development of Sikkim, as more and more male members are becoming seasonal migrants in search of employment opportunities in other sectors. The women trainees articulated that after the completion of the training, they will start organic farming and raising livestock, as both are complimentary from the convenience of their home in the small patches of land they own. They conjointly voiced that starting commercially viable farm from the convenience of home enables them to look after their children and family without compromising familial roles and duties.

Assessment of CMSES

Chief Minister's Self Employment Scheme (CMSES), like many self-employment schemes available across the country, was started with the objective to encourage entrepreneurial and employment opportunities for Sikkimese youths. Through the scheme, the government aimed at fulfilling the local employment demands by developing skilled manpower, and increase production of local goods by providing financial assistance to the unemployed youths for setting up micro-enterprises. Maximum financial assistance of rupees five lakhs[x] is given to those unemployed youths whose annual family income is less than rupees two lakhs fifty thousand and has successfully completed livelihood/vocational courses conducted by SICB. The loan is disbursed in two to three instalments, without incurring any interest for the first two years, after which an annual interest of six per cent is applied. After the expiry of moratorium period, the loan must be repaid within a period of five years in instalment. The nodal agency for handling and monitoring various financial schemes related to promotion of higher education and small-scale industries in the state is Sikkim Industrial Development & Investment Corporation Ltd. (SIDICO), a state level financial institution registered under the Registration of Companies Act, Sikkim, 1961. Presently, it

handles four state government schemes in conjunction with the respective departments for selection and disbursement of the schemes, namely, Comprehensive Educational Loan Scheme (CELS), Chief Minister's Free Scholarship Scheme (CMFSS), Chief Minister's Self-Reliant Scheme (CMSRS) and CMSES. However, the study is focused only on CMSES as it is directly related to capacity building and youth empowerment programme for dropout and unemployed youth.

Since its pronouncement in 2002 till 2016-17 fiscal year, a total of 7,756 young entrepreneurs have been benefited and have availed the financial help for various micro-enterprises, with a total amount of Rs. 9,299.17 lakhs disbursed under the scheme. However, after 2013-14, the scheme became intermittent and dwindled significantly in loan disbursement due to fund paucity (Table 3). The study found a clear gender gap in the scheme as only 35.95 per cent of women have been benefited under the scheme, which is relatively lower both in terms of those who have trained in the livelihood courses (51.12 per cent, Table 2) and population ratio (47.09 per cent, 2011 census), whereas, a total of 64.05 per cent of male entrepreneurs have availed benefits under the scheme. The year 2012-13 was an exception when the number of women beneficiaries was recorded higher comparatively to men with 55.67 per cent; however, this is one isolated case of exception. Further, in the fiscal year 2016-17, the number of women beneficiaries was 100 per cent, nonetheless, if we see the total number of recipients it is only two, which is a very insignificant number compared to previous years. Interaction with SIDICO officials revealed that in comparison to male, women applicants are always in minority; however, the reason for lower number of women applicants for loan, despite higher rate of enrolment in livelihood programmes, could not be ascertained, requiring further study. Nonetheless, numerous studies (Schwartz, 1976; Goffee & Scase, 1985; Carr, 1990) have shown that women encounter more realistic gender-centred confounding challenges in raising financial assets for start-up and 'credibility problems when dealing with bankers' or financial institutions or any investors (Carter & Rosa, 1998, p. 225). Stengel (2013) citing the analysis conducted by Biz2Credit, pointed that women entrepreneurs were '15% to 20% less likely to receive approval on a small business loan application' owing to lower annual revenue, higher operating expenses, low credit points, and choice of business model. McGee (2016) articulated existence of discriminating stance towards women with small business, which she referred as 'Start up Sexism'. However, on the brighter side contextual to Sikkim, it can be argued that women are empowered to an extent to come out of the traditional gender role

assignments and experiment their hand in micro-enterprises breaking the gender stereotypes.

Table 3: Total no. of beneficiaries, gender break and the amount spent under the CMSES

YEAR	TOTAL		FEMALE		MALE	
	No.	Amount (in lakh)	No.	Amount (in lakh)	No.	Amount (in lakh)
2002-03	1484	931.5	552	346.5	932	585
2003-04	1640	1024	408	408	1232	616
2004-05	60	38.5	28	19	32	19.5
2005-06	57	114.7	15	21	42	93.7
2006-07	7	22	1	5	6	17
2007-08	142	240.86	62	141.93	80	98.93
2008-09	915	1504.35	369	600.4	546	903.95
2009-10	1263	1854	487	730.5	776	1123.5
2010-11	544	816	220	330	324	486
2011-12	238	545.76	101	230.51	137	315.25
2012-13	467	717	260	296.75	207	420.25
2013-14	910	1383	276	403.5	634	979.5
2014-15	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
2015-16	27	100	7	22	20	78
2016-17	2	7.5	2	7.5	0	0
Total	**7,756**	**9,299.17**	**2,788**	**3,562.59**	**4,968**	**5,736.58**
%	**100.00**	**100.00**	**35.95**	**38.31**	**64.05**	**61.69**

Source: SIDICO, July 2017

Activity-wise loan sanctioned between 2002-2017 shows that the highest loan sanctioned was made in 'business' (37.61 per cent) with least in 'industry' (1.65 per cent) (Table 4). However, intriguingly, least number of beneficiaries (4.36 per cent) and sanctioned loan amount (3.55 per cent) was found in agricultural loan, presenting a contradictory scenario compared to number of trained individuals available under the programme (15.09 per cent, Table 1). Similar observation is also discernible in relation to loan sanctioned for vehicles (5.68 per cent) when 19.49 per cent (Table 1) have been trained for Driver cum Tour Guide, to which SIDICO officials reasoned to lesser number of applicants and non-fulfilment of the eligibility criteria. The analysis of district-wise distribution of beneficiaries shows that highest numbers of beneficiaries are concentrated in the East district (36.40 per cent) while the North district recorded the least (6.94 per cent) (Table 5). However, if we contrast the number of beneficiaries with the population of

each district, the West district was found to have higher concentration of beneficiaries and the least was in the East district.

Table 4: Activity-wise sanctioned loan amount under CMSES (2010-17)

Activity Wise	Opening Balance as on 31st March, 2010		2010-11		2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		Cumulative		%	
	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)
Industry	118	84.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	15	0	0	4	12.5	0	0	128	112.3	1.65	1.21
Agriculture	275	230.9	28	42	5	13.5	13	17.5	17	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	338	329.9	4.36	3.55
Animal Husbandry	1255	989.55	174	261	38	61.6	99	127.25	39	58.5	0	0	2	5	0	0	1607	1502.9	20.72	16.16
Service	294	362.75	0	0	0	0	215	330.5	58	103.5	0	0	1	5	0	0	568	801.75	7.32	8.62
Business	2412	2491.33	180	270	64	98.25	71	96	180	229	0	0	10	29.5	0	0	2917	3214.08	37.61	34.56
Tourism	767	961.5	87	130.5	47	105.75	31	56.5	11	141	0	0	0	0	0	0	943	1395.25	12.16	15.00
Vehicle	0	0	0	0	45	185.16	38	89.25	84	226	0	0	9	28	0	0	176	528.41	2.27	5.68
Others	447	609.08	75	112.5	39	81.5	0	0	515	584	0	0	1	20	2	7.5	1079	1414.58	13.91	15.21
TOTAL	**5568**	**5729.91**	**544**	**816**	**238**	**545.76**	**467**	**717**	**910**	**1383**	**0**	**0**	**27**	**100**	**2**	**7.5**	**7756**	**9299.17**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Source: SIDICO, July 2017

Table 5: District-wise distribution of beneficiaries (Amount in lakh)

YEAR	EAST		WEST		NORTH		SOUTH		TOTAL	
	No.	Amount	No.	Amount	No.	Amount	No.	Amount	No.	Amount
2002-03	619	399	418	248	127	80	320	204.5	1484	931.5
2003-04	674	429	458	257.5	100	57.5	408	262	1640	1006
2004-05	11	8	21	31.5	NIL	NIL	28	17	60	38.5
2005-06	27	54.2	15	27	6	14	9	19.5	57	114.7
2006-07	3	12	1	2.5	2	4	1	3.5	7	22

2007-08	94	166.91	21	31.45	4	14.25	23	28.25	142	240.86
2008-09	391	643.75	269	432.9	33	51.5	222	376.2	915	1504.35
2009-10	283	421	595	865.5	102	153	283	414.5	1263	1854
2010-11	198	297	159	238.5	45	67.5	142	231	544	834
2011-12	84	189	34	80.97	14	39.6	106	236.19	238	545.76
2012-13	185	257	101	169.25	38	70	143	220.75	467	717
2013-14	244	394.5	252	370.5	65	124.5	349	493.5	910	1383
2014-15	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
2015-16	9	37.5	8	29	2	6	8	27.5	27	100
2016-17	1	3.5	1	4	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	2	7.5
Total	**2823**	**3312.36**	**2353**	**2788.57**	**538**	**681.85**	**2042**	**2534.39**	**7756**	**9299.17**
%	**36.40**	**35.62**	**30.34**	**29.99**	**6.94**	**7.33**	**26.33**	**27.25**	**100.00**	**100.00**
Population ratio as per 2011 census	**46.29%**		**22.43%**		**7.13%**		**24.15%**		**100.00%**	

Source: SIDICO, July 2017

Critical Appraisal of Livelihood School and CMSES

Both the schemes have considerably helped the Sikkimese youth in experimenting their hand in various small-scale entrepreneurship and generation of employment, and to empower themselves by enhancing their choices in earning a decent livelihood without solely depending on government jobs. In addition to the statistical analysis, field-based enquiries and observations were carried out with the help of SICB to assess both the achievements and challenges, through follow-up studies of those who have availed the schemes. Although number of cases were studied, however only two atypical cases will be highlighted in relation to the livelihood school.

Nirmala Sharma, trained in Agriculture and Horticulture programme from Yuksom-Tashiding livelihood school, West Sikkim, started her small-scale floriculture farm with 50,000 saplings of marigold. During the training programme, she was guided to specialise in floriculture of medicinal plants, particularly marigold, due to its high cultural and religious significance and substance in medicinal usages. Her farm was fruitful as the scope for market value was greater and it really helped her to have a respectable earning, sufficient enough to support her small family. Likewise, Somdutta Kaflay, who was trained successfully in the first batch of 'Driver cum Tour Guide' training programme from Khamdong-Singtam livelihood school, East Sikkim, was able to secure his

commercial vehicle license with the assistance extended by SICB. After that he was able to procure his first (used) commercial vehicle, without any financial help from the government, with the money that he had gathered over the years from the small grocery shop which his family runs and with the help of his relatives. He narrated with a content smile how he is now able to fulfil his dream – sending his children to English medium school and support his family without much hardship, as they are equipped with double income.

The, assessment of livelihood school and CMSES has helped to unearth some of the gaps in the process of implementation and operationalisation of the programmes, creating a mismatch between its objectives and effective actualisation. For instance, as discussed, many trainees exploited the training programme for the sake of the stipend alone, thus blocking the seats and stripping the benefits from reaching the deserving. Additionally, it was felt that livelihood schools proffered solely in the hand of private players under PPP model which need proper monitoring by the implementing agency. Major challenge with CMSES is accountability of the sanctioned loaned vis-à-vis whether the loan has been appropriately utilised for the stipulated purpose or not. The communiqué with the SIDICO officials brought to notice that there are issues of non-repayment of loans in many cases, resulting in financial paucity for future loan, evident from 2014-2015 financial year onward (Table 5). In dialogue with Panchayat members, many express their concerns that there are cases where the sanctioned loan has been utilised to fulfil personal and domestic needs and requirements instead of investment in productive enterprises. Therefore, SIDICO as an implementing nodal agency needs to develop ways for strict monitoring and follow-up.

To sum up, since these schemes are a commendable endeavour on the part of the state in empowering and creating a pool of human resource by skill development, an exhaustive evaluative study to assess the realisation of the objectives of the programme needs to be carried out to review how widely the programme has been successful. Accordingly, the programme can be reviewed to meet the gaps and loopholes and make it more relevant and context oriented for Sikkim.

Notes:

[i] The motto is emphasised to ensure fast track policies and actions for the marginalised sections of the society and to end extreme form of poverty ('Leaving no one behind' in action, 2017).

[ii] The view is expressed by those who have participated in the 55th meeting of the Commission for Social Development representing their country and have emphasised that the success of SDGs 2030 Agenda depends on empowering young people.

[iii] The observation was made by the Deputy Director of SICB, Mr. I.B.S. Yadav during interaction in the field visit at SICB, Karfectar, South Sikkim on 2015, July 30.

[iv] However, at present, the number of livelihood schools has been increased to forty-one as per the latest information published in the SICB website. Retrieved from http://sicbsikkim.in/?action=livelihood_schools

[v] Those who are holders of Sikkim Subject Certificate or Certificate of Identification are classified as Sikkimese for availing any employment or welfare programmes of the state.

[vi] The specified amount is as per 2016 information which was collected during the field visit.

[vii] The contribution of tourism in the state's GDP is estimated to be around 8 per cent (GOS 2015), providing roughly 12 to 15 thousand jobs as highlighted in the *State Tourism Policy 2016.* Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, GOS highlighted that in 2017 domestic tourists who visited Sikkim was 13,75,854 and 49,111 foreign tourists. Retrieved from http://www.sikkimtourism.gov.in/Webforms/General/DepartmentStakeholders/TouristArrivalStats.aspx

[viii] Sikkim Subject Regulation Act of 1961 has given the status of Sikkim subject to the predominant communities' viz., Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepali; further, the Representation of People Act, 1974 has classified the Sikkimese population into Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha and Sikkimese of Nepali origin. Presently, the Sikkimese population are divided into the following social categories, namely, Bhutia-Lepcha (BL), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Scheduled Castes (SC), Other Backward Classes (OBC) which is further classified into OBC Central List and OBC State List, and 'General' category who are basically the plainsman of pan-Indian communities.

[ix] GDR is a simple conceptual tool developed to calculate the percentage difference between the female and male trainees.

[x] The maximum amount of rupees five lakhs is not very clear because though the SIDICO official and the official website (http://www.sidico.org/employment_scheme.htm) confirms the amount, but the official brochure of the scheme mentioned the amount of rupees ten lakhs (http://www.sidico.org/cmses_1.pdf).

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Select Ethnographies on Water in India: a Review

--- Kanaka Himabindu Pottumuthu
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Abstract

Water, an essential resource for survival, has become a subject of central attention in the contemporary debates on sustainability. Research on water from various disciplinary perspectives suggests that the issue is not about quantity but about management of the water resources. Social sciences, particularly anthropology and sociology, have contributed a lot to our understanding of water as a resource, grounded in the empirical method. This paper is a review of selected ethnographic studies from different disciplinary perspectives, viz. anthropology, geography, urban studies and cultural politics on water. Based on ethnographic studies of water in both urban and rural India, the authors argue for increased attention of Indian scholarship to 'infrastructures' like water from an ethnographic perspective.

Key words: Ethnography, Management, Rural, Urban, Water

Introduction

India had experienced rapid transformation in the last three decades after economic liberalisation. Out of the total population of 1210.2 million, in 2011, about 377.1 million live in urban areas and 833.1 million live in rural parts of the country (Census of India, 2011). This has created a big challenge in providing access to water to everyone. As per census 2011, 70.60% urban get potable water, whereas only 30.80% rural population get potable water. It is widely argued that, 'water is the most obvious environmental resource over which conflict seems likely and that water wars will be wars of the future' (Ashton, 2002 & Dimitrov, 2002, in Baviskar, 2008, p. 69). Though certain movements like 'Save the Kelo' movement (Kashwan & Sharma, 2008) have had an impact on not allowing rapid development of industries which makes certain areas drought prone, however, the more recent drought like situation in Shimla and Chennai in 2019 is emblematic of the larger problem of water crisis. Newspaper reports state that the local water

board in Shimla gave preference to certain prominent persons to receive water more regularly, compared to others. Since summer is the peak tourist season in Shimla, hotels and residents faced extreme water shortage. Photographs of people lining up for water were flashed across newspapers. It has been repeatedly stressed upon that water is an important resource that requires not just technological but social and political reflections. The Chennai water crisis has also recently made headlines internationally. These instances highlight the urgency for social scientists to engage with this pressing issue affecting humanity, using their strength in ethnographic methods. In this paper, we review a few select ethnographies on water in rural and urban India. It begins with discussion on the studies on water and related issues and then takes an empirical approach to water in urban settings.

Low (1996), an anthropologist who has worked extensively in urban areas in the United States, discusses at length on the under-theorisation of the city in anthropology. She points out that urban analysis has been mostly confined to disciplines like architecture and geography. Anthropologists have concentrated on every day practices of urban spaces but with only limited impact on the literature of the urban. Recently, however, anthropologists have begun to look at 'infrastructure' of the cities as an ethnographic object (Appel, Anand & Gupta, 2018). Cities are fiercely contested territories for access to various infrastructures like electricity, housing, transport and water. Appel, Anand & Gupta point out that attention needs to be given to exclusions and distribution. Access to water is one such matter. Access to good quality regular supply of water is an 'aspiration' (ibid., p. 3) and 'failure' to provide for this aspiration can be problematic and can lead to social tensions.

Several studies have been carried out on water in urban areas of India, a select few of which will be discussed here. A study on water consumption in Bangalore conducted by environmental scientist Vishal Mehta and others (Mehta, Goswami, Kemp-Benedict, Muddu & Malghan, 2013) argues that water consumption of a city demands assessment of three factors – justice, ecological sustainability and economic efficiency. The authors came up with water demand models based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative aspects in understanding domestic water consumption (ibid., p. 48). They collected one thousand and five hundred random samples, looking at demographic, hydrological, spatial and infrastructure variables. The study concludes that apart from resource flows, waste flows should also be taken into consideration, and, 'urban metabolism' is a problem from both

biophysical sustainability and social equity perspectives, and that it is important to portray the spatial variation in resource flows (ibid., p. 41).

Taking such large mixed method studies as an example, we argue that a more in-depth, perhaps small scale, but empirical study can offer great insight into various dimensions of water, be it usage or waste. In this paper, we summarise some of the key studies on water done from an ethnographic perspective and make a case that more such studies are needed in order for us to foreground 'infrastructure' as crucial for sociological and anthropological research in India.

Scholars like Baviskar (2007, p. 1) have pointed out that 'unlike land and other immovable resources such as forests, where the rights of ownership and control are easier to demarcate and defend, water is harder to track and regulate.' This would lead to socio-cultural and political problems, even war, if water is regulated arbitrarily. In her book Waterscapes (2007), Baviskar talks about the autochthonous tradition, which is the revival of the 'dying wisdom' in villages about ecological conservation as a form of village institutions and practices. The essays in this edited volume show that water is treated as a natural resource which is omnipresent and has to be viewed through a cultural lens. Cultural politics provides an analytical framework examining questions like power and inequality, conflicts and compromises, as they shape waterscapes. In the new millennium, water scarcity has enabled people to understand the significance of water and also resulted in various national and international forums around water.

Water management has been a challenge for future economic growth and ecological sustainability. Appel et al. (2018, p. 3) underscore that 'infrastructures are critical locations through which sociality, governance and politics, accumulation and dispossession, and institutions and aspirations are formed, reformed, and performed'. Following them, we have considered some of such thought provoking studies in this review. In the sections below, we will discuss ethnographic studies on water, conducted in both rural and urban contexts.

Water Ethnographies in Rural India

Lyla Mehta, a sociologist, and Anand Punja, a sustainability professional, discuss the Adivasi Tadvi community's relationship with water (in the form of the river Narmada) in their village of Malu, in Gujarat (Baviskar, 2007). Their study explains the gap in the understanding of water supply between the government

and the public. Residents of Malu were relocated by the government because of Sardar Sarovar dam project. While displacement and employment were of equal concern to the people, loss of good quality lake water for day-to-day usage was also a major worry. Water in Malu was *meetu* (sweet) and clean. Displacement resulted in a sense of declining well-being. In Malu, despite having multiple sources of water, there is no reliable supply. Tadvi people classified water into three types: *meetu pani* (sweet water, which is of the best quality), *moru pani* (bland water but can be consumed) and *kharu pani* (salty water which cannot be consumed). People emphasise fine aspects like hardness of water and effects like dryness. Both government and non-government organisations feel that the effort of women in procuring water has been reduced by the decrease in distance to water source. But people are nostalgic about taste and quality. Some old villagers even keep jars of Narmada water in their homes.

Gender dynamics takes an interesting turn in the village. Fathers-in-law help their daughters-in-law in fetching water, not out of sympathy, but due to the limited time available. Men feel that if they do not help, they might not have adequate water for daily chores. This is a positive sign of change in gender relations, with men engaging in hitherto traditional 'female' tasks. On the contrary, these conflicts around water become serious in larger households among sisters-in-law. The loss of the river had a tremendous impact on people's lives in Malu, especially for women. The river offered them a chance to step out of home and interact with other women, exchanging news and gossip. Women told officials that they prefer the 'drudgery' of their submerged village to the conditions in the resettlement site. Now they are far away from both their kin and the river. For Malu residents, the river is equivalent to mother. Constricting the river with dams is considered inappropriate. Narmada, for the Tadvis, is not just a river but an ecosystem which played an important role in their social structure and identity.

In such water ethnographies state policies have also come under scrutiny. Baviskar's (1995) work in Madhya Pradesh is a case in point. Her research was amongst the Bhilala community of the Narmada valley, who were both agrarian and cattle rearers. She looks at deforestation and land encroachment issues, apart from their agrarian cycle. The forest department, without understanding the community and their discourse, had forced their ideology on people in the name of development which led to their displacement. The *sangaths* (community meetings) had argued that the disputed lands are traditionally owned/cultivated/used by the community people. The Bhilala community's close

ties with nature is elaborated through a detailed description of *indal puja* (homage offered to a supernatural entity) and singing *gayana*. Gayana is a song which is sung by the people of Bhilala to express their relationship with nature. The displacement due to Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) caused tremendous anxiety amongst the Bhilala. Decisions taken by the state in the name of development without consulting the people and with no proper displacement plan resulted in agitations. For Baviskar (1995, p. 230) 'the challenge to development has come in the form of political movements of people who are ecologically, economically and culturally marginalised'.

Another account of such ethnography is by Mosse (2003), a social anthropologist, who writes on the complex relationship between water and society in Tamil Nadu, from a historical, sociological and regional dimension. Mosse shows that water resources are produced, used, and set meaning by flowing social and political relations. He argues that 'water – a productive and symbolic resource – is integral to the historical making of the regionally-specific institution' (Mosse, 2003, p. 4). Political institutions have been shaped by water flows and had legitimised them. In the past, water flows were gifted by medieval kings and chiefs, who also controlled them by creating landscapes which marked their role in the hydrology and thus naturalised it. Mosse opines that at the beginning of the 21st century water would play an important role in various levels of political processes. He also pointed out policy representations of imagined institutions of *kudimaramat* (irrigation repair works by villagers) custom with cultural practices of Ramnad and Sivaganga kings and *zamindars*, government officers and other villagers. He pointed out the flaws in environmentalists' arguments (like, 'standard environmental narrative' by Madsen (1992) and 'new traditionalist' discourse by Sinha, et.al (1998)) and also administrative ideas which are not realistic. In doing so, Mosse makes a note of water being a resource for agriculture and a medium between social and political organisations.

Technology is another trope that is often mentioned in scholarly studies on water. Examining irrigation technology from an ethnographic angle in Karnataka, Shah (2003) suggests that indigenous knowledge ultimately has had to give way to the more powerful scientific paradigms. In looking at tank designs and paddy cultivation in Bellary, Dharwad, Kolar and Bangalore, she shows through folk songs and stories that constructions of tanks have been labour intensive. The availability of space and cheap labour made tanks possible. But the tank's design has to interact with local social structure, which Shah terms as 'social design'.

Artisan castes named *vodda* contributed to the tank's design. A tank usually is full between July-October or latest by November-December. Water distribution is done during irrigation, especially during the nights. While the water flows through the gravity system, the firsts in line receive more and the last ones receive less, logically. Certain traditions, rules and regulations are involved in this process, but in the *atchakat* system, the tail end farmers receive water first. The new generation add-on of bore wells has been accepted eagerly by the farmers. Shah suggests that destroying water outlet structures to make new ones is like rejecting water distribution designs, in that particular tank in the Bombay-Karnataka region where she conducted fieldwork.

Continuing with the discussion on tradition and technology like Shah, Luisa Cortesi's study in North Bihar, conducted between 2006-2008 shows that contrary to what is expected, most residents have a very casual attitude towards water quality. Megh Pyne Abhiyan (MPA) is a network of grassroots organisations working on water management in North Bihar. MPA has been trying to get dug-wells back in the places where they have disappeared, replaced by hand pumps. Repeated floods in Bihar had resulted in high dependence on benefits and relief operations. The usage of hand pumps was widespread. A discourse emerged about hand pumps being modern and dug-wells being traditional/backward. Hand pumps were considered as 'agents of transaction in the relations between people and water' (Cortesi, 2014, p. 322). Though dug-well is a sustainable scientific concept and filters contaminants naturally, there was not much interest in MPA's work amongst the general public.

Water Ethnographies in Urban Setting

Now we focus on a couple of studies on water conducted in urban settings. Bjorkman (2015), a political scientist, worked on water in Mumbai city. She procured maps from the BMC (Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation) of the Maharashtra state government for her research about 'pipe politics'. After managing to get the Mumbai-East blueprints, she had conversations with senior engineers for weeks and months. The BMC survey was operational until the early 1990s. In the early 1980s, BMC faced the issue of privatisation of the BMC board. The idea of providing water meter connections to households was partially supported by people but political parties such as Shiv Sena opposed it. She focused on apartments which claim to have world-class facilities but lack attention to water problems. The BMC engineer mentions about the water

pressure with which he manipulated valve, commissioned or decommissioned water mains and made a cross-connection. While doing so, he tries not to compromise on water flows and affecting flow to another area. Bjorkman explains the strategies of acquiring maps to trace water management of a big city. She sees the idea of corruption, often seen as the villain in getting access to water in big cities, as mediating the relationship between people's everyday encounters with unsystematic, unpredictable water flow, and various kinds of knowledge about the forces, actions, and activities that might be influencing those flows. Her work shows that water flows happen with power, authority and 'hydraulic spectacle' (Bjorkman, 2015, p. 198); 'if water comes it's because of politics', she argues (ibid.).

More recently, Nikhil Anand, an anthropologist, has looked at water usage and politics in India, again in Mumbai. Anand (2015) has dealt with the interesting aspect of water leakage in Mumbai city. People in managerial positions point out water leakages from a financial perspective but there are technical constraints behind it as well. Residents in buildings have storage tanks, but in the city there are a lot of people living in slums and pavements who do not have access to such facilities. The issue then is about providing water to those deemed 'illegitimate' residents of a city. Anand mentions that his research motive is to analyse the pros and cons of the amount of water being lost or wasted in Mumbai. Water leakage, he points out, is not a problem occurring only in developing countries. For instance, approximately 30 per cent of New York city's water is estimated to be leaking (Murley, 2011 in Anand, 2015). Anand says that water leakages are way beyond the institutional or managerial control. At times the engineers also ignore the leakages for social or political reasons and feel that leakages are necessary for social equality and to avoid conflicts.

In another article, Anand focuses on people pressurising the system to draw attention to the 'materiality of water' (Anand, 2011, p. 544). The technology used in playing politics was termed by Anand as 'PoliTechnics' (ibid., p. 542). He discusses how a basic resource like water comes to define politics of a place. Anand's research on water issues stands as a benchmark in anthropology where we can identify the problems faced by citizens and suggest possible solutions to engineers in efficient management of water.

Conclusion

From the ethnographic studies conducted by researchers from various disciplines reviewed here, it is evident that water is a crucial aspect of living, with both social and political undertones. During an interview we conducted, Serish Nanisetti, the city editor of *The Hindu*, Hyderabad edition, said, 'water is equal to power'. Fernandes (2018) feels that rapid urbanisation and city-centric models have put pressure on water resources in India. Further, Mehta and Punja (as cited in Baviskar, 2007) rightly mention that water quality is not about the technical aspects but about taste, colour and odour. These aspects can be brought out only through in-depth ethnographic studies. The understanding of water is culture-specific and it is also important to get the adverse impact of supply logic. The authors cited here have shown that technology in itself cannot be seen as a solution in isolation; it has to go with the larger social dynamics. Traditional forms of water collection and distribution may have to be articulated differently if one has to counter modern technologies, whether it is hand pump or water filter. Development as understood in the form of dams result in other kinds of hardships for the displaced population. Using methods from other disciplines, such as looking at city administration maps and water supply chain, can also yield rich data if pursued from an ethnographic perspective. Corruption and leakage get new meaning when seen from this angle. The aim of this paper is to call for attention from social scientists working in and on India to ethnographically capture people's interactions with a resource that is political, economic and social.

This ethnographic review highlights the importance of water as a necessary infrastructure. Water is a political resource with multiple implications. Social scientists need new tools and ways of thinking to study water disputes. If we understand the role of history in analysing water disputes, it may be easy to analyse the present and plan the future. We end this review with a quote from our ethnographic study in Hyderabad during 2016-2017. One of the respondents in Hyderabad said, 'water is basic; if we manage water then no one will have any other complaints'. This statement briefly summarises the importance of water management in everyday discourse.

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Research in Progress: Resistance or Change? Manipur in the Neo-liberal Era

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Resistance or Change? Manipur in the Neo-liberal Era

--- Sapana Devi Karam

Abstract

Manipur has been considered as a conflict-ridden state of the Northeastern region of India. These issues and tensions are very complex and sometimes overlapping in nature. These conflicts in Manipur are rooted in territory, autonomy, separation and identity politics. Much of this assertion has been to protect 'cultural identity' as symbolised in dress, language and cultural tastes. Against this backdrop, the paper attempts to analyse the interplay between people and the conflict in the face of the neo-liberal period in Manipur. This paper examines the changes in cultural attitudes and cultural tastes owing to the forces of neo-liberalism, especially the changes taking place in the context of material and symbolic culture. In this context, the present study focuses on non-state actors and their activities towards restriction of outsider culture, especially the mainland India.

Key words: Conflict, Manipur, Middle class, Neo-liberal, Northeast

Introduction

This paper attempts to examine the changing socio-cultural aspects of Manipur in the neo-liberal period. Manipur has been considered a conflict-ridden state. The conflicts and tensions in Manipur are based on 'assertion of ethnic identity and protection of territoriality, demands for a separate sovereign state, and autonomy within the state' (Raile, 2012, p. 56). Much of this assertion has been to protect 'cultural identity' as symbolised in dress, language and cultural tastes. Thus, owing to this socio-political situation, the state has high presence and dominance of security and state military apparatus (McDuie-Ra, 2016).

However, the nature and forms of conflicts in Manipur have been changing. In comparison to 1960s and 1970s, the present scenario of insurgency's attitude towards the demand for independent sovereign state of Manipur has been blurred. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, tribals who were supporting the struggle for the sovereignty of Manipur, have started to mobilise themselves in demand for their

territorial rights (as separate area) and 'integration' movement of Nagas (with Nagas of Nagaland and Kuki for Kukiland) (Hanjabam, 2013, p. 110; Goswami, 2011). On the other hand, such sentiments seem to have gone away from 'people's mind' (mostly Meiteis) as Manipur is more 'integrated' into the mainland India 'culturally' than before.

Against this backdrop, the paper attempts to analyse the interplay between people and the conflict in the wake of the neo-liberal economy in Manipur and examine the changes in cultural attitudes and tastes owing to the forces of neo-liberalism. The focus of the present study is on the activities of non-state actors towards restriction of outside culture, especially from the mainland India.

The main focus of the study is the Imphal area. Methodologically[i], it is based on both primary and secondary data, collected for a study on education in Manipur. The data was collected from different stakeholders using interviews. This includes academicians, student union leaders, journalists, government retired officials, active service personnel and social activists. Snowball sampling has been employed in the data collection. In addition, observation method was also employed in the study. The data was collected within the period of 2016 to 2018 at periodic intervals.

Neo-liberalism and Manipur

With the opening of the national market to the global market economy in the early 1990s, the 'neo-liberal era' brought many changes in India. Privatisation in different sectors of society has increased rapidly. Defining neo-liberalism, Harvey says, 'Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes human wellbeing can be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurship, freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade' (Harvey, 2007, p. 2). The role of the state is to guarantee the proper functioning of the markets with minimal intervention (Kotz, 2000). According to Steven Ward, 'under neo-liberalism, people are situated as less socially connected citizens of the state, and they are more situated as more as self-interested, competitors, self-actualised entrepreneurs and rational consumers in a dynamic and ever-changing global marketplace' (Ward, 2012, p. 2). The neo-liberal era emphasises the role of the market in all sectors of the society including education (ibid.). Consequently, private enterprises in the sector of education and health are on the rise (Nayak,

2014). This new economic configuration was subsumed under the term globalisation (Harvey, 2007) and now there is no region where globalisation has not penetrated, and Manipur too has not escaped its clutches.

It is interesting to discuss the case of Manipur because 'attention to post-liberalism in the borderland has been limited owing to the dominance of security and state-led development in its governance' (McDuie-Ra, 2016, p. 144). This could also be a reason for the late influx of neo-liberal market forces in the state. In the past, even at the turn of the century, some underground outfits have propagated resistance to anything 'Indian' and restrictions to acculturation of Indian values (Singh, 2010). For instance, banning of Hindi movies in theatres, telecast of Hindi language programmes on TV and Hindi songs in public places since 2000 (ibid.), even shutting down of showing Hindi movies in cable television (though this is now relaxed at present for home viewing, but not in public spaces like cinema theatres), discouraging wearing of mainland dresses, especially North Indian dress code such as *saree, salwar*, and western outfits such as jeans, skirt (by women), and so on and so forth, which they considered a threat to traditional Manipuri culture (Hussain, 2001) as it 'undermines Manipuri cultural values' (Bhaumik, 2009). However, the restriction on dress code was ephemeral.

In the initial period of such restriction, it was very common to collect and burn down the CDs containing Hindi films, breaking of music system if someone was listening to Hindi songs in public vehicles or personal car. Hindi films and music was totally shut from being displayed in public space (Singh, 2010). For people, it was also one of the fears of violence, and threat if someone dares to play Hindi music or films in public. Due to such ban on Hindi films in the state, a few cinema hall owners have converted their cinema halls to shopping plazas (Naorem, 2006).

As a result of such restriction on Hindi entertainment programmes, three effects have been seen – first, South Indian entertainment programmes such as Telugu, Malayalam or Kannada movies have started selling in CD parlours for viewing on home TV with English sub-titles; second, interestingly, Korean movies, soap operas and their pop culture have become popular in Manipur; and third, Manipur digital film industry rapidly developed and expanded its production (Naorem, 2006). However, the former has not gained popularity among the people as much as the second, especially among the youth. McDuie-Ra (2012) stated that youth in

Imphal are heavily influenced by the cosmopolitan lifestyle of East Asian countries such as Korea and Japan and also the Western culture as introduced by Korean/Japanese movies and soap operas. This shows the 'divergence from Indian popular culture (Bollywood, cricket, etc.)' (ibid., p. 61). Korean movies and their drama series have become a favourite form of entertainment, especially among the youth (Das, 2014). Even other states of Northeast India where Hindi was not banned, such as Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, have witnessed the spread of the Korean wave (Kuotsu, 2013). It could be considered as an after-effect of banning Hindi movies and this has been successful because of the technological changes in telecasting through satellites in the early neo-liberal period.

Restriction on Hindi entertainment programmes shows the role of non-state actors, their share in power (McDuie-Ra, 2016) and their influence in the state. Although there has been restriction and resistance to so-called mainland attire and entertainment, especially Hindi programmes, there is no such strong case in terms of learning of the Hindi language in schools as part of their education. It could be argued that the resistance conducted by the interest groups or underground outfits was specifically to express cultural non-integration; but resistance to learning Hindi is not seen as a threat so that Manipuris who migrate are not at a disadvantage for not knowing Hindi. The resistance is not to get 'exploited' (financially and symbolically) but at the same time not to handicap the people of Manipur in terms of cultural capital (by allowing them to learn Hindi). All these are portrayed as an attempt to protect the interest of the Manipuris.

Nevertheless, such resistance and restrictions has not spread uniformly in the state. Being a multi-ethnic diverse state, different resistance imposed by non-state or any interest group, has different effects on different sections of the society. The above instances of banning Hindi entertainment programmes have more effect in the valley areas especially with Meitei ethnic groups. Such practices have been strongly imposed in the valley areas, because bulk of the population of the state live in the valley areas; thus it is the centre of political power as well (as most of the State Legislative Assembly seats are from the valley). Hence non-state Meitei actors were in the forefront of asserting their power and influence through such means. Indeed, this could be seen as fear of assimilation with the dominant culture, especially of Hindi heartland. In the hill areas, resistance did not take such form, partly because the tribals wanted to assert their culture vis-à-vis the Meiteis.

Neo-liberal penetration in Manipur has come about only in the second decade of this century, perhaps owing to the negative image of the state being conflict-ridden. Now perhaps the image is changing owing to the political view that movements of 'resistance' and 'secession' are because of lack of job opportunities and 'development' (Bhaumik, 2009; Dutt, 2003). The central government has given a push in this regard with its Act East Policy (Dubey, 2015).

Manipur at Present: Resistance or Change?

Regardless of issues and tensions in the state, gradually Manipur has started participating and entering into the mainstream scenario, especially in material and symbolic culture, with the existing resistance unconsciously taking a backseat. Gradually, commercial activities have been slowly penetrating into the state in the last few years, especially since the early 2000s. Commercial activities have emerged in the valley. Recently, a number of mini shopping malls have also come up (Mamcy Mall, Bazar India, Vishal Shopping Mart, etc.). It was in 2013 that a multi-national brand ADIDAS landed in Imphal in Mamcy Mall and then later followed by other brands (Khangenbam, 2015). There were no food chains like KFC, McDonalds in the state but in the beginning of 2019, a KFC restaurant has opened up in Imphal city. This is the emerging new cultural taste for the Manipuri people, especially among the urban elite and growing middle class people. As a result, it has changed the culture of consumption in the state. Thus, it has become a cultural symbol of the upper middle class and for the aspirant middle class. A respondent stated that till recently, the well-off families were conscious that if they indulged in such consumption, non-state members would come and place a demand (in form of a letter) for money (usually in terms of lakhs). However, such things are not happening anymore and people appear to have come out of that fear.

In this sense, Manipur is no more marginal in material and symbolic culture as compared to other mainland states. The emerging consumerist urban middle class culture is visible rapidly. Big multi-nationals are making their presence felt. For many of the elite and middle class who have had such taste from outside Manipur, now Imphal is part of the global elite consumer culture. Imphal has become well known as an important centre for medical tourism, especially for those in Myanmar; and with the opening of international air services to Myanmar, this integration is only growing to get deeper (*Straits Times*, 2019). A few educated people have started establishing private schools. Many of them have established

private coaching institutions and other commercial activities in the state. Such penetration has been helped by young people who have been educated or have worked in mainland cities and brought such mainland traits and culture. As a result, the forces of neo-liberalism have been expanding in the state.

Indeed, technology and media have contributed towards bringing this transition in Manipur as well, with the introduction of smart phones, private cable network, and more so with the Indian government's Look East Policy (re-launched in 2014 as 'Act East Policy') [ii] . Recently many billboards, a number of banners, advertisements on mainstream Indian television channels, including in Hindi, have become popular, which was not possible till recently. McDuie-Ra observes about Imphal that 'the frontier city has been connecting slowly through symbolic gestures such as the Indian-ASEAN car rally and with the opening of the land border with Myanmar and the arrival of national and international capital and its trappings such as billboards, advertisement, and the consumer goods' (McDuie-Ra, 2016, p. 144). Further, he states that the local people and their practices have been reshaped, along with their connectivity to other regions, despite the politics of 'belonging' and political situation in the state.

In addition, we cannot ignore the role of media, including both visual and print media. Recently, the Northeastern states of India have been the focus of national media, and even that of Bollywood (Hindi film industry). There can now be seen a representation of Northeast Indian, including Manipur in Bollywood films. Films such as *Mary Kom*, *Jagga Jasoos*, *Uri*, and *Penalty* are few such examples of Bollywood films which have aspects of Northeast and also Manipur in their narration. The underground outfits have not yet accepted the release of such films in theatres in Manipur, even though the films are more or less based on Manipur and Northeast India. However, these reflect the newly growing connectivity with mainland India.

Interestingly, modern technology, especially private DTH (direct to home) TV, has increased the accessibility to watch films without having to go to theatres. Big private players like Tata Sky, Dish TV bring Bollywood films to the TV sets at home, while streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc. bring it directly to the individual smart phones. These technologies have changed the way films and visual entertainment is watched and consumed. These technologies have circumvented the ban on Hindi films and programmes in public space in such a way that it has become infructuous. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that

traditional attempts of resistance to Bollywood and Hindi entertainment programmes are not much successful now; technology has broken down the fence of such resistance. Thus, now, it is not surprising that many young people from Manipur are also participating in mainland (Hindi heartland) TV entertainment programmes and talent shows, such as dance and singing competition, and other entertainment activities, which was unimaginable until the recent past. However, these Manipuri singers or young emerging singers have to face threats from the underground groups for singing Hindi songs[iii].

On the other hand, many sports players are coming out and playing for India and earning national recognition, especially in sports such as boxing, weightlifting and football. Mention can be made especially of women sportsperson MC Mary Kom (six times world women's boxing champion), and Bala Devi Ngangom in football (team captain of Indian women football). Mary Kom was nominated to Rajya Sabha because of her achievements in boxing. Because of the rich sports culture in the Northeast, especially Manipur, the National Sport University has also been established in Manipur in 2018.

The education sector is also one such domain which has been affected by neo-liberalism. Private educational institutions, especially professional colleges are increasing; private higher secondary schools are flooded in the state, especially in the urban areas in the valley. In this contemporary era, people are consciously or unconsciously being oriented towards the economy rather than the community. This can be seen with many new associations and organisations which are emerging. For instance, the parents' association for exemption of fees for those months when teaching does not take place due to long duration of closure of schools. On the other hand, teachers' have made the counter-demand against the school authority that the demands of parents should not affect their salary and so on[iv]. Such a scenario indicates the logic of individual economic interest taking precedence ahead of societal or community concerns.

People who have resources are the ones enjoying such educational opportunities and in turn expand their social capital, developing a new taste of urban culture and becoming a symbol of middle class culture. The emerging middle class consumerist culture has considerably reshaped Imphal and Manipur.

Conclusion

The present social and cultural landscape in Manipur has experienced rapid change in comparison to around ten years back. Different national as well as international brands for clothes, jewellery, furniture, automobile stores have flooded in and around Imphal city, such as in the areas like Thangmeiband and Sangaiprou-Airport road. This leads to a change in the symbolic capital and socio-culture of Manipur. Manipur is no longer at the margin as far as consumerism is concerned, as it is no different to other cities in India. For instance, in the near past, going out in the evening was not considered safe, owing to frequent security checking by the state forces or due to unfavourable incidents, especially among the youth. But now-a-days, one can easily find people coming out in the evening for leisure time. Shops also stay open till late in the evening. In fact in the last three to five years, going out in the night has become fashionable in the areas in and around Imphal city.

In terms of development, Northeastern states including Manipur, are considered to be lagging behind compared to mainland India (Sharma, 2012). It is also believed that it is the lack of development that has given rise to the conflicts in the region. So, the major role of the Indian government is now to focus on the development of the Northeast region; hence, one witnesses significant government activism in the planning for connecting the state with the railway network, upgrading the status of the Imphal airport to international airport, establishing international market at Moreh, Indo-Myanmar border, construction of Asian Highway (Dubey, 2014), taking Asian car rally through Imphal to other parts of Asia and so on (McDuie-Ra, 2016).

However, an important question to be posed is that will this kind of development finally bring peace to Manipur and will it lead to the resolution of all the conflicts? Though people want development in the state, the local people have a fear of the influx of outsiders. Thus, development is always double-edged. People have shown fear of assimilation with so-called Hindi-land culture and there is also a deep concern about the influx of outsiders, as there is a fear that they may become a minority in their own homeland in near future. As a result, the demand for re-implementation of the Inner Line Permit System (ILP)[v] and demand for recognition of the Meiteis as a Scheduled Tribe has been raised.

It is yet to be seen whether neo-liberalism will result in greater acceptance of the mainland culture of Hindi speaking regions, or whether it will manifold the existing tensions involving the Inner Line Permit System and the demand for Scheduled Tribe status to the Meiteis, or will it result in the emergence of new conflicts? Manipur is in a period of transition, despite laden with conflicts and various social tensions. Gradually, the neo-liberal economy has made significant penetration into the socio-cultural landscape of the state, generating new values of individualism and consumerism, and thereby undermining the resistance movement of the non-state actors against contemporary Indian middle class consumerist cultural values.

Notes:

[i] This paper is based on my ongoing PhD work.

[ii] Look East Policy was launched by former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in 1991. The main aim of the policy is for economic integration by strengthening the ties between India and ASEAN countries. In 2014, the NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi re-launched the policy as 'Act East Policy' at East Asia and India Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). See, Sajjanhar, A. (2016). Taking stock of India's 'Act East Policy'. *ORF Issue Brief,* (142).

[iii] Manipuri Girl Trolled for Singing Hindi Song at Indian Idol. *The Shillong Times* (January, 2017). Retrieved from http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2017/01/04/manipur-girl-trolled-for-singing-hindi-song-at-indian-idol/

[iv] On 23rd July, 2009, a 27 year old man was killed in an alleged fake encounter; and a bystander, a pregnant woman was also shot dead in Imphal city. Owing to this, schools were forcefully shut down by the All Manipur Students' Union (AMSU) for more than three months. Owing to prolonged shut down of schools, some parents' association put forward the demand that school should exempt the fees of those months for which teaching has not taken place. On the other hand, the private school teachers' association owing to the fear of cutting down of their salary, in turn, demanded to the school authorities that the issue of exemption of fees should not affect their salary. (Private School Teachers not given Salary. *E-pao* (January, 2009). Retrieved from http://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=17..271009.oct09)

[v] The Inner Line Permit System is the permit system under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 Act which has been implemented in some Northeast states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland (Government of India, 1873). According to official Gazette, there are prohibitions to all citizens from other regions of India to reside or pass through boundary of such regions without a valid pass issued by the relevant authority under the regulation. Manipur in the past had a well-regulated policy that was functional under permit systems and Foreigners Department to maintain check and balance towards entry and exit of outsiders. In 1949, when Manipur merged into India, the transit and exit system of Manipur was removed from Manipur on 18th November, 1950.

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Research in Progress: Adivasis, the Fifth Schedule and Urban Development: a Study of Greater Ranchi

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Adivasis, the Fifth Schedule and Urban Development: a Study of Greater Ranchi

--- Aashish Khakha

Abstract

The Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution was created for special administration of tribal areas to prevent land alienation through land transfer regulation, where no land or immovable property in these areas can be transferred by way of sale or lease to persons other than the tribals/Adivasis. However, in Jharkhand, a state which falls in the Fifth Scheduled Area, when state-led urban development projects are carried out, in the name of 'progress' and 'development', one finds a blatant violation of not just the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution but also of historical laws such as the Chhotanagpur Tenancy (CNT) Act (1908). One such example of development is the creation of the new capital township of Jharkhand known as 'Greater Ranchi'. This township is being built on the outskirts of the city, in the Dhurwa area, on former Heavy Engineering Corporation Limited (HECL) land. This land had been given by the state to the corporation, after displacing the Adivasi people living in the area. This paper looks into the various contestations surrounding the urban development of Greater Ranchi and examines its impact on the above-mentioned laws and the Adivasi society living in that area.

Key words: Adivasis, Fifth Schedule, Greater Ranchi, Jharkhand, Scheduled Tribes, Urban Development

The Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution: the Case of Jharkhand

By the early 20th century, following World War-I, when the British realised that they would have to leave India, they came out with the Government of India Act (Govt. of India Act, 1919)[i]. They began to form Councils, such as Bengal, Bihar and others, for participation of Indians in governance. It was during this phase that the Areas under the Scheduled districts, which were predominantly inhabited by tribals, came to be described as the Backward Tracts. This later came to be rechristened as the Excluded Areas and the Partially Excluded Areas. The areas

with the Inner Line Permit (ILP) came to be known as The Excluded Areas. The rest where there was some presence of the non-tribals were referred to as The Partially Excluded Areas. After Independence, during the Constituent Assembly Debates[ii], the Excluded Areas and Partially Excluded Areas of the Northeastern region became the Sixth Schedule Areas and the Partially Excluded Areas in the rest of India came to be known as the Fifth Schedule Areas. The Fifth Scheduled Areas were stated to be administered through the Governor and the Tribes Advisory Council (TAC). They had the power to bring about peace and good governance and prohibit the sale of tribal land to non-tribals. This provision was made following the recognition by the national leadership for protection and special administration of these areas. These were due to three key characteristics namely: distinct cultural features, vulnerability to external exploitation and development gaps between tribal people in comparison to non-tribal people (Xaxa, 2008, p. 65).

Following the provisions of the Fifth Schedule, the states which came under this jurisdiction introduced laws restricting the alienation of tribal land to non-tribals. Jharkhand, which was carved out of erstwhile Bihar in 2000 (Tirkey, 2002, p. 3) did not enact such laws, as there were already such provisions in the form of the Chhotanagpur Tenures Act (1869) (which was further amended as the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act, 1908, after the Birsa Munda rebellion of 1895-1900)[iii]. And so was the case with the Santhal Pargana Act (1876) (which was brought about after the Santhal Hul rebellion of 1855-57[iv], and rechristened as the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act in 1949).

Notwithstanding such historical and legal provisions, there has been continuing violation of constitutional and legal provisions. Alienation of tribal land from tribes to non-tribes and from tribes to state has accelerated in post-independence India. Under the name of nation building and development, thousands of acres of tribal land were taken away for various projects such as power dams, irrigation, mines and industries across India, and especially in Jharkhand. It is around these projects that most of the urbanisation process in Jharkhand has taken place. Jharkhand has been witness to rapid urban growth in about two decades. It provides an apt case for understanding the process of urbanisation in tribal India.

Urbanisation in Jharkhand

In 1901, the urban population of Jharkhand was 1,17,975 comprising of 13 towns. It constituted 1.94 per cent of total urban population of India (Harshwardhan & Tripathi, 2015, p. 69). The urban population in Jharkhand, as elsewhere in India, emerged mainly out of administrative centres required for effective administration of the region. However, a few of the towns had grown out of economic activity which had to do with extraction of minerals, mainly coal. The need for the transportation of minerals led to the introduction of railways which gave further boost to urbanisation. In fact, it was the access to minerals that led to the setting up of a modern industry in the form of the Tata Iron and Steel Company. This gave spurt to new economic activity leading to urbanisation and making of the city of Jamshedpur, which is the largest city in Jharkhand.

The character of urbanisation in post-independence India has moved along the same lines as in colonial period. It has developed around mines and industries that are invariably linked to exploitation of mineral resources. Alongside these, there has been steady growth and expansion of administrative centres, resulting in the push of the urbanisation process in Jharkhand. In 1951, there were 35 towns, which meant an increase of 22 towns in comparison to 13. Jharkhand saw the establishment of a number of industrial and other infrastructure projects, especially power and dams. The industrial projects were greatly contingent on minerals which Jharkhand has in abundance. The site of these economic activities attracted a large number of labour forces from outside and paved the way for the emergence of these places as towns. In fact, all important towns in Jharkhand are centred on industry. Since most of these projects came between mid-1950s and 1970s, Jharkhand experienced an accelerated process of urbanisation during this phase.

Since 1981, there was however decline in the growth which continued till 2001. But post 2001, there has been rapid growth in urban population. In 2004-05, 11 per cent of the working population in Jharkhand were engaged in mining and quarrying, utility services and in construction sites. This has increased to 23 per cent in 2009-10. The total population of the state grew by 22 per cent during 2001-11, but the growth of the urban population had been much higher at 33 per cent during this period (ibid., p. 70). In 2001, the share of urban population to the total population of Jharkhand was 22.4 per cent, which increased to 24.05 per cent in 2011. Here we see that it witnessed unprecedented urbanisation in the decade

2001-2011. Paradoxically, however, the tribal population, the natives of the region, have been missing from this process of industrialisation and urbanisation. As per the 2001 census, they formed 9.8 per cent of the tribal population. Interestingly even in 2011, their share remains the same though, as noted above, there has been rapid urbanisation during this phase[v].

According to 2011 census, there are 228 towns and urban agglomerations in Jharkhand. Yet most of the districts where these towns are located have very low level of urbanisation. Only four of the districts in the state are highly or moderately urbanised. These are East Singhbhum with 55 per cent urban population, Dhanbad with 52 per cent, Bokaro with 45 per cent, and Ranchi with 35 per cent urban population (ibid.). This clearly shows that the tribal land was already being exploited despite the CNT and SPT acts being brought in.

Urbanisation of Ranchi

Christopher Lakra mentions that 'the township of Ranchi itself has grown out of a number of tribal villages. In this sense Ranchi could be called a "tribal city"' (Lakra, 1999, p. 19). The Draft Master Plan for Greater Ranchi[vi], which was framed by 1964, states that, 'Ranchi, the Headquarters of the Chhotanagpur Division is fast growing into the most industrialised town in the eastern region. The most important phase of development of Ranchi started with the decision to locate such important undertakings as Heavy Engineering Corporation (HEC), Headquarters of Hindustan Steel Limited and National Coal Development Corporation. The rapid growth of the city is apparent from the multifarious and sporadic activities going around in and around the town. The activities in the colonies of the Heavy Engineering Corporation and Hindustan Steel etc. are well planned but the private building activities present a chaotic state of affairs. Some ancillary industries are coming up without much regard to well recognised zoning regulations. It is obvious, therefore, that a Master Plan for Ranchi should be drawn up to channelise the growth of the town in accordance with the best-known planning principles.' (Urban & Rural Development in India, 2005, p. 362).

Further it mentions that, 'During the decade 1951-1961, the population of Ranchi town showed an increase of 31.50% that is, from 1,06,840 to 1,40,253. The rate of growth is not commensurate with the potentialities of the town – firstly, because the town suffered in this decade due to the shifting of the Eastern Command Headquarters from Ranchi to Lucknow; secondly, because, full impact of

industrial growth was not felt until 1961. There has been lately a marked trend for the rural population to migrate into urban areas and this influx is likely to continue for quite some time in the near future. These developments are going to increase pressure on urban lands and other civic amenities of the town. All these factors have been taken into consideration while drawing up the Master Plan for Ranchi.' (Thakur, Sinha, Prasad, Sharma, Pratap, Mandal & Singh, 2005, p. 362).

The Case of Greater Ranchi

The acquisition of land for the development of Greater Ranchi came about soon after the establishment of Jharkhand as an autonomous state. The state was carved out from the Adivasi areas of the Chhotanagpur and the Santhal Parganas, in the southern part of Bihar, on 15th November, 2000. The birth of this state was the culmination of the century old Jharkhand Movement, which advocated for an autonomous state for the Adivasis of the Chhotanagpur Plateau (Munda & Mullick, 2003, p. 4). This is the longest such movement for an autonomous state in India. After its creation, Ranchi was chosen to be the capital of the state, as it was not just the centre of the Jharkhand Movement, but also housed key official government office buildings. The development of Greater Ranchi came about because, according to the planners of the city, it was observed that the holding capacity of the existing city, which includes the Ranchi Municipal Corporation (RMC), and the Census Towns (CT) of Kanke, Arsande, Ara, Bargarwa and Tundiul, had almost reached saturation level. The establishment of a new township was seen necessary by the state to make room for future citizens and prevent undesirable developments in the already congested city limits. As per state records, the land to the government was allotted from 2004 onwards from the land allotted to Heavy Engineering Corporation Limited (HECL) in the Dhurwa area of Ranchi. The land, measuring around a sprawling 7,200 acres, was itself gifted to HECL by the Nehru government in 1958, by displacing 23 Adivasi villages. There was further displacement of Adivasi villages from 1959 to 1973 by the then Bihar governments to make more space for HECL.

A Soviet-era inspired industrial complex, HECL was envisioned as a 'mother of industries' for producing heavy machinery, equipment and components for steel, cement, aluminium, mining, mineral processing and power industries. This was supposed to be the face of the 'development of a new India' (Vidyarthi, 1970, p. 30). However, the company grew below par in the subsequent years and did not take off as expected by the state. A large portion of the land acquired by HECL

was lying vacant and unused. This area was 'given back' to the Jharkhand government for the development of the new state capital known as 'Greater Ranchi'. The question here remains, 'Development for whom?'

In an interview[vii] with two senior architects of the Ranchi Building Construction Department, it was said that HEC was Nehru's dream base for an industrial India. This was supposed to be the 'mother industry' to every other industrial unit in the country. Around 7,000 acres of Adivasi land was acquired in the name of setting up the HEC unit. This was done in collaboration with Russia, and was even modelled on the Soviet industrial plants which had impressed Nehru. At that time, Jharkhand was part of Bihar. When the bifurcation of Bihar came about, Jamshedpur was the initial choice for the capital of Jharkhand. It was so as it was the most prosperous area of the state and hub of the Tata industries. But since Ranchi was the district capital of Southern Bihar and a major administrative centre since the British times, it was decided to make Ranchi the capital of Jharkhand. Economically, Ranchi was a predominantly undeveloped area. When the bifurcation of Bihar took place, a lot of *dikus*[viii] flooded into Jharkhand as the economic prospects were more in the new state, as compared to Bihar. They illegally took over tribal land and set up several real estate properties in Ranchi. After that they slowly penetrated the countryside and set up small shops, taking over the tribal land there as well. This was a blatant violation of the CNT Act. For this they should have been charged and dealt with; but nothing of the sort happened. It is in this backdrop, that the issue of Greater Ranchi comes into picture. This was the dream project of the first Chief Minister of Jharkhand, Babulal Marandi. He had announced the benefits of having a new capital for the state. The architects reflect that, what was the purpose of building a new capital when one existed already?

This acquisition of land by the state for the purpose of creating Greater Ranchi has raised intense contestations from the original landowners of the area. Dr.Vasavi Kiro, member and co-founder of the Indigenous Women India Network (IWIN), has been one of the most vocal opponents of this state-sponsored land grab mission. She says that the Greater Ranchi project is the biggest state violation of the Chhotanagpur Tenancy (CNT) Act in Jharkhand. The CNT Act was instituted in 1908 and is one of several laws provided by the Constitution to safeguard Adivasi lands from being sold to non-Adivasis. The law was brought about by the British government after the Birsa Munda Movement to govern Adivasi land issues and prevent Adivasi land alienation to outsiders (Britishers

and non-Adivasis). In the post-colonial era, it was meant to prevent foreseeable dispossession, and to preserve the Adivasi identity. However, as Dr.Kiro points out, more than 10 crore Adivasis have been displaced in the last 70 years of Indian Independence in the name of 'development'.

The situation has gotten worse with the coming of the BJP government in 2014. In December 2014, after the coming of the Raghubar Das government, the contract for construction on the Greater Ranchi site was given to Ram Kripal Singh (RKS) Construction Private Limited, a private construction firm. On 9th June, 2015, a local newspaper reported in a small column that the foundation stone of the new township will be laid on the site on 12th June, 2015. There was a protest outside the Jharkhand Assembly on the next day. From the narratives on the ground it has come to light that, on 11th June, around 200 police personnel and 16 magistrates descended upon the site at Dhurwa. They began demanding to know from the people that where are the people who are protesting? 'Meeting kahan hai?' they would ask. On 12th June, 2015, at 7:00 A.M. the government authorities, including the Chief Minister, quietly came to the inaugural site for the foundation stone to be laid. However, around 500 people had gathered at the site to protest the inauguration. There were also several political leaders from across the political spectrum who had come in solidarity and protest. When the Chief Minister asked what the issue was, the villagers said that he had assured them a day before that he would not inaugurate the site. They informed about several illegal people who have come from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and have settled in the land and are also claiming rehabilitation from the government. 'Do you still want to live like Adam?' was the Chief Minister's reply.

The same day a huge procession of over 5,000 people armed with traditional weapons and farm tools and shouting slogans against the government went all over Ranchi. They came from over 18 villages of the Namkum, which also falls in the Greater Ranchi area. They first assembled at Rajendra Chowk under the aegis of Greater Ranchi Pariyojana Sangharsh Samiti (GRPSS). They then headed through Main Road and Shaheed Chowk to reach the Ranchi district collectorate at Kutchery Chowk, where they continued to protest for a while before submitting a petition to the then Ranchi Deputy Commissioner, Manoj Kumar. As Kumar was not in office, the petition was accepted by his office staff. Prafulla Linda, convener of GRPSS said in an interview on the same day that, 'There is no guarantee that peace will prevail tomorrow. Within Namkum block, the government has decided to acquire 39,682 acres under Greater Ranchi Project. All

these acres are fertile land. Agriculture is our mainstay. Land is our identity. Don't make us landless.' An Adivasi farmer said that, 'Last month, government officials came to survey our land. But we were not allowed to even visit our plots. The government is trying to acquire land in a hush-hush manner.' In fresh revelations, in a series of documents, which Dr.Kiro uncovered with the aid of Right to Information (RTI), she unravels the extent of corruption which has burgeoned with the growth of the Greater Ranchi project.The following table provides the details of the villages whose land has been proposed to be taken over for the development of Greater Ranchi:

Village Name	Total Land (acres)	Available Land (acres)	Proposed Transfer of Land for the CISF (acres)	Proposed Transfer of Land for the Government of Jharkhand (acres)
Ani	612.68	583.69	-	583.69
Murmu	685.40	670.90	-	560.90
Kute	395.61	369.31	110.00	321.31
Labed	72.37	72.37	48.00	72.37
Tiril	564.03	551.48	-	551.48
Bhusur	405.06	59.69	-	59.69
Jagannathpur	984.04	377.73	-	107.45
Total	4865.15	3236.95	158.00	2256.89

(Here HEC will be left with 270.28 acres of land in Jagannathpur Village)

Source: RTI filed by Dr. Vasavi Kiro

What we find here is that the government has systematically mapped out the areas proposed to be taken over for the CISF and the state itself. By doing so, it intends to displace the original Adivasi inhabitants in the name of 'development.' Binit Mundu, member of the Adivasi Women's Network, points out a critical point here that there can be no Municipality within a PESA area. Legally, the Municipality Extension to PESA has not yet been done. By this regard, the Ranchi Municipality is an illegal body set up to manipulate land away from Adivasis and give it to the non-Adivasis.

As of now 600 Adivasi families from these villages have filed cases of land grab in the Jharkhand High Court (which will also be shifted to the site). As per the new Land Acquisition Act (2013)[ix], if tribal land has been taken away for the purpose of development and no work has been done on it for 5 years, the land has to be legally transferred back to tribals. A legal roadblock that has come in the way is the Supreme Court judgement of March 2018, which says that High Courts cannot deal with cases pertaining to the new Land Transfer Act, specifically with clause 24 (2) of the Act which deals with the lapse of the transfer period of the land. This combined with the recent Supreme Court judgement of 21st February, 2019, which orders the forcible eviction of tribals and forest dwellers in 16 states, raises serious questions about the judiciary's role in aiding the land grabbing mechanism of the state. What comes out very clearly in the case of Greater Ranchi is not only the sheer violation of the CNT Act, but also of the Fifth Schedule, PESA as well as the new Land Transfer Act, at the hands of the state. This is a scenario of complete injustice meted out to the Adivasis of the region. Is there anything great about displacing millions of Adivasis to build a city for the dikus? This remains question for everyone to ponder upon.

Notes:

[i] The Government of India Act (1919) was an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It was passed to expand participation of Indians in the government of India. The Act received royal assent on 23rd December, 1919. This Act embodied the reforms recommended in the report of the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford. It initially covered ten years, from 1919 to 1929, after which it was reviewed by The Simon Commission.

[ii] See the Constituent Assembly Debates (30.7.1949 to 18.9.1949).

[iii] See Rana, L. N. (2010). *Jharkhand - Aspects of freedom struggle and constitution making.* Allahabad: K. K. Publications. (p. 5).

[iv] See Rana, L. N. (2010). *Jharkhand - Aspects of freedom struggle and constitution making.* Allahabad: K. K. Publications. (p. 4).

[v] See Annual Report, Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2013-14).

[vi] This Draft Master Plan of Greater Ranchi was prepared by Syed Mobin Ahmed, Town Planner, Ranchi Improvement Trust. The consulting associates were R. L. Bawa (Chief Town Planner, Bihar) and A. K. Srivastava (Assistant Town Planner, Bihar). Interestingly enough, this draft plan did not fix any target range of time, whether it is for 20 or 25 years, nor does it have its date of publication. Normally these two are planning prerequisites of a Master Plan or Draft Master Plan. [Source: Thakur, B., Sinha, V. N. P., Prasad, M., Sharma, N., Pratap, R., Mandal, R. B., & R. B. P. Singh. (Eds.) (2005). *Urban and regional development in India* (Vol. 2). New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company].

[vii] Interview conducted on 7th February, 2019 in Ranchi.

viii Diku is a term used by tribals to denote non-tribals.

ix As per the Government of India, this is an Act to 'ensure, in consultation with institutions of local self-government and Gram Sabhas established under the Constitution, a humane, participative, informed and transparent process for land acquisition for industrialisation, development of essential infrastructural facilities and urbanisation with the least disturbance to the owners of the land and other affected families and provide just and fair compensation to the affected families whose land has been acquired or proposed to be acquired or are affected by such acquisition and make adequate provisions for such affected persons for their rehabilitation and resettlement and for ensuring that the cumulative outcome of compulsory acquisition should be that affected persons become partners in development leading to an improvement in their post-acquisition social and economic status and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. Within this Act, The Scheduled Tribes are defined as Land Owners.' (See the Land Acquisition Act, 2013).

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Vision

Sociology as a discipline, like other social sciences, is passing through a transition. The developments in the contemporary world have opened up new areas of enquiry expanding the traditional frontiers of the discipline. Many sociologists are engaged in these new and emerging areas of study which is often informed by a multidisciplinary approach. Sociologists in India are also in increasing numbers engaged in such research (in areas which includes environment, minority rights, gender studies, sexuality studies, etc. to name a few). However, they have an additional challenge posed by the need to integrate the enormous regional, social and cultural multiplicities of India into the Indian sociological canvas. These diversities, especially those of the socially marginal and geographically peripheral societies, have remained somewhat out of the radar of Indian sociology. However, emerging discourses on caste, tribe, ethnicity, religion, region, nation and nation building in contemporary India have created new consciousness and imperatives to integrate the marginal regions and societies into the broad canvas of India Sociology. The journal is sensitive to such discourses and it aims to encourage scholarly publications focused on such identities and regions. While the major focus of the journal is societies, histories and cultures of India, it also welcomes publications of comparative studies with other countries as well as on societies and cultures of South Asia.

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The journal encourages data based (both primary and secondary) quality research publications using sociological concepts and theories. It is open to both quantitative and qualitative works. Besides regular research papers, the journal includes sections such as interviews, commentaries and debates and discussions. While the journal encourages research publication of young scholars, it also welcomes contributions from senior scholars. The journal carries interviews/dialogues with eminent sociologists and social scientists who share their own experiences of teaching and research. The idea is to make the journal a platform for overall professional development of the practitioners – research scholars, teachers and researchers – of sociology, especially those without adequate access to the resources required for the purpose.

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We publish interviews/conversations with eminent sociologists/social scientists focusing on their contributions to scholarship and teaching. The contributors have to submit the audio/video recording of the interviews along with the transcriptions.

- **Commentaries** (2000-2500 words)

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- Cover page, showing title of the paper, name of author, author's affiliation and institutional address with pin code, email id and a 100–150 word abstract. Authors' names and references should not be used in the text in order to keep authors' anonymity (e.g., 'as the author has written elsewhere' should be avoided). In case there are two or more authors, then corresponding author's name and address details must be clearly specified on the first page itself.

- The contributors should also provide 4–5 keywords for online searchability.

- Text should start on a new page, and must not contain the names of authors.

- References should come at the end of the manuscript.

- Tables and figures should be provided in editable format and should be referred to in the text by number separately (e.g., Table 1) not by placement (e.g., see Table below). They should each be submitted on a separate page following the article, numbered and arranged as per their references in the text. They will be inserted in the final text as indicated by the author. Source citations with tables and figures are required irrespective of whether or not they require permissions.

- Figures, including maps, graphs and drawings, should not be larger than page size. They should be numbered and arranged as per their references in the text. All photographs and scanned images should have a resolution of minimum 300 dpi and 1500 pixels and their format should be TIFF or JPEG. Permissions to reprint should be obtained for copyright protected photographs/images. Even for photographs/images available in the public domain, it should be clearly ascertained whether or not their reproduction requires permission for purposes of publishing (The Publisher is a profit-making endeavour). All photographs/scanned images should be provided separately in a folder along with the main article.

- Mathematical formulae, methodological details, etc. should be given separately as an appendix, unless their mention in the main body of the text becomes essential.

2. **Language**

- The language and spellings used should be British (U.K.), with 's' variant, e.g., globalisation instead of globalization, labour instead of labor. For non-English and uncommon words and phrases, use italics only for the first time. Meaning of non-English words should be given in parenthesis just after the word when it is used for the first time.

- Articles should use non-sexist and non-racist language.

- Spell out numbers from one to ninety nine, 100 and above to remain in figures. However, for exact measurement (e.g., *China's GDP growth rate 9.8 per cent*) use numbers. Very large round numbers, especially sums of money, may be expressed by a mixture of numerals and spelled-out numbers (*India's population 1.2 billion*). Follow thousand, million, billion number metric system instead of lakhs and crores.

- Single quotes should be used throughout. Double quote marks are to be used within single quotes. Spellings of words in quotations should not be changed. Quotations of words or more should be separated from the text.

- Notes should be numbered serially and presented at the end of the article. Notes must contain more than a mere reference.

- Use 'per cent' instead of % in the text. In tables, graphs etc, % can be used. Use '20th century', '1990s'.

- We do not encourage frequent use of capital letters. They should be used selectively and consistently. Only the first word of title and subtitle should start with capitals. Although proper names are capitalised, many words derived from or associated with proper names, as well as the names of significant offices are lowercased. While the names of ethnic, religious and national groups are capitalised (*the Muslims, the Gorkhas, the Germans*), designations based loosely on colour (*black people*) and terms denoting socio-economic classes or groups (*the middle class, the dalits, the adivasis, the african-american*) are lowercased. All caste, tribe and community names (*the Santhals, the Jatavs*) are to be capitalised but generic terms (*the kayasthas*) are to be lower cased. Civil, military, religious, and professional titles (*the president*) and institutions (*the parliament, the united nations*) are to be put in lower case, but names of organisations (*the Labour Party, the Students Federation of India*) are to be capitalised. The names of political tendencies (*the marxists, the socialists*) should remain in lower case.

- Abbreviations are spelled out at first occurrence. Very common ones (*US, GDP, BBC*) need not be spelled out. Other commonly used abbreviations (*am, pm, cm, kg, ha*) can be used in lower case, without spaces.

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   Guidelines specified in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition, 2009) must be followed.

- References: A consolidated listing of all books, articles, essays, theses and documents referred to (including any referred to in the tables, graphs and maps) should be provided at the end of the article.

- Arrangement of references: Reference list entries should be alphabetized by the last name of the first author of each work. In each reference, authors' names are inverted (last name first) for all authors (first, second or subsequent ones); give the last name and initials for all authors of a particular work unless

the work has more than six authors. If the work has more than six authors, list the first six authors and then use et al. after the sixth author's name.

- Chronological listing: If more than one work by the same author(s) is cited, they should be listed in order by the year of publication, starting with the earliest.

- Sentence case: In references, sentence case (only the first word and any proper noun are capitalized – e.g., 'The software industry in India') is to be followed for the titles of papers, books, articles, etc.

- Title case: In references, Journal titles are put in title case (first letter of all words except articles and conjunctions are capitalized – e.g., Journal of Business Ethics).

- Italicize: Book and Journal titles are to be italicized.

- Citations and References should adhere to the guidelines below (based on the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th edition). Some examples are given below:

In-text citations:

- One work by one author: (Kessler, 2003, p. 50) or 'Kessler (2003) found that among the epidemiological samples..'.
- One work by two authors: (Joreskog & Sorborn, 2007, pp. 50–66) or Joreskog and Sorborn (2007) found that..
- One work by three or more authors: (Basu, Banerji & Chatterjee, 2007) [first instance]; Basu et al. (2007) [Second instance onwards].
- Groups or organizations or universities: (University of Pittsburgh, 2007) or University of Pittsburgh (2007).
- Authors with same surname: Include the initials in all the in-text citations even if the year of publication differs, e.g., (I. Light, 2006; M.A. Light, 2008).
- Works with no identified author or anonymous author: Cite the first few words of the reference entry (title) and then the year, e.g., ('Study finds', 2007); (Anonymous, 1998).
- If abbreviations are provided, then the style to be followed is: (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2003) in the first citation and (NIMH, 2003) in subsequent citations.
- Two or more works by same author: (Gogel, 1990, 2006, in press)
- Two or more works with different authors: (Gogel, 1996; Miller, 1999)
- Secondary sources: Allport's diary (as cited in Nicholson, 2003).

- Films: (Name of the Director, Year of release)

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- Non-English reference book, title translated into English:
  Real Academia Espanola. (2001). *Diccionario de la lenguaespanola* [Dictionary of the Spanish Language] (22nd ed.). Madrid, Spain: Author.
- Special issue or section in a journal:
  Haney, C., & Wiener, R. L. (Eds.) (2004). Capital punishment in the United States [Special Issue]. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, *10*(4), 1-17.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the Editor

Dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure to present the sixth issue of *Explorations*. The present issue consists of two papers published under the 'Articles' category, one Review Essay and two papers under the 'Research in Progress' category.

The first article, titled *National Register of Citizens: Politics and Problems in Assam*, by Sanjay Barbora discusses the updating process of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam which entailed elaborate use of technology, law and the bureaucracy to determine citizenship. While acknowledging the benefits derived from the use of technology, the article emphasises on transformation of citizenship debates through a closer, nuanced attention to ethnographic details about other contingencies, such as floods and climate change, which greatly influences the habitats of a large section of the population.

The second article, titled *Skill Development and Youth Empowerment Schemes in Sikkim: a Gender Perspective*, by Yumnam Surjyajeevan and Sandhya Thapa identifies the skill development and empowerment schemes of the government for the youth of Sikkim and evaluates how they are responding to such schemes. Further the article makes a critical assessment of the achievements and gaps of these schemes. While doing so, it has also taken into consideration the gender dimension.

The next article, titled *Select Ethnographies on Water in India: a Review*, by Kanaka Himabindu Pottumuthu and Haripriya Narasimhan is a review essay on select ethnographic studies on water from different disciplinary perspectives, viz. anthropology, geography, urban studies and cultural politics. Based on such studies in both urban and rural India, the authors argue for increased attention from social scientists working in and on India to ethnographically capture people's interactions with a resource like water that is of considerable political, economic and social significance.

The first paper under Research in Progress by Sapana Devi Karam is titled *The Next Resistance or Change? Manipur in the Neo-liberal Era*. This paper examines the changing cultural attitudes and tastes, especially in the context of material and

symbolic culture, among the rising middle class in the wake of the growing influence of the neo-liberal economy in Manipur. The paper also focuses on the activities of the non-state actors towards restriction of the mainstream Indian culture, and argues that in the face of the emerging consumerism among the middle class the strength of such resistance is on the wane.

The second paper under Research in Progress by Aashish Khakha is titled *Adivasis, the Fifth Schedule and Urban Development: a Study of Greater Ranchi*. This paper looks into the various contestations surrounding the urban development of Greater Ranchi area in the tribal state of Jharkhand. The paper recounts how such development initiatives result in blatant violation of the various laws for the protection of the tribal people (Adivasis) and examines its impact on the tribal society living in that area.

Explorations invites your contributions for future issues of the journal. We will appreciate your feedback or suggestions on the journal.

Chandan Kumar Sharma
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October 2019

National Register of Citizens: Politics and Problems in Assam

--- Sanjay Barbora

Abstract

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam has raised several issues pertaining to citizenship, migration and political mobilisation throughout the region. An administrative exercise of this order that uses technology, law and the bureaucracy to address historically contentious grievances within a region of a country is an interesting phenomenon for social scientists working on citizenship in the 21st century. This is more so since approximately nineteen lakh persons from various walks of life and ethnic heritage have been left out of the rolls, leaving every stakeholder (including the ruling party in Assam) disappointed with the outcomes. While there have been great benefits derived from the use of technology, this article argues for closer, nuanced attention to ethnographic details about other contingencies – such as floods and climate change – that influence the process, especially since the process is being promoted for the entire country.

Key words: Assam, Bureaucracy, Citizenship, Climate change, NRC, Technology

Introduction

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) has occupied a prominent position in political discourse and mobilisation in Assam for the 2014 and 2019 parliamentary elections. The process can be seen as the culmination of years of political unrest and negotiations between civil society organisations and the government. In 2013, the Supreme Court of India took cognisance of two writ petitions filed by non-governmental organisations from Assam and ordered the state and central governments to update the NRC adhering to the Citizenship Act of 1955 and the (amended) Citizenship Rules of 2003. After two rounds of publication of drafts of the register, a partial one on December 31, 2017 and a final draft on July 30, 2018, the final list was published on August 31, 2019 (Barbora, 2019)[i]. The NRC has polarised public opinion, at least among those who question the norms and rules of citizenship. Many commentators and advocacy groups in Assam see it as a much-needed solution for a long-drawn

issue of immigration from different parts of the subcontinent but with a greater public focus on migrants from neighbouring Bangladesh. Yet others raise caution about the excesses and shortcomings of the process, where bureaucratic overreach, advocacy overdrive and technological failures have led to tragic consequences for thousands of women and men in the state. The fact that senior representatives of the recently elected government (in 2019) have called for NRC to be extended to all states of the country has made the issue more deserving of sociological inquiry and attention.

In this article, I focus on the social and political outcomes of the NRC process and examine the contradictory and contentious politics of citizenship in Assam. In this article, I draw from my two-year engagements with a *char*-related advocacy group, humanitarian relief agencies, journalists and government officials involved in ascertaining the status of those left out of the NRC. I argue that the NRC issue forces us to revisit old questions about citizenship, while engaging with challenges that are peculiar to the 21st century. The challenges I refer to, such as climate change and conflict-induced displacement, have a universal impact on the planet, though communities around the globe feel their effects differently. As a sociologist working on agrarian change and human rights in Assam, I am drawn to extend the NRC debates with questions that animated social science research in the 20th century. How is farming organised? What is the role of the peasant, the small farmer, or subsistence farmer in the farming process? How much control are they able to exercise over political decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods? The subject of these questions was rooted to the soil, primarily in agriculture and on whose behalf various modes of political mobilisations had taken place in the 20th century in India (Weiner, 2016).

These questions have been central to the development of sociology (and social anthropology) in India, with a significant number of scholars basing their empirical work around issues of equity, representation and rights (Desai, 2019; Dhanagare, 1983). Indeed, for a better part of the 20th century, national liberation struggles, socialist revolutions and civil wars, were waged on behalf of the figure of the downtrodden peasant/farmer (Alavi, 1965; Wolf, 1966). With the emergence of a world order that was characterised by bounded nation-states that were free from their former European colonisers in the middle of the 20th century, the peasant/farmer became a paradoxical but foundational image for postcolonial states and political leaders (Verwimp, 2000). The peasant, though backward and rooted in the past, was still seen as the moral grounds upon which a new

citizenship regime would emerge in postcolonial societies (Deutscher, 1971). Hence, many of the arguments for the enforcement of the NRC process are actually based on permanent settlement, adult franchise and ownership of property. Those individuals and organisations who oppose the presence of immigrants on their soil, do so because they (immigrants) appear to disrupt the continuity of the social and economic fabric of the land, taking over farming activities from indigenous groups, controlling petty trade and businesses, and eventually the political sphere as well (Bhattacharyya, 2018). The immigrant, in this schema, is seen as someone who takes away the entitlements from the citizens – especially those that work the land – who expect the state to protect their interests.

Yet, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) point out in their seminal work *Empire*, as we move into the 21st century, the figure of the citizen, with its sureties of rights and entitlement, is not as stable a category as it used to be. In its place, we have a host of other, equally compelling identities to contend with – refugee, displaced persons and so on. The authors argue that under specific conditions of capitalist and technological globalisation, the nation-state's capacity to exercise sovereignty has declined in many fundamental ways. Writing specifically about the turn of the experience that shaped politics in the United States and West Asia, they pointed out that individual nation-states (like Iraq and Afghanistan) had had their sovereignty rescaled, retaining hollowed out institutions that worked in favour of global capital. This form of sovereignty, they add, is acted upon a mobile subject that is forced to serve the needs of capital. In celebrating the eventual triumph of this subject, they see global labour moving across boundaries that were earlier bounded within nation-states by capital, creating the multitude and rendering redundant older concepts of national citizens. While there have been critical readings of *Empire,* a contrarian fact that is important for this essay sticks out in their analysis. Even as technology and capital take on 20th century national borders, the national-territorial form has reappeared, as one that is capable of politically excluding others. As the NRC process shows, judicial advocacy built on populist struggles against 20th century colonial settlements have converged with technology and bureaucracy to create an exclusionary regime for thousands of persons. Most of those excluded belong to rural, agricultural communities that saw political violence and displacement throughout the last quarter of the 20th and the first decade of the 21st centuries. How then, I ask, are we to read something as polarising as the NRC, as an object of sociological enquiry for the 21st century?

Since the announcement of the draft on July 30, 2018, one has had to confront the fact that more than four million people had their names excluded from the list, leading many to commit suicide (Saikia, 2019). This has divided civil society and public opinion vertically. Many student unions and political parties, as well as the administration attempted to show that there would be no violence in dealing with the aftermath. Other members of civil society and political opinion have pointed out that the exercise itself was faulty and the rhetoric that pushed it was divisive in nature. Political commentators, advocacy groups and public intellectuals have spent considerable time and energy in persuading those who disagree with their view of the soundness of their positions. Since then, the final list of the NRC was published on August 31st, 2019 and it left out more than nineteen lakh persons, leaving a wide cross section of civil society, political parties, political parties and the ruling party unhappy with the outcome (Barbora, 2019).

For many political commentators in Assam, the NRC was seen to be the legal and political way to address the two issues that have influenced political mobilisation in Assam since the mid-20th century: (a) autonomy and (b) social justice. Autonomy demands have been central to political mobilisation in Assam after 1947. Starting from the Naga and Mizo insurgencies in 1950s and 1960s, the province also saw the assertion for separate statehood in Meghalaya in the 1970s. These movements reflect the desire for territorial control over land, as well as political aspirations of indigenous communities who were part of the 'light-touch' administrative set up under British colonial rule (Chaube, 1968; Goswami, 2012). Movements for social justice centred around demands of social justice reflect an insistence on citizenship and equality under constitutional law, especially among socially marginalised groups like the tea workers and immigrant communities who had come from various parts of colonial India (Guha, 1977). Both issues – autonomy and social justice – have had a very tense relationship with one another. They have led to decades of violent conflicts, where the state has used a combination of military subjugation and co-optation of voices of dissent to deal with the situation.

Occasionally, certain events highlight the tensions in the political project for social justice among those who feel excluded by the NRC. Even though people from various walks of life, religious and language speaking communities were affected by the NRC, some were doubly disadvantaged because they were Muslim and of Bengali heritage. Drawing attention to this experience, poets like Hafiz Ahmed write:

Write

Write Down

I am a Miya

My serial number in the NRC is 200543[ii]

These lines, as also the efforts of a few other poets who assert that they write 'Miya' poetry (as opposed to Bengali or Assamese), were enough to warrant the filing of First Information Reports (FIR) in various police stations in Assam by people who felt aggrieved, as the poems had painted the entire Assamese community in bad light[iii]. This is where the community, land, homestead begins to show deeper fissures within the social fabric in Assam. Sections of Assamese speaking people and organisations that represent their interests have gone on to use the local state machinery to further exclude persons from the NRC. Anthropologist Ghassan Hage (2003) alludes to similar processes of moral panic that is happening on a global scale, where local communities find cause for conflict with those perceived as outsiders in their space. His work on settler-colonial paranoia about immigration in Australia might not have an exact equivalence in Assam, though the roots of both fears are associated with entanglements between three processes: (a) colonial history, (b) ethnic identity and (c) control over resources (Barbora, 2019). Each of these processes have had an impact on the other, nowhere more so than in the claims over land, which has been marked by tragic conflicts between many communities since 1983 (Barbora, 2018).

However, in order to have a better empirical understanding about the issue, I proceed to introduce three sections that will describe and analyse the complexities confronted by social scientists who wish to study and comment on the NRC process in Assam. In the first section, I draw on field data from one rapidly transforming rural block in Barpeta district to engage with Hardt and Negri's theory that the 'multitude' has the possibility of making a political breakthrough in their fight against the 20th century state that promotes capitalist development. Here, I draw from a growing research among social anthropologists that assert that human existence is irrevocably linked to climate change and to the myriad ways through which other non-human factor impact politics in our time (Crate & Nuttal, 2009). In the second section, I focus on the role of the bureaucracy, specifically the manner in which it has enacted the NRC process on the ground, to

understand how it exercises rationality by emphasising on procedures over deeply complex social and political realities. Here too, I draw on the growing literature around state practices of enumeration, documentation, exclusion and expansion of welfare activities of the state (Sharma & Gupta, 2006). In the third section, I analyse responses from various civil society actors in Assam to understand how concerns about citizenship are interwoven with claims over natural resources, land and identity.

Floods, Climate Change and Being from Barpeta

Mozidbhita is a *char*[iv] that is close to Balikuri non-cadastral (NC) village in Mandia block in Barpeta district. It is, in many ways, a typical settlement of the itinerant poor in Assam. According to the 2011 census figures, Mandia is the largest rural block in Barpeta district, which covers 587.06 square kilometres. It is also one that has the most number of households at 65,511. It has a national highway (NH 427) that runs through it. There are no major industries in Mandia and of the 109,270 workers enumerated in the census, a little more than half are engaged in agriculture. There are no major industries in the block, so most of the predominantly male working persons are engaged in daily wage work and petty trade (Census of India, 2011). Situated approximately 20 kilometres west of Barpeta town and across the Beki River, Mozidbhita (in 2018-19) had 208 households, a significantly smaller number than the 296 who had moved to the current char around four years ago. The families had moved due to the erosion of their land and homesteads by the river. They had come from four neighbouring villages: Mozidbhita, Tapajuli, 4 No. Bhera and Balikuri NC (non-cadastral). In the summers, monsoon rains along the flood plains and in neighbouring Bhutan always bring vast quantities of water to the district. In 2004, engineers and administrators of Bhutan's Kurichhu dam, situated upstream on the River Beki, had released water causing unprecedented floods in Barpeta[v]. The annual monsoon-induced floods make it imperative for government departments and aid workers to recover such civil engineering related data for their work. Mozidbhita would qualify to be included as a part of the increasingly vulnerable spaces of human habitation that is likely to be affected by rising levels of water on the planet, both due to climate change and human-induced follies like construction of faulty embankments and dams (Arnell & Gosling, 2016; Hirabayashi, et. al, 2013).

Houses in the chars like Mozidbhita are built on elevated land that is usually raised with extra soil from elsewhere. The materials used to build the houses are a combination of bamboo, mud and corrugated tin. This makes them extremely cold in the winter and unbearably hot in the summer. However, such material is easy to come by and once the earth has been adequately raised, members of the community construct the houses. Although there are three primary schools in the area, one was lost due to land erosion in 2018. Children are taught in Assamese, most struggle to complete high school as they have to go to nearby Balikuri or further to complete their middle elementary and higher elementary levels. Most families in the char grow *bao* rice and jute during the summer, and vegetables and lentils during the winter months. In the past four years, the local families have had access to high yielding variety (HYV) seeds and fertilisers for their winter vegetables and some families use both abundantly. Almost every existing household has cows and buffaloes, which they often used to sell in times of distress but are not able to now, as the price of cows have decreased since the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed a government in 2014. There are three shallow tube wells that are used in winter to grow the vegetables. However, during the summer rains, they are almost always inundated by floodwater from the Beki River. In winter, the Beki is situated 200 metres away, a distance that is rendered redundant in the summer when the river spreads across the plains in every direction, making settlements like Mozidbhita look like tiny, marooned rooftops and homesteads waiting for relief and rescue. The families in Mozidbhita have two major sources of income: daily wage and from the jute and vegetable farming produce. The plant-based and daily wage incomes are seasonal. In some years, certain families earn more doing daily wages than from farming. The average income for a family of five would be approximately six thousand rupees per month, but this is never steady and expenses for medical needs are very high. Social scientists use a variety of terms to describe the motivations of people who live in such adversarial spaces. Most often, they are seen to be people escaping the reach of the State (Scott, 2009); or those who are given to deterministic fatalism, for wanting to risk their lives in the face of natural disasters of calamitous proportions (Baqee, 1998). Both descriptions come to mind during the floods, as the jute plants struggle to stay above the surging water, livestock scramble to the cramped raised land, and shallow pumps and latrines disappear under the water.

One of the most stable and safe buildings in the area is the Parag Kumar Das Char Library, named after one of Assam's best-known journalist and human rights

activist, who was assassinated by a death squad for his forthright views on the right to self-determination for the people of Assam. For many Assamese intellectuals, Parag Das embodied a fiercely autonomous political spirit that was symptomatic of struggles for self-determination in the region (Baruah, 1999). It was started in 2015 by left-leaning activists from the area as a statement of their political beliefs. During the floods, the raised earth provides refuge to cattle and people alike. At such times children are not able to access the library, nor do they see the need to refer to the eclectic books on display. The activists had requested their comrades and sympathisers in urban Assam to donate books that would be useful for children, with an expressed request for material that had been published in Assamese. Instead, many of the books on the four wooden shelves are in English and range from children's novels to computer software guidebooks. They are stacked against corrugated tin walls, where there is a bullhorn microphone dangling on a shelf, 'to warn people when the river starts breaching the banks at night', according to one of the activists who lives in the area.

The activist group has been working in the area since 2015 and have among them graduates of social work and other humanities subjects. Educated in some of the reputed universities and institutes in Assam, they zealously promote development of the char areas and focus mainly on education, health and livelihood issues. Other than English, the activists are keen that children in the char area learn Assamese, a language that frequently lands older, unlettered residents vulnerable when they travel to parts of upper Assam to work in the brick kilns. Their inability to speak a particular tonal form of Assamese allows local student groups to exercise everyday acts of micro aggression on the migrant communities[vi]. This kind of humiliation rankles the activists, driving them to focus on issues of poverty with greater passion. Their internal discussions and debates with other groups of developmental NGOs have made them concentrate on the flood as a particularly universal experience for the people of the char, one that requires a similar collective remedial effort. Raising the plinth of the houses is an obvious engineering innovation that they feel will help reduce a cascading effect on vulnerabilities for the people of Mozidbhita. In 2019, only a few homes survived the rising waters of the Beki despite having raised plinths and once again, many families were forced to move towards the highway and neighbouring areas where they could live in make-shift camps until the waters had receded.

'It is difficult to access these areas', said Rajib[vii], a social worker employed with a non-governmental organisation working on developmental issues and based in

Guwahati city (situated approximately 100 kilometres away), on July 19, 2019. He and his team were surveying the swathe of land that had been inundated by floodwaters and were distributing tarpaulin sheets, drinking water and medicines to hundreds of families who had to leave their homes and come to higher ground. Rajib and his colleagues had been worried about the outbreak of disease and high mortality of animals during and after the floods. The camps, they say are necessary for survival. Nevertheless, they are also testimony to a series of damaging side effects on those who are forced to live in them for weeks. For people of the chars, the camps are disorienting places where they have little control over their lives. It takes a mental and financial toll on women and men alike, as they spend weeks without work, access to their jute and bao rice and livestock. Women are especially vulnerable as they adjust to a life with strangers with whom they have to share toilets and living space. Rajib's colleagues, like the activists in Mozidbhita, are always concerned about the rising levels of dropouts and child marriages among the char dwelling communities. These have a bearing on the NRC process. Working with the local activists of the library, Rajib shares his concerns about the numbers of children and women whose names had been left out of the NRC and wondered if char habitation had anything to do with their exclusion from the first draft.

Chars are partly the outcome of a colonial history of raising embankments in agricultural lands that were rich in revenue earnings, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. Historian Rohan D'Souza draws on archival material from the period to show how the draining of rivers and diversion of water by civil engineers was key to the creation of a particularly oppressive feudal order in eastern India (D'Souza, 2015). Following the transfer of power in 1947, the newly independent government of India dedicated resources towards expanding irrigation and protecting agricultural and grazing areas from flooding. In Assam too, changes in hydraulic flows led to far-reaching changes and conflicts in a wider area – causing floods in some, aridity in others and always resulting in the gradual movement of people from one place to another (Barbora, 2018). Swiss geographer Christine Bischel noted similar conflicts following the collapse of the legal and political order in the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. In her detailed account of the conflicts in the Ferghana valley, she writes about the pressures that local communities have to endure, once the centralised water-sharing regimes disappeared and were replaced by antagonistic communities that acted as if on behalf of their national governments (Bischel, 2009). The aridity of the Central Asian region and the water-soaked ecology of

the South Asian chars, therefore, have one feature in common. They force their inhabitants to be resilient, where people are constantly adapting to their landscapes in order to make a living and where water determines the production cycles of the land. In the chars however, water remains the most significant source of wealth as well as the biggest threat to human life (Lahiri-Dutt, 2014). Significantly, they become part of a regional and global debate on climate change, especially with regard to how little say they have in decision making processes in their engagement with the adaptive regimes (Paprocki, 2018). This poignant point is most visible during the floods, when people are forced to leave home and flee to a higher ground. In 2019, newspaper reports from Assam noted that many people refused to leave their inundated homes for fear of losing documents that would jeopardise their NRC status[viii].

Documents, Bureaucracy and Technology: Rolling out the NRC

The headwaiter of the rice hotel near the Public Works Department (PWD) and District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) is patient and forthcoming about the day's menu with individuals who have an air of urgency about them. They are usually bureaucrats and NGO officials who visit town for flood-related work. In the summer of 2019, the numbers of officials working on the NRC were added to the existing one. As he took orders, the headwaiter would inquire: 'Baan paani ne NRC?' – flood or NRC – eliciting a response either way from the officers. He would proceed to ignore other customers, seating the officials first, regardless of a waiting group of persons. In 2019, the citizenship issue was entangled with flood and climate change issues in many discursive ways. Both processes have created unprecedented pressures on local bureaucracy. In Assam, almost all government officials, including teachers employed in government colleges, have had to report for NRC duty. At the district-level, all departments too have been involved in NRC work. During the floods, their tasks have diversified to include relief and rehabilitation of affected persons. The NRC demonstrates the state's ability to categorise and penalise citizens, even as flood relief demonstrates its ability to provide care, relief and rehabilitation. How did these different practices, especially those related to categorisation and incarceration following the NRC process come about and did ordinary people have ways to counter this? Do personal views of local officials play any role in an activity that is both driven by technology and supervised by governmental machinery and embodies rationality and impartiality? In order to understand the

importance of both questions, one has to focus on the NRC timeline and the political environment within which it was resurrected in Assam.

The first NRC followed the 1951 census and appeared in government circulars issued to reassure agitating groups in Assam that the immigration issue would be addressed by the administration. This meant taking recourse to laws like Foreigners Act, 1946 and Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 1939. Such a process was in marked contrast to the upheavals of the tragic transfer of people between India and Pakistan in the west, where these laws were put aside to accommodate people escaping violence in West Pakistan. This difference between the two partitioned sectors of British India is important, as it alludes to the different ways regional governments responded to the humanitarian crisis. Drawing attention to the government's unwillingness to address the movement of people in the east, as well as the persistence of civic efforts to raise the issue of immigration, Sanjib Baruah (2009; 2008) underlined the different ways in which the partition narrative appeared in Assam and showed how it continues to have an impact on contemporary debates. He highlights the contentious identity and resource politics that led to the Assam Agitation (1979-1985), the Assam Accord (1985) and subsequently, three decades of insurgency (1979-2009). Baruah's arguments about the Indian state's deleterious policies in subverting democratic institutions and processes in Assam are backed by evidence of the government's policies of using military coercion to deal with dissenting political opinion in Assam. In his recent writings on the NRC, he addressed the government's lack of preparedness in conducting such a process, drawing attention to the manner in which key South Asian neighbours like Bangladesh, were not informed of the outcomes of this process, especially when political rhetoric was directed towards a historically specific population from the neighbouring country (Baruah, 2018).

In the recently concluded NRC in Assam, the government sought to minimise these shortcomings in two ways: (a) by throwing in the entire state machinery, including all departments of the government of Assam, the Registrar General of India and the Supreme Court, into the process and (b) using technology to iron out human frailties that are attributed to the everyday workings of the state in developing countries. The 2015 edition of the NRC required individuals to show their legacy data that included having a family member's name in the 1951 NRC and/or having the individual (or a direct family member's name) included in the electoral rolls as of March 24, 1971, a day after the Bangladesh liberation war was formally announced. In case a person was unable to find her/his name in the

legacy data, the administration allowed for twelve other documents that could be shown as evidence, provided they were granted before March 24, 1971. These were: (i) land tenancy records, (ii) Citizenship Certificate (iii) Permanent Residential Certificate (iv) Refugee Registration Certificate (v) Passport (vi) LIC Policy (vii) Government-issued License/Certificate (viii) Government Service/Employment Certificate (ix) Bank/Post Office Accounts (x) Birth Certificate (xi) Board/University Educational Certificate (xii) Court Records/Processes. These documents have an aura of middle-class respectability to them. They attest to a person having ownership of property, access to education, jobs and documents that allow her/him to travel at will. However, many itinerant working people – who constitute Assam's unorganised labour sector – were unable to produce these documents. Every person had to take these documents to the nearest NRC Seva Kendra, a government building designated for the purpose of gathering documents of individuals and loading it on to a database. For many trying to register their names in the database, this was their first encounter with computers and information technology. Hence, they were also daunted by the finality of the exclusion, when it happened, since there seemed to be no human error, or authority that could be chastised for failures. As a bureaucratic network of officials and staff, the NRC process was grafted onto the local administrative structure of governance as a time-bound project that had external support for a specific period of time. This allowed the state coordinator of the NRC to deploy various officers (and offices) to ensure a smoother functioning in places where human interface with potential technological shortcomings seemed inevitable.

In most cases, the diligence of individuals and groups meant that most people were able to provide documentation. Years of activism had built into the system some checks and balances that could ensure a process of redress, as well as a human interface that people could appeal to. Therefore, when one's name was excluded from the NRC, a person could appeal to a Foreigners Tribunal (FT), a body that was originally constituted by the government in 1964 and later amended in 2019, specifically to deal with the cases that had come up after the exclusions of 2018. With support from the central government, the government of Assam recruited 1000 members (as those judging the cases under the FT are called) into the FTs. Any advocate between the ages of 45 to 60 was eligible to apply and would be considered for a contract of 2 years, where they would be employed by the government of Assam. An interesting, but leading criterion for their recruitment was stated early on. The government notification stated that the

person (applying) should '… have a fair knowledge of the official language of Assam and its (Assam) historical background giving rise to foreigner's issue'[ix]. Such conditionality has severe consequences for people who do not speak standardised Assamese, who are char dwellers and who are itinerant as they are already seen to be interlopers in the region. They were also most likely to be summoned to the FT members to answer questions about their missing documents and irregular data.

'Let me explain how this technology works', said Dhiren, a humanities lecturer in a government college just outside Guwahati city. He had been inducted as a disposing officer (DO) in the early months of 2019. The DO worked within a particular circle area and was the first – or last – human line of verification of the claims and objections that were filed by those who had failed their meetings with the FT. They reported to the Circle Registrar of Citizen Registration (CRCR, a circle officer in the administrative set up), who reported upward to the District Registrar of Citizen Registration (DRCR, a district commissioner in the administrative set up). Dhiren had been involved in the autonomy movement among the Karbi and Tiwa communities in the 1990s and early 2000s, before he got his job as a lecturer in 2013. He continues to be involved in cultural and social issues among indigenous communities, especially in the wider Kamrup, Morigaon, Nagaon and Karbi-Anglong areas. His work as the DO had kept him away from college, a fact that caused him some irritation. However, despite his personal misgivings about the nature of his work, he was all praise for the kind of technology that was being deployed in the NRC process. 'Once the field-based work got over last year (in March, 2018), things started getting a shape', he further explained about the family tree verification (FTV). As our conversation got into specifics, I had to keep track of the almost objective type, algorithm-based tenor of his descriptions.

'We had a domain to allow for second and third generation respondents to make mistakes about the names of their immediate lineage relatives', he stated and added in the same breath: 'but can you forget the name of your own sister?' He claimed that many of the false claims of legacy data resulted from people giving different names for their immediate kin and siblings. He outlined the way in which the software was able to 'capture' the inconsistencies in the manner in which certain persons claimed their family tree. Hence, lack of knowledge about immediate kin in an extended bilateral descent family would cause the software to determine that there was something amiss in the data provided. Dhiren was

convinced that the software could not have got anything wrong, as far as catching on to the inconsistencies of personal narratives. Instead, as he explained the unfolding of a particularly poignant human drama, it was almost as if the software – in this case DOCSMEN – had begun to unravel family secrets into the public domain. When there was a mismatch in the family legacy (assigned an algorithm under the Legacy Data Code, or LDC), especially in the cases where two families claimed the same person and yet did not know anyone from the other family, they were asked to explain how the family trees for the same assigned LDC could go so wrong. In many cases, explanations attested to the frailty of human relationship: an aggrieved father who might have disowned a daughter for marrying against his wish, a man with a family in two towns that did not know one another and so on. Others, Dhiren continued, were harder to let go. It was even more so when officials higher up the administrative chain had already verified the claims and objections at the investigative stage. In that case, the DO became the last human to deal with people who wanted answers from the executive body of the government.

This is where the role of small, committed local advocacy groups becomes very important. In Mozidbhita, the activists, who began the library, had worked with the community in order to ensure that they were included in the draft. This meant ensuring that the people of the char had all their documents in order: a government receipt as a beneficiary for some scheme, or even an old court document that showed a person's permanent address to be the seasonal char, were all part of a repertoire of documents that were being produced as evidence that would be taken to the NRC Seva Kendra. It is important to remember that a person could file their NRC papers through either their mother's or their father's legacy and if one set of documents did not add up, they would not be able to change their lineage. This could lead to a lot of anomalies and difficulties for those who attempting to establish that their claims for citizenship were correct and that they had been excluded due to a combination of technological errors and human prejudice[x].

Journalist Arunabh Saikia's story about a woman, Kadbhanu, lays bare the tragedies that are involved in such case[xi]. Kadbhanu's husband Hitmat Ali committed suicide because he was unable to bear the legal costs of trying to get her included in the NRC. The officials who were verifying her claim, refused to believe that Kadbhanu was her father's daughter. Being unlettered, she requested her *gaonburah* (village headman) to validate her claim that she was indeed her

father's daughter. As one might expect from functionaries of small, face-to-face communities, the gaonburah signed a certificate that had the state's emblem embossed in the middle. This, the tribunal claimed, was unauthorised. Moreover, the gaonburah had also not appeared in person. Hence, Kadbhanu's Kafkaesque experience of the threat of incarceration began because of the local official's unwillingness to accept her document. Saikia had another poignant story of technological and human error in the case of Rupa Dutta, whose father started the Tinsukia Commerce College in 1972[xii]. She decided to claim her legacy through her mother's LDC but found that the NRC authorities were not convinced that her mother had genuine papers. As it turned out, the mother got a matriculation certificate from Gauhati University in 1955, while her citizenship papers were processed over the year and she became a citizen in 1956.

The NRC process as it was rolled out in Assam relied on the convergence of technology, administrative efficiency and political will in order to achieve its goals. However, as media reports show, there have been instances where Bengali-speaking persons have been subjected to unprecedented harassment for not being able to provide documents that could have made it through the NRC software[xiii]. Often, as middle- and lower-level officials and part-time officers employed to conduct the NRC will attest, there has been pressure from political organisations and mid-level civil servants, including those in the courts of law and appellate bodies like the FT. In such cases, documents (and software) have the ability to strip away the context in which local interactions have become aggregated in the NRC process. They present a dilemma for students of social sciences who wish to research issues of citizenship. 20th century citizenship research looked at the various ways through which an individual entered into a political and social relationship with the state that included economic welfare and civil rights (Marshall, 1950), protection of cultural rights of minorities (Kymlicka, 1996) and an overall protection of the sanctity of personal freedom that emanated from Kantian ideas of universally applicable rules that allowed individuals to be free. In a relatively short span of time since the Supreme Court instructed the government of Assam to conduct the NRC, one has been confronted by a different order of issues. For social scientists then, the idea of generating data from a big, government and software driven data gathering process is daunting. However, this is also the moment when one sees a greater need to put this data into a context. One needs to allow a plurality of narratives to emerge that challenges the current situation where the state's narrative is considered superior to that of the neighbour, friend and relative (Dourish & Cruz, 2018).

The state's capacity to conduct a process of this scale on the basis of documents that attest to property, occupation and proof of residence have increased manifold since 1951. To paraphrase social anthropologist Annelise Riles (2011), some projects are too big to fail. These embody a process by which the state finds itself exposed by oversights and failures but continue to hold sway because in the moment of crisis the various ideas and political strategies reveal their interdependence[xiv]. In the context of the NRC in Assam, a similar argument may be made about the need for infallibility that has been attributed to the convergence of technology and bureaucracy, in their dealing with matters that evoke historical evidence in deeply contested political time. However, as anthropologist Matthew Hull has pointed out in the context of the bureaucracy in Pakistan, there is no clear correlation between an administration's ability to document and how people respond to such demands (Hull, 2012). Most people who need to negotiate with the state know that there are theoretical (and practical) ways to create the kind of documentation in order to finish a job. There are forms to fill out, windows to present them at and officials to meet in order to be permitted to do something, or to be counted for one of the schemes that is being employed by the state. In classical sociology emanating from Max Weber, this is the bureaucratic work at its best – impersonal, rational and uniform. Yet, as Akhil Gupta argues, bureaucratic mechanisms and procedures used by the Indian state systematically produce arbitrary outcomes whose consequences can be catastrophic (Gupta, 2012). Gupta's work focuses on the routine manner in which government files, forms, procedures, complaint mechanisms and inspections have the ability to normalise structural violence upon the poor in the country, even as there is a paradoxical effort by the government to ameliorate their condition.

In many parts of the country, even as the state goes through various methods of calculating the risks of the poor and vulnerable, while making sure that they receive adequate care, the poor are hardly able to access the institutions of the state. The poor experience bureaucratic apathy far more intensely and with more intimacy than others, especially since their ability to preserve documents and follow through legal procedures is very weak. Hence, even though the government has to continue with some degree of welfare for the poor, the current political climate around the world and in India point towards an increased fear of the immigrant as an undeserving object of social anger (Kymlicka, 2015). How then are social scientists supposed to respond to the ideas propounded by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) referred to earlier in this essay: in the eventual analysis, the contradictions between bourgeois liberal nationalism and capitalism

will result in the rise of a multi-dimensional order of the dispossessed – the multitude.

Reactions to the Citizenship Debate

Ugandan anthropologist Mahmood Mamdani (2001) draws one's attention to the weight of history, politics and the colonial encounter in the kind of views one asserts about brutal, polarising events. In his book *When victims become killers,* he showed how routine matters of governance have the ability to be twisted to malicious extent. Those who advocate such intent are able to bestow some kind of warped political logic on atrocities that are committed by one section of people upon another. Perhaps there is something similar happening in India, where the example of Assam is pertinent. People, ideas and political positions swerve towards selective readings of the past, especially when it comes to the disruptions caused by colonialism. In this process, some histories are privileged, while others are relegated to the margins.

In the following section, I look at the manner in which colonial history has created different political spaces for communities in Assam. I do so in order to underline the importance of ethnicity in the control over resources and territory, since all three are very important to understanding the NRC process. In addition, I discuss some of the possible outcomes of the citizenship debate, specifically within Assam, but also in relation to its impact on a wider region. This is particularly important in light of the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Bill[xv] in the Brahmaputra Valley by organisations and individuals who were supportive of the NRC. Interestingly, those who opposed the NRC in the Barak Valley, especially organisations representing Bengali-speaking Hindus, came out to support the Bill. Therefore, when angry Assamese students shout slogans like 'Bangladeshis go back', they confuse many outside the region who wonder why then are they opposed to the Citizenship Bill? It is harder to explain that 'Bangladeshi' is not a religious category, but sociological shorthand for a historical process that has muted regional specificities in nationalist debates. For those who have been excluded from the list, the bureaucratic process involves a lengthy process to seek legal recourse. Those who wish to appeal (their exclusion) will have to do so to the Supreme Court mandated Foreigners Tribunal (FT) in four months from the receiving the notification of their exclusion. The government has also announced that it would not detain those who have been excluded; at least not until the FT have had a chance to review their cases[xvi].

The NRC process provides an analytical moment to assess the range of issues that are aggressively inserted into citizenship debates in contemporary South Asia (and across the world). Recent scholarship on outmigration from Northeast India has focused on the conditions of militarisation and lack of opportunities that have forced indigenous communities to move away from the homelands that were being sought for in the 1990s and 2000s (McDuie-Ra, 2012). Furthermore, Kikon & Karlsson's (2019) work on the lives of Northeast migrants to other parts of India and their return home offers us a complex picture of the impact of affective labour on politics and policy making in the region. These works eschew the binary view of settler and indigenous ideas of belonging that have been foundational to 20th century nationalism and national territory-centric growth of capitalism. Against this bleak backdrop is what Irish poet Seamus Heaney in his Nobel acceptance speech called 'the abattoir of history', with a past full of violent expressions of identity.

The triggers of the episodes of violence are many. Regardless of the spectrum of causes of conflict in the region, the recurring binaries that operate (in the conflict) are those of the 'migrant' and 'native'; or 'settler' and 'indigenous'; or 'citizen' and 'foreigner'; or the generic 'insider' and 'outsider'. At the centre of the contestations is the process of migration – or more precisely – of mobility of human beings forced to move by the sheer force of geographic and political considerations not entirely of their making. As the debates around the standard sociological units of analysis – individuals and communities – undergo, and emic change in response to external pressures of climate change and nationalist discourse, there is a need for social scientists to ask critical questions about the manner in which certain forms of knowledge find prominence in debates on citizenship, migration and climate change (Whyte, 2017; Todd, 2016). Here, the voices of the marginalised – in this case both the indigenous as well as the itinerant seasonal migrant – need to be included, not merely as passive data, but as discursive ontological entities that have a historical relationship with each other.

Such political predicaments are not unique to Northeast India. The evocation of fear of the outsider, hence the evolution of a narrative to 'drive out' those who are seen as the mirror opposite, is similar to what transpires in other parts of the world. As different actors use the mediated public sphere to articulate their grievances against migrants/outsiders/foreigners, they simultaneously point to perceptions of anarchy among the actors themselves. Mobility (across national borders) in this case, is seen as a weakness of the state to police its boundaries

(Alexseev, 2006). If the features pages and editorials of vernacular dailies are anything to go by, migrants are seen to have an undue advantage in the mobility narrative (Kimura, 2008). This implies that the host populations are most likely to react to strategies that aid migration, in a manner that is confrontational (rather than reconciliatory). Whether it is the dominant narrative of the All Assam Students Union (in the 1980s), or the campaign for recognition of rights of the people of Terai in the new Nepali constitution, movements in the region have always tested existing notions of citizenship. Sometimes, movements have used the dominant narrative of constitutions; while there have been times when constitutional language has been rejected in favour of innovative alliances that defy prescribed political possibilities. These processes are best captured in the manner in which the national constitutions and laws reflects the concerns of the inhabitants of the region. In India, the government has used the political events and discourse in Assam to amend the constitution and push through a version of citizenship that is marked by blood ties and cultural ascriptions, where it has become harder for a person to be granted citizenship in India even if s/he has lived and worked in the country all their life, unless s/he can prove that s/he has parents or ancestors who were born (here) (Roy, 2016). However, it is puzzling to come to terms with the fact that some of India's most abused citizens, living in one of South Asia's most militarised regions, can in turn seek the disenfranchisement of those they see as their *other*.

Ranabir Samaddar (2018) had a melancholic view of this predicament in his recent article published in The Wire. In positing citizenship and statelessness as inseparable twins, he concludes that the voices of support for the NRC are emblematic of a collective revulsion towards an imagination of mixed lives. Yet, the political discourse, framed as it is around notions of identity and history, do not do justice to the myriad ways in which people have managed to live with each other in Assam. These pathways of coexistence are evident in mundane spaces like weddings, funerals, village festivities during the harvest season and other events that allow for more layered lives to evolve. For those trying to make sense of the contentious politics surrounding the NRC, there seems to be little hope for reconciliation between communities that see each other in adversarial positions over a government-sponsored, advocacy-driven process. It is true that a focus on the NRC process alone can lead one to the conclusion that it's supporters displayed a monochromatic view of society, history and culture in Assam – one that continues to view society through a 20th century lens, where the stable, land-holding peasant is at the foundation of social and political structures. Journalist

Sangeeta Barooah-Pisharoty's recent book on the Assam Accord and its aftermaths points towards the shared suffering of all communities across Assam and cautions readers from assuming that a victim-perpetrator binary can be applied to understand the outcomes of the exclusionary process (Pisharoty, 2009).

If anything, the sociological outcomes of the NRC debate are a reminder that the militarisation of politics and civil society in Assam has led to an untenable reality. Today, it is easier for middle-class Assamese men to reminisce about home and culture in distant places than it is for working class *Miya* women, who have been born and raised in the chars, to find their names in the NRC. Yet, asserting secular ethics and quotidian examples of tolerance will be left to those who have been systematically excluded by the state, especially in its new software-driven environment. The NRC involved colossal expense for the state and civil society in Assam that are financial and political. Political parties (including the ruling party) expressed dissatisfaction about the outcome of the process, pointing towards the presence of many Indian citizens in the list. This almost universal disappointment should serve as a moment to examine the impact that the NRC will have on social science scholarship in the future. While it has disrupted relationships and forced people and organisations to revisit old colonial debates about autonomy and social justice, it has also forced the need to revisit new ones about transformation of the citizenship debates and the realities of climate change.

Notes:

[i] As per a press release from the NRC office a total of 3,30,27,661 person had participated in the updating process of the NRC. Of these, 3,11,21,004 were found to have valid documents to prove their citizenship through the legacy code. This left out 19,06,675 persons (including those who did not file claims following the publications of the two drafts). For more details see: https://www.livelaw.in/pdf_upload/pdf_upload-363869.pdf

[ii] https://indianculturalforum.in/2019/07/01/i-am-miya-reclaiming-identity-through-protest-poetry/

[iii] On 10th July 2019, journalist Pranabjit Doloi filed a first information report (FIR) in a Guwahati police station against ten persons who, he felt, had used Miya poetry to belittle the NRC process, as well as painted the entire Assamese community as xenophobes in the national and international arena. Leaving aside the problematic phenomenon of associating a collective Assamese pride with the NRC process, the reaction to the FIR resulted in several weeks of acrimonious debates in the media. Prominent intellectuals weighed in on what was otherwise a small, creative expression of community pride, as they felt that the timing of the entire controversy was suspect (Gohain, 2019).

[iv] *Chars* are seasonal river islands that are found along the Ganga-Brahmaputra Rivers, especially when they flow in the flood plains. For a better part of the 19th and 20th century, agricultural communities in the Bengal delta region that encompasses present-day Bangladesh and parts of India and Myanmar, were involved in claiming these fertile seasonal areas for winter cultivation.

ᵛ https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/natural-disasters/floods-affect-over-30-000-in-assam-56023

ᵛⁱ Hafiz Ahmed, president of the *Char Chapori Sahitya Parishad*, raises similar concerns in his explanatory interview with journalist Sangeeta Baroooah-Pisharoty in an online journal. Following allegations by Assamese nationalist intellectuals that members of the Miya community – a pejorative term once used for char Muslims of Bengali heritage, which some are now attempting to appropriate – were portraying all Assamese people as xenophobic, Ahmed explained their position in great detail. He speaks about the Miya community's resolute efforts to integrate with mainstream Assamese society by drawing on all manner of real and tenuous links from the past. He also rues the lack of effort among the mainstream Assamese – of every religious colour – to understand the deeper political significance of the Miya community's dilemmas in contemporary Assam. https://thewire.in/rights/hafiz-ahmed-assam-miyah-poetry

ᵛⁱⁱ Names of all interviewees and respondents have been changed to protect their identities (unless otherwise stated).

ᵛⁱⁱⁱ https://scroll.in/latest/930834/assam-flood-victims-go-back-to-fetch-nrc-documents-some-refuse-to-leave-homes

ⁱˣ See Notification of Gauhati High Court dated June 21, 2017:
https://districts.ecourts.gov.in/sites/default/files/Notification-21-06-2017_0.pdf

ˣ Online news and views portal, Scroll.in had done a series of stories based on bureaucratic errors and personal dilemmas of a range of people whose names had been omitted in the NRC. Journalist Arunabh Saikia filed most of the reports under the title *Humans of Assam*. For more, see: https://scroll.in/article/931788/humans-of-assam-do-we-need-to-show-pieces-of-paper-to-prove-that-we-are-people-of-this-land

ˣⁱ　　https://scroll.in/article/930649/death-by-citizenship-this-man-killed-himself-anxious-over-wifes-fate-and-he-is-not-the-only-one

ˣⁱⁱ https://scroll.in/article/931382/humans-of-assam-if-they-want-to-send-me-to-bangladesh-so-be-it

ˣⁱⁱⁱ　　https://scroll.in/article/932134/worse-than-a-death-sentence-inside-assams-sham-trials-that-could-strip-millions-of-citizenship

ˣⁱᵛ Riles' work looked at the particular ways in which the US stepped in to bail out banks like AIG during the financial crisis in 2008. Riles asked her readers to consider the conditions under which this particular event is made possible. How, despite pressures from politicians on the Left and concerned citizens, the US treasury decided to bail out private parties like the banks, is a matter that pushes us to look at different forms of legitimacy and accountability in the study of markets and the state.

ˣᵛ The Bharatiya Janata Party-led government introduced the Citizenship Amendment Bill in Parliament in 2016. It (the Bill) proposed that citizenship be granted to non-Muslim persons from other South Asian countries where religious persecution was rife. Critics of this bill point to its communal and anti-Constitutional overtones. Civil society in the Northeast also opposed the bill on the grounds that it opens out the possibility for the settlement of non-Muslim Bangladeshis in the region.

ˣᵛⁱ The government of Assam had sought to employ 1000 officers to the FTs. There are 100 that already exist and an additional 200 FTs were added in September 2019. For more details see:
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/assam-government-to-set-up-foreigners-tribunal/articleshow/71263494.cms

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Skill Development and Youth Empowerment Schemes in Sikkim: a Gender Perspective

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Abstract

A prime focus among seventeen major global agendas of 2016's Sustainable Development Goals is achieving gender equality and youth empowerment. It primarily aims at providing enabling environment to both men and women, to work together as equal partners, by addressing the challenges created by the twin problem of unemployment and youth bulges in developing nations. Measures toward youth empowerment and gender equality envisage converging and imparting education and skill for enlarging the choices in sustainable livelihood. The SDGs provide guidelines and supportive framework for creating positive political base to create an enabling environment for youth empowerment and gender equality. Contextually locating, the paper seeks to identify skill development and empowerment schemes for the youth of Sikkim and to assess how they are responding to such initiatives by the state. The study is an analytical exploration of few youth empowerment schemes in the state of Sikkim and makes a critical assessment of both its achievement and gaps, also taking into consideration the gender dimension.

Key words: Capacity Building, CMSES, Gender Equality, Livelihood School, Youth Empowerment

Introduction

The record of around 356 million youths, as per 2014 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Report, affirms that India is a youthful nation. It is projected that by 2020, sixty-four per cent of India's population will belong to working age group (Chatterjee & Karunakara, 2016) with 'dependency ratio' coming down to 0.4 by 2030 (Basu, 2007). The abundant human capital is indeed a boon for the country's economy; however, contradictorily, the very blessing can also be the cause of future cataclysmic disaster. Urdal (2006) argued about relative

association between 'youth bulges' and increased risk of political violence. The theoretical plausibility of the argument can be contextualised into the socio-political realities of India, reflected in issues concerning reservation, identity politics, regionalism, and in the extreme forms – Naxalism and secessionist movements. Blackett's work on *Bhadralog* argued that political unrest in India are largely economics oriented and 'a direct and potent cause in creating much political unrest' (Blackett, 1929, p. 42). Similarly, anti-reservation agitation (1985), anti-Mandal agitation (1990), Assam movement (1983-84), and in recent times the Patidars agitation in Gujarat are instances of youth unrest. Comparable situations were experienced in Egypt (LaGraffe, 2012), Ethiopia (Mains, 2012), Nigeria (Tenuche, 2009) and Sri Lanka (Wijesinghe, 1973; Vodopivec, Gunatlilaka & Mayer, 2010). In India, youth problems are further accentuated by regional variations in development, such as lack of industrial development and poor connectivity, as in the case of North-Eastern States (NES) (Nandy, 2014), amplified by preference of government jobs over individual entrepreneurial enterprises (Agarwal, 1998).

Redressal of such structurally induced constraints requires prioritisation in development of life skills through vocational trainings, which can generate a source of sustainable livelihood and employability for youths leading toward empowerment (Urdal, 2006), with gender inclusivity and sensibility. Regardless of the policy initiatives taken at various levels, such as Beijing Conference, UN Human Development, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), etc. for achieving gender equality, inequality persists manifesting in various shades. Malik (2015) underlines how gender component has always been side-lined in policy discourses, and the structural challenges remain true regardless of rural-urban distribution. Therefore, empowerment, with the motto 'Leaving No One Behind'[i], by creating an enabling environment for youth is an integral part of contextual policy discourses as reflected in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2016, which emphasises on inclusive policies and actions to ensure gender equality and empowerment of women. Activists and scholars have also articulated that success of SDGs agendas 'hinged on the empowerment of young people'[ii] and gender inclusiveness is on top priority.

Development, Empowerment and Gender in Perspective

The paradigmatic shift in development discourse gave birth to 'alternative development' focusing on 'human flourishing' which challenged the archetypical

economic growth model of development (Pieterse, 2010). Human flourishment aspires for enhancing the quality of life by means of capacitation and choice enlargement leading to empowerment. This often requires sound cultural and social bases, what Bourdieu (1986) referred to as 'capitals'. Developing and strengthening the cultural base requires a strong supportive legal and administrative framework with equal impetus given on access to knowledge, information and skills, and a positive value system (CS, 2007). Therefore, what is required is dissemination of knowledge through formal and vocational education, since education creates enabling condition and is seen as a 'catalyst of social change', a developmental indicator and a crucial variable in measuring HDI (Dréze & Sen, 2002, p. 143). Whereas, a firm social base is rooted in inclusively participative collective action oriented toward community development (Janssens, 2010), inevitable for sustainability. Martínez, Jiménez-Morales, Masó, and Bernet (2016) pointed that power, participation and education, which are also reflected in SDGs agendas, have transformative and emancipative capacities which are concomitant to empowerment. Idealistically, sustainability is inclusive and a gender-neutral concept, however, under patriarchal social system it embodies andocentric stance in both its approach and method. Therefore, achieving inclusiveness for women becomes a multifarious challenge (Carr, Chen, & Jhabvala, 1996), as women are not viewed as an integral part of economic development process, hence are excluded from development policies and programs (Mehra, 1997). These constraints resulted in differential 'quality of opportunities offered' to women particularly in informal sectors (Kantor, 2002, p. 285).

In Indian context, despite the constitutional enshrinement, gender discrimination is socially legitimised and entrenched in the cultural milieu (Thapa, 2009), proving to be a major barrier in achieving gender equality. This often is reflected in various socio-economic indicators like declining sex ratio, unfavourable literacy rate, health care system, decision making and work participation. In fact, India ranked at 130th out of 146 countries based on United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Gender Inequality Index, and at 108th out of 144 countries in Global Gender Gap Index 2017 (Ravi & Jayaraman, 2017). These facets reflect that there is a serious gap between the policy measures and the manifested ground realities suggesting that gender inequality is inherent in the structural reality of our society.

Contextually, NES are generally perceived as embodiment of egalitarian disposition; however, Mahanta and Nayak (2017) contradicts the opinionated view arguing that women in NES are relatively disempowered and have lower social status, and gender gap in socio-economic and political domain. The prevalence of traditional and customary practices superimposes over their access and control to education, employment and health (Buongpui, 2013; Das, 2013) and political participation (Changkija, 2017). Similarly, Sikkim being a patriarchal society, gender inequality and discriminations are evident in socio-economic and political aspects of the society, such as *Dzumsa* (Thapa & Sachdeva, 2017), state level political participation (Thapa, 2009) and existence of glass ceiling in bureaucratic structure (Thapa, 2014).

Addressing the issue, in consistent with SDGs, UN Women Leadership, Empowerment, Access & Protection (LEAP) framework strategically aims at bringing young men and women to work together as equal partners of gender equality to achieve a gender transformative society. The framework emphasised on three thematic agendas – strengthening leadership of young women, economic empowerment and skills development, and action on ending violence against young women and girls. In perspective with the foci, the state as a stakeholder has the responsibility to create the enabling environment through proper resource allocations, a democratic platform, infrastructure, informational supports and opportunities, and making youth empowerment an integral component of developmental policies and programmes.

In view of the changing social realities and transformations occurring in the state, the study, which is exploratory in nature, seeks to examine how the youth in Sikkim in general and young women in particular are responding to the various empowerment initiatives by the state government. Using both primary and secondary information collected from various concerning departments of the state government and from field survey and in-depth interview with stakeholders, the study critically examines the achievements and challenges of the youth empowerment schemes and its gender dimension.

Youth Empowerment Schemes in Sikkim: a Brief Backdrop

Sikkim, since its statehood in 1975, has witnessed massive structural transformations achieving numerous strides in significant development indicators. The state registered a sharp rise in Gender Development Index (GDI) from 0.445

to 0.528 between 1991 and 1998 (Lama, 2001). In 2006, GDI score increased to 0.659 which was higher than National average of 0.590. Within the same decade, Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) was improved by eighth rank (GOI, 2009). This is primarily due to state's prioritisation toward inclusive development by implementing women centric policies, such as fifty per cent reservation in local self-government and thirty per cent in public sector jobs (Thapa, 2009), making Sikkim among the top six Indian states recording maximum acceleration in terms of Human Development Index (HDI) (GOS, 2015). However, despite the achievements, Sikkim also encounters many social issues related to youth. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2015 Report recorded annual suicide rate of Sikkim to be 37.5 per cent, the highest being among the most productive age-group of 21-30 (24.4 per cent) and 31-40 (17.3 per cent) (Chettri, Gurung, & Singh, 2016); alcoholism and drug uses are also high among the youth (Bhalla, Dutta, & Chakrabarti, 2006; Pandey & Datta, 2014). Additionally, Human Resource & Development (HRD) Ministry's Annual Report 2006-07 raised concerns about high dropout rate (82.30 per cent) among class I-X students during 2004-05, which is far above the national average of 61.92 per cent. During the period, the non-working population of Sikkim constituted 63.68 per cent of the total population (5,81,546), of which 51.94, 40.82, and 7.24 per cents were students, others, and unemployed respectively (GOS, 2006). However, interestingly, the number of unemployed youths in the state was lesser than the number of vacancies[iii]. Subsequently, recognising the conundrum, the state felt the immediate necessity to spell out its policies and programmes vis-à-vis developing and pooling of skilled human resources by imparting both specialised and vocational courses.

Comprehending the socio-economic reality, Directorate of Capacity Building (DCB) was instituted in 2007 to propagate higher education, vocational and livelihood training. The directorate handles matters related to higher education, while its subsidiary unit – State Institute of Capacity Building (SICB) looks after vocational trainings in livelihood skill programmes. DCB also monitors schemes like Chief Minister's Self Employment Scheme (CMSES), trainings for the educated unemployed youth under Skill Development Scheme (SDS) and Comprehensive Educational Loan Scheme (CELS), which are implemented through SIDICO (Sikkim Industrial Development & Investment Corporation Ltd.) and works in coordination with various departments within and outside the state in matters related to Capacity Building. In 2013, the directorate was merged with Human Resource Development Department (HRDD), while SICB was separated

from the DCB to work as an independent livelihood training institution. Presently, these institutions, namely, DCB, SICB, Sikkim Entrepreneur Centres (SEC), HRDD, and Ministry of Overseas Employment (MOE), Government of India (GOI), are tied together at national level under Human Resource Development Mission (HRDM) for empowering the youth through skill development training and placements in suitable jobs.

SICB and Livelihood School

SICB has its footprint in the state's directive towards creation of a pool of human resource capital in Sikkim and zero tolerance towards youth unemployment. The decision was persuaded by the statistical fact presented in the *State Socio Economic Census 2006* regarding the unemployment status in the state. Accordingly, in 2009 the SICB was established at Karfectar, South Sikkim, with the task of implementing and supervising thirty-one livelihood schools[iv] in all constituencies, targeting 'greater empowerment and developing entrepreneurial capability of unemployed persons of the state' (SICB, Resolution No. 6).

The pedagogic principle of the programme is based on 'effective learning through productive work', offered under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. Income being one criterion, it targets mostly the underprivileged unemployed Sikkimese[v] youths. During the training period, financial incentive of Rs. 3,000 is provided monthly as stipend to encourage them [vi]. Training programmes at various livelihood schools are not always pre-designed and selected, rather it is conducted as per the need and requirement of the local people through formal request to and through the Panchayat. Along with it, specialised training programmes are also provided on the request from various departments of the state. For instance, in the past it has trained junior land surveyors of the Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department, personnel of various private security agencies, etc. Successfully trained individuals from the livelihood schools are eligible to avail various financial assistance from the government for setting up micro enterprises.

Various programmes offered under the livelihood school and the programme-wise gender segregated enrolment from 2009-2010 to 2015-16 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Programme-wise enrolment and gender breakup from 2009-2016

Sl. No	Programme Name	Female	Male	Total	Programme wise Participation
1	Agriculture & Horticulture	119078.65%	323 21.35%	1513 100%	15.09%
2	Animal Husbandry & Veterinary	455 69.15%	203 30.85%	658 100%	6.56%
3	Apparel Manufacturing Technology	12 63.16%	7 36.84%	19 100%	0.19%
4	Assistant Work Supervisor	0 0	34 100%	34 100%	0.34%
5	Automobile Repairing	0 0	178 100%	178 100%	1.78%
6	Beautician & Spa	618 95.08%	32 4.92%	650 100%	6.48%
7	BPO & Banking	9 33.33%	18 66.67%	27 100%	0.27%
8	Caregiver	23 100%	0 0	23 100%	0.23%
9	Chef	5 7.46%	62 92.54%	67 100%	0.67%
10	Computer Hardware	110 35.37%	201 64.63%	311 100%	3.10%
11	Computer Software	285 65.52%	150 34.48%	435 100%	4.34%
12	Computer Software/Tally	134 59.82%	90 40.18%	224 100%	2.23%
13	Construction Trade	87 22.72%	296 77.28%	383 100%	3.82%
14	Cutting & Tailoring	236 98.74%	3 1.26%	239 100%	2.38%
15	Driver cum Tour Guide	50 2.56%	1904 97.44%	1954 100%	19.49%
16	Electrical Trade	0 0	197 100%	197 100%	1.96%
17	F&B Services	68 66.67%	34 33.33%	102 100%	1.01%
18	Foreign Language	165 64.45%	91 35.55%	256 100%	2.55%
19	Garment Production Technique for Self-Employment	17 100%	0 0	17 100%	0.17%
20	Homestay Tourism	184 71.60%	73 28.40%	257 100%	2.56%
21	Hospitality	508	293	801	7.99%

	&Tourism	63.42%	36.58%	100%	
22	Integrated Farming	65 83.33%	13 16.67%	78 100%	0.78%
23	Orange Rejuvenation	31 63.27%	18 36.73%	49 100%	0.49%
24	Primary Teacher's Training	113 73.38%	41 26.62%	154 100%	1.54%
25	Retail Management	298 73.58%	107 26.42%	405 100%	4.04%
26	Security Guard Services	75 16.45%	381 83.55%	456 100%	4.55%
27	Souvenir Making	123 82%	27 18%	150 100%	1.50%
28	Spoken English & Personality Development	264 67.87%	125 32.13%	389 100%	3.88%
Total		**5125 51.12%**	**4901 48.88%**	**10026 100%**	**100**

Source: SICB, February 2016

Within the span of eight years, 28 major livelihood training programmes were conducted (Table 1), besides the need based specialised courses. The observation reflects that all programmes offered under the schemes are not equally appealing among the trainees, as some courses are more prospective in view of local job market. Sikkim, known for its growing tourism sector[vii] and having high demand of training on 'Driver cum Tour Guide', has more enrolment (19.49 per cent) as compared to other livelihood programmes. The programme also has high gender segregation, as only 2.56 per cent of women took up the training as compared to 97.44 per cent male. Similar trends are also observed in 'Automobile Repairing', 'Assistant Work Supervisor' courses where 100 per cent male enrolment is evident. While programmes like 'Beautician and Spa' has high concentration of female enrolment (95.08 per cent), so does 'Caregiver' (100 per cent), 'Cutting and Tailoring' (98.74 per cent), 'Garment Production Technique for Self-Employment' (100 per cent), 'Apparel Manufacturing Technology' (63.16 per cent). 'Hospitality and Tourism' programme, which is the third most offered course, also has higher female enrolment 63.42 per cent.

The clear gender segregation in the offered programmes has to be seen primarily in the backdrop of attached traditional values in gender specific role assignment on the part of the trainees. Nonetheless, slight transformations in the programme

preference, which is outside the gender specific stereotypical occupation, were observed in few programmes. 'Construction Trade' and 'Security Guard Services' are such programmes where respective percentage of 22.72 and 16.45 female trainees were enrolled, which primarily is due to the job market with the establishment of numerous organisations like pharmaceutical companies, private educational institutions, etc. which requires female personnel. To an extent, this can be translated as indication of changing worldview among the Sikkimese youths related to gender role assignment, as these two professions were traditionally confined within male domain for their physical prowess and bravery. Comparatively, 26.62 per cent of male were also enrolled in 'Primary Teacher's Training', which is largely preferred by and constricted among women, as it becomes easier for women to balance home and the job and vacation is the incentive. The incursion into the professional domain of one another by breaking the occupational gender barrier is a welcoming trend in a traditional society which is grappling towards self-determination from the shackles of patriarchy.

'Agriculture and Horticulture' with 15.09 per cent is second most enrolled programme where 78.65 per cent are female and 21.35 per cent are male. This observation is noteworthy, particularly in relation to gender dimension, as agriculture and its allied activities in hill economy has been thought predominantly to be the province of man's economic activities, except in the sphere of tea and other plantation industries, where many women are employed. However, an overwhelming number of women are opting to equip themselves with the technical knowhow in agricultural and horticultural practices. This is primarily attributed to the emerging trend of intra and inter-state migration of male towards the urban centres for better job prospects and employment, particularly in secondary and tertiary sectors. The process has created a major gap and challenges in the availability of agrarian labour forces in the rural Sikkim which to a large extent contributed to the plummeting agricultural productivity which Chakrabarti (2010) accounted as 'agrarian crisis in Sikkim'. However, with the recent change in the agricultural policy of the state to be one of the leading producers of organic food items, people are gradually showing their interest in agricultural and allied activities, particularly among subsistent farmers. The prospect, created by the decision of the state government to declare the state as organic state and stopping import of vegetables items from outside the state in a phase manner, induced the women to take up the challenge in schooling themselves in the technical yet practical knowledge in organic farming. Similar trend is also observed in 'Animal Husbandry and Veterinary' training

programmes. This also substantiates what Bhati and Singh (1987) argued about the active participation in the economic activities of women in poor rural areas, particularly in the agricultural sector. Of all the programmes offered, 'Garment Production Technique for Self-Employment' and 'Apparel Manufacturing Technology' are the least enrolled programmes with 0.17 per cent and 0.19 per cent respectively.

The overall enrolment in terms of gender and social category suggests the absence of gender bias towards women. Rather, the overall enrolment and participation of female is encouraging and more as compared to male. Since the beginning from 2009 till 2016, a total of 10,026 individuals have been trained, out of which 51.12 per cent are female and 48.88 per cent are male (Table 2). However, at the time of commencement of the courses in 2009-10, the participation of the female (13.64 per cent) trainee was far less than male (86.36 per cent). The gender difference in enrolment ratio in the initial stage can be due to lack of access to information and motivations among the women. However, since 2010-11 there has been steady increase in the number of participation of women from mere 13.64 per cent in 2009-10 to 60.69 per cent in 2015-16. The yearly analysis of social category of enrolment in livelihood schools illustrates that five-social categories excluding the 'General' category are the major beneficiaries[viii]. In overall, 6.26 per cent of the total trainees belong to the SC communities, out of which 51.91 per cent are female and 48.09 per cent are male. The participatory rate among the Bhutia-Lepcha (BL) population is observed to be significantly less (8.66 per cent) compared to their combined population size of 21 per cent (GOS, 2006). Although the BL are classified as separate entity according to historical precedence for various rights and entitlement, however, within the broader framework they are classified under the ST category along with two other communities, namely, Limboo and Tamang. The participatory rate among the STs is 27.94 per cent, if however, the BL category is also totalled with the ST category then it makes a total of 36.6 per cent, suggesting that the STs in Sikkim are in active involvement in availing the diverse benefits under the various schemes by the State. The programme also proved beneficial among the OBC communities, with higher concentration among OBC State List communities (Bahun, Chettri, and Newari/Pradhan) with 29.38 per cent, out of which 49.56 per cent are female while 50.44 per cent male. The OBC Central List communities (Bhujel, Dewan, Gurung, Jogi, Manger, Rai, Sanyasi, Sunuwar/Mukhia and Thami) has total participation of 27.73 per cent, of which 51.22 per cent are female and 48.78 per

cent are male. However, insignificant number of enrolment (0.13 per cent) is observed among the General category.

Table 2: Year-wise enrolment in terms of social categories and sex

Fiscal Year	Female Participants							Male Participants							Grand Total
	BL	G	OBC C	OBC S	SC	ST	Total	BL	G	OBC C	OBC S	SC	ST	Total	
2009-10	0 0	0 0	0 0	3 4.55%	3 4.55%	3 4.55%	9 13.64%	0 0	0 0	18 27.27%	10 15.15%	4 6.06%	25 37.88%	57 86.36%	66 100%
2010-11	67 5.74%	0 0	195 16.70%	176 15.07%	24 2.05%	120 10.27%	582 49.83%	65 5.57%	0 0	145 12.41%	188 16.10%	31 2.65%	157 13.44%	586 50.17%	1,168 100%
2011-12	141 7.84%	0 0	276 15.35%	248 13.80%	44 2.45%	210 11.68%	919 51.11%	117 6.51%	0 0	269 14.96%	277 15.41%	50 2.78%	166 9.23%	879 48.89%	1,798 100%
2012-13	77 3.45%	3 0.13%	271 12.14%	288 12.90%	65 2.91%	322 14.42%	1,026 45.95%	84 3.76%	0 0	312 13.97%	378 16.93%	88 3.94%	345 15.45%	1207 54.05%	2,233 100%
2013-14	69 3.38%	0 0	366 17.91%	311 15.22%	71 3.47%	297 14.53%	1,114 54.50%	64 3.13%	0 0	304 14.87%	270 13.21%	71 3.47%	221 10.81%	930 45.50%	2,044 100%
2014-15	52 2.37%	0 0	265 12.06%	347 15.79%	83 3.78%	413 18.79%	1,160 52.78%	88 4.00%	0 0	265 12.06%	303 13.79%	50 2.27%	332 15.10%	1038 47.22%	2,198 100%
2015-16	24 4.64%	0 0	51 9.83%	87 16.76%	36 6.94%	117 22.54%	315 60.69%	20 3.85%	0 0	43 8.29%	60 11.56%	8 1.54%	73 14.07%	204 39.31%	519 100%
Grand Total	430 4.29%	3 0.03%	1424 14.20%	1460 14.56%	326 3.25%	1482 14.78%	5125 51.12%	438 4.37%	0 0	1356 13.53%	1486 14.82%	302 3.01%	1319 13.16%	4901 48.88%	10026 100%

Notes: BL= Bhutia-Lepcha; G= General; OBCC= OBC (Central List); OBCS= OBC (State List); SC= Scheduled Caste; ST= Scheduled Tribe

Source: SICB, February 2016

Analytical exploration of the livelihood school training programme did not reveal significant correlation between gender and social category, as almost an equal number of female-male trainees are represented in each category, with marginal variations except in 2009-10 and 2015-16 batch, which has been discussed. However, in 2015-16 batch, significant gender difference within each category is observed remarkably, as out of total 44 enrolled SC trainees, 36 (81.82 per cent) are female and 8 (18.18 per cent) are male with a Gender Differential Ratio

(GDR)[ix] of 63.64 per cent, followed by ST (only Limboo and Tamang) with 23.16 per cent GDR, and OBC (State List) with 18.36 per cent GDR. The transition to higher enrolment rate among the women, especially in 2015-16 batch, could be attributed to rising awareness about the benefits (both financial and skill enhancement) of the scheme, unrestricted information flow with the advancement in ICTs, change in societal perception, and gender sensitive inclusive policies of the government.

Karfectar Livelihood School

Karfectar livelihood school is an in-house training centre at State Institute of Capacity Building (SICB) headquarter premise, which initially conducted only two training programmes on 'Driving cum Tour Guide' and 'Beautician and Spa' courses. However, recently the centre has also incorporated training programme in 'IT (Tally, VAT, CST, IT, Multimedia)'. During field visit in July 2015, 75 trainees were found enrolled in Driving cum Tour Guide and 56 in the Beautician and Spa programme. As mentioned earlier, the trainees in the Driving cum Tour Guide were only males, whereas in 'Beautician and Spa' all were females. The interaction with the Deputy Director, SICB and the instructors of both the courses revealed that the response of the trainees were reassuringly encouraging. The instructors deliberated that the trainings are orientated towards hands-on practical experiences with fewer theoretical classes. Besides the syllabus intensive trainings, the trainees are also trained in spoken English to widen the scope of their employability. Successfully trained participants are awarded with certificate – a mandatory document in applying for CMSES loan, and placements for industrious trainees. In the case of those efficaciously trained in driving, SICB in collaboration with the Transport Department also equipped them with driving license. In interaction with the instructors, we came across one such faculty in the Beautician and Spa programme who herself is a product of the centre. She narrated that after successful completion of the training she was able to secure placement in Mumbai, while working there she enrolled herself for advanced training, which proved to be productive and helped her in securing the faculty position in the livelihood school, making her able to secure a dignified livelihood. Such cases show how livelihood programmes prove to be a source of empowerment for the youth, especially women.

A critical appraisal of the programme highlighted that welfare schemes like the livelihood programmes are not without flaws. The Deputy Director revealed how

initially, many trainees repeatedly enrolled themselves in different livelihood schools with the sole motive of availing the monthly stipend given under the scheme. Presently, however, with digitisation and centralisation process in the enrolment procedure, the problem to an extent has been overcome. Other concerns which were raised by him were issues related to attitudinal outlook of the trainees, how among the successfully placed trainees, especially those outside the state, there is a higher tendency of desertion of jobs within few months, on the ground of inability to cope up with unsuitable social and physical environment. This implies liability on the part of the SICB vis-à-vis putting future recruitments from outside the state into jeopardy. Further, lack of motivation towards labour intensive works particularly in construction trade is a major concern, although 383 have been trained till 2016 (Table 1), thus involving huge financial liability.

Namcheybong Livelihood School

Livelihood school at Basilakha, Namcheybong, East Sikkim became operational in 2014, with its first and only training programme in 'Agriculture and Horticulture'. It is managed by four instructors from B-ABLE group, which is tendered out by SICB under PPP model. The programme training module is divided into 3:7 ratio, with higher edge apportioned to field exercise as trainees with little or no education. The instructors further elaborated that besides the training in the techniques of organic farming, they are also trained in animal husbandry to enhance their source of livelihood.

The programme was conceived primarily keeping in view the dropout youths; however, it was observed that the age of trainees range from 19-41 years. In 2015 session, when the fieldwork was conducted, a total of 26 trainees were enrolled, of which only one was male, five trainees had already dropped out. The crucial reason for dropout, as revealed by one of the instructors, was role conflict due to familial pressure and maladjustment in the role-sets as a housewife and trainee. Statistically observing, 76 per cent of the total female trainees were married and belonged to below poverty line (BPL) family. In a poverty-stricken traditional household, the role of women gets augmented with multiple role sets, predominantly both as caretaker and livelihood supporter. Therefore, many women trainees opined that adopting a new role, which was not instantaneously productive financially, creates pressure and confrontational role-conflict in the family, despite the knowledge of opportunities and avenues that will be opened to them after successful completion of the training. This reveals the need to contrive

mechanisms for prevention of future dropouts, especially for those women belonging to BPL families.

Gender disparity in the enrolment of trainees was observed distinctively as 96.15 per cent of trainees were women. The phenomenon is not limited to the present livelihood school alone, but it also extends to other livelihood schools, which are assigned in delivering training programme in 'Agriculture and Horticulture'. The consolidated figure from 2009-2016 (Table1) shows that, out of the total number, 78.65 per cent were female, suggesting that women are major initiators in equipping themselves with the practical knowledge of organic farming for future agricultural development of Sikkim, as more and more male members are becoming seasonal migrants in search of employment opportunities in other sectors. The women trainees articulated that after the completion of the training, they will start organic farming and raising livestock, as both are complimentary from the convenience of their home in the small patches of land they own. They conjointly voiced that starting commercially viable farm from the convenience of home enables them to look after their children and family without compromising familial roles and duties.

Assessment of CMSES

Chief Minister's Self Employment Scheme (CMSES), like many self-employment schemes available across the country, was started with the objective to encourage entrepreneurial and employment opportunities for Sikkimese youths. Through the scheme, the government aimed at fulfilling the local employment demands by developing skilled manpower, and increase production of local goods by providing financial assistance to the unemployed youths for setting up micro-enterprises. Maximum financial assistance of rupees five lakhs[x] is given to those unemployed youths whose annual family income is less than rupees two lakhs fifty thousand and has successfully completed livelihood/vocational courses conducted by SICB. The loan is disbursed in two to three instalments, without incurring any interest for the first two years, after which an annual interest of six per cent is applied. After the expiry of moratorium period, the loan must be repaid within a period of five years in instalment. The nodal agency for handling and monitoring various financial schemes related to promotion of higher education and small-scale industries in the state is Sikkim Industrial Development & Investment Corporation Ltd. (SIDICO), a state level financial institution registered under the Registration of Companies Act, Sikkim, 1961. Presently, it

handles four state government schemes in conjunction with the respective departments for selection and disbursement of the schemes, namely, Comprehensive Educational Loan Scheme (CELS), Chief Minister's Free Scholarship Scheme (CMFSS), Chief Minister's Self-Reliant Scheme (CMSRS) and CMSES. However, the study is focused only on CMSES as it is directly related to capacity building and youth empowerment programme for dropout and unemployed youth.

Since its pronouncement in 2002 till 2016-17 fiscal year, a total of 7,756 young entrepreneurs have been benefited and have availed the financial help for various micro-enterprises, with a total amount of Rs. 9,299.17 lakhs disbursed under the scheme. However, after 2013-14, the scheme became intermittent and dwindled significantly in loan disbursement due to fund paucity (Table 3). The study found a clear gender gap in the scheme as only 35.95 per cent of women have been benefited under the scheme, which is relatively lower both in terms of those who have trained in the livelihood courses (51.12 per cent, Table 2) and population ratio (47.09 per cent, 2011 census), whereas, a total of 64.05 per cent of male entrepreneurs have availed benefits under the scheme. The year 2012-13 was an exception when the number of women beneficiaries was recorded higher comparatively to men with 55.67 per cent; however, this is one isolated case of exception. Further, in the fiscal year 2016-17, the number of women beneficiaries was 100 per cent, nonetheless, if we see the total number of recipients it is only two, which is a very insignificant number compared to previous years. Interaction with SIDICO officials revealed that in comparison to male, women applicants are always in minority; however, the reason for lower number of women applicants for loan, despite higher rate of enrolment in livelihood programmes, could not be ascertained, requiring further study. Nonetheless, numerous studies (Schwartz, 1976; Goffee & Scase, 1985; Carr, 1990) have shown that women encounter more realistic gender-centred confounding challenges in raising financial assets for start-up and 'credibility problems when dealing with bankers' or financial institutions or any investors (Carter & Rosa, 1998, p. 225). Stengel (2013) citing the analysis conducted by Biz2Credit, pointed that women entrepreneurs were '15% to 20% less likely to receive approval on a small business loan application' owing to lower annual revenue, higher operating expenses, low credit points, and choice of business model. McGee (2016) articulated existence of discriminating stance towards women with small business, which she referred as 'Start up Sexism'. However, on the brighter side contextual to Sikkim, it can be argued that women are empowered to an extent to come out of the traditional gender role

assignments and experiment their hand in micro-enterprises breaking the gender stereotypes.

Table 3: Total no. of beneficiaries, gender break and the amount spent under the CMSES

YEAR	TOTAL		FEMALE		MALE	
	No.	Amount (in lakh)	No.	Amount (in lakh)	No.	Amount (in lakh)
2002-03	1484	931.5	552	346.5	932	585
2003-04	1640	1024	408	408	1232	616
2004-05	60	38.5	28	19	32	19.5
2005-06	57	114.7	15	21	42	93.7
2006-07	7	22	1	5	6	17
2007-08	142	240.86	62	141.93	80	98.93
2008-09	915	1504.35	369	600.4	546	903.95
2009-10	1263	1854	487	730.5	776	1123.5
2010-11	544	816	220	330	324	486
2011-12	238	545.76	101	230.51	137	315.25
2012-13	467	717	260	296.75	207	420.25
2013-14	910	1383	276	403.5	634	979.5
2014-15	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
2015-16	27	100	7	22	20	78
2016-17	2	7.5	2	7.5	0	0
Total	**7,756**	**9,299.17**	**2,788**	**3,562.59**	**4,968**	**5,736.58**
%	**100.00**	**100.00**	**35.95**	**38.31**	**64.05**	**61.69**

Source: SIDICO, July 2017

Activity-wise loan sanctioned between 2002-2017 shows that the highest loan sanctioned was made in 'business' (37.61 per cent) with least in 'industry' (1.65 per cent) (Table 4). However, intriguingly, least number of beneficiaries (4.36 per cent) and sanctioned loan amount (3.55 per cent) was found in agricultural loan, presenting a contradictory scenario compared to number of trained individuals available under the programme (15.09 per cent, Table 1). Similar observation is also discernible in relation to loan sanctioned for vehicles (5.68 per cent) when 19.49 per cent (Table 1) have been trained for Driver cum Tour Guide, to which SIDICO officials reasoned to lesser number of applicants and non-fulfilment of the eligibility criteria. The analysis of district-wise distribution of beneficiaries shows that highest numbers of beneficiaries are concentrated in the East district (36.40 per cent) while the North district recorded the least (6.94 per cent) (Table 5). However, if we contrast the number of beneficiaries with the population of

each district, the West district was found to have higher concentration of beneficiaries and the least was in the East district.

Table 4: Activity-wise sanctioned loan amount under CMSES (2010-17)

Activity Wise	Opening Balance as on 31st March, 2010		2010-11		2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		Cumulative		%	
	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)	No.	Amount (in lakhs)
Industry	118	84.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	15	0	0	4	12.5	0	0	128	112.3	1.65	1.21
Agriculture	275	230.9	28	42	5	13.5	13	17.5	17	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	338	329.9	4.36	3.55
Animal Husbandry	1255	989.55	174	261	38	61.6	99	127.25	39	58.5	0	0	2	5	0	0	1607	1502.9	20.72	16.16
Service	294	362.75	0	0	0	0	215	330.5	58	103.5	0	0	1	5	0	0	568	801.75	7.32	8.62
Business	2412	2491.33	180	270	64	98.25	71	96	180	229	0	0	10	29.5	0	0	2917	3214.08	37.61	34.56
Tourism	767	961.5	87	130.5	47	105.75	31	56.5	11	141	0	0	0	0	0	0	943	1395.25	12.16	15.00
Vehicle	0	0	0	0	45	185.16	38	89.25	84	226	0	0	9	28	0	0	176	528.41	2.27	5.68
Others	447	609.08	75	112.5	39	81.5	0	0	515	584	0	0	1	20	2	7.5	1079	1414.58	13.91	15.21
TOTAL	**5568**	**5729.91**	**544**	**816**	**238**	**545.76**	**467**	**717**	**910**	**1383**	**0**	**0**	**27**	**100**	**2**	**7.5**	**7756**	**9299.17**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Source: SIDICO, July 2017

Table 5: District-wise distribution of beneficiaries (Amount in lakh)

YEAR	EAST		WEST		NORTH		SOUTH		TOTAL	
	No.	Amount	No.	Amount	No.	Amount	No.	Amount	No.	Amount
2002-03	619	399	418	248	127	80	320	204.5	1484	931.5
2003-04	674	429	458	257.5	100	57.5	408	262	1640	1006
2004-05	11	8	21	31.5	NIL	NIL	28	17	60	38.5
2005-06	27	54.2	15	27	6	14	9	19.5	57	114.7
2006-07	3	12	1	2.5	2	4	1	3.5	7	22

2007-08	94	166.91	21	31.45	4	14.25	23	28.25	142	240.86
2008-09	391	643.75	269	432.9	33	51.5	222	376.2	915	1504.35
2009-10	283	421	595	865.5	102	153	283	414.5	1263	1854
2010-11	198	297	159	238.5	45	67.5	142	231	544	834
2011-12	84	189	34	80.97	14	39.6	106	236.19	238	545.76
2012-13	185	257	101	169.25	38	70	143	220.75	467	717
2013-14	244	394.5	252	370.5	65	124.5	349	493.5	910	1383
2014-15	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
2015-16	9	37.5	8	29	2	6	8	27.5	27	100
2016-17	1	3.5	1	4	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	2	7.5
Total	**2823**	**3312.36**	**2353**	**2788.57**	**538**	**681.85**	**2042**	**2534.39**	**7756**	**9299.17**
%	**36.40**	**35.62**	**30.34**	**29.99**	**6.94**	**7.33**	**26.33**	**27.25**	**100.00**	**100.00**
Population ratio as per 2011 census	**46.29%**		**22.43%**		**7.13%**		**24.15%**		**100.00%**	

Source: SIDICO, July 2017

Critical Appraisal of Livelihood School and CMSES

Both the schemes have considerably helped the Sikkimese youth in experimenting their hand in various small-scale entrepreneurship and generation of employment, and to empower themselves by enhancing their choices in earning a decent livelihood without solely depending on government jobs. In addition to the statistical analysis, field-based enquiries and observations were carried out with the help of SICB to assess both the achievements and challenges, through follow-up studies of those who have availed the schemes. Although number of cases were studied, however only two atypical cases will be highlighted in relation to the livelihood school.

Nirmala Sharma, trained in Agriculture and Horticulture programme from Yuksom-Tashiding livelihood school, West Sikkim, started her small-scale floriculture farm with 50,000 saplings of marigold. During the training programme, she was guided to specialise in floriculture of medicinal plants, particularly marigold, due to its high cultural and religious significance and substance in medicinal usages. Her farm was fruitful as the scope for market value was greater and it really helped her to have a respectable earning, sufficient enough to support her small family. Likewise, Somdutta Kaflay, who was trained successfully in the first batch of 'Driver cum Tour Guide' training programme from Khamdong-Singtam livelihood school, East Sikkim, was able to secure his

commercial vehicle license with the assistance extended by SICB. After that he was able to procure his first (used) commercial vehicle, without any financial help from the government, with the money that he had gathered over the years from the small grocery shop which his family runs and with the help of his relatives. He narrated with a content smile how he is now able to fulfil his dream – sending his children to English medium school and support his family without much hardship, as they are equipped with double income.

The, assessment of livelihood school and CMSES has helped to unearth some of the gaps in the process of implementation and operationalisation of the programmes, creating a mismatch between its objectives and effective actualisation. For instance, as discussed, many trainees exploited the training programme for the sake of the stipend alone, thus blocking the seats and stripping the benefits from reaching the deserving. Additionally, it was felt that livelihood schools proffered solely in the hand of private players under PPP model which need proper monitoring by the implementing agency. Major challenge with CMSES is accountability of the sanctioned loaned vis-à-vis whether the loan has been appropriately utilised for the stipulated purpose or not. The communiqué with the SIDICO officials brought to notice that there are issues of non-repayment of loans in many cases, resulting in financial paucity for future loan, evident from 2014-2015 financial year onward (Table 5). In dialogue with Panchayat members, many express their concerns that there are cases where the sanctioned loan has been utilised to fulfil personal and domestic needs and requirements instead of investment in productive enterprises. Therefore, SIDICO as an implementing nodal agency needs to develop ways for strict monitoring and follow-up.

To sum up, since these schemes are a commendable endeavour on the part of the state in empowering and creating a pool of human resource by skill development, an exhaustive evaluative study to assess the realisation of the objectives of the programme needs to be carried out to review how widely the programme has been successful. Accordingly, the programme can be reviewed to meet the gaps and loopholes and make it more relevant and context oriented for Sikkim.

Notes:

[i] The motto is emphasised to ensure fast track policies and actions for the marginalised sections of the society and to end extreme form of poverty ('Leaving no one behind' in action, 2017).

[ii] The view is expressed by those who have participated in the 55th meeting of the Commission for Social Development representing their country and have emphasised that the success of SDGs 2030 Agenda depends on empowering young people.

[iii] The observation was made by the Deputy Director of SICB, Mr. I.B.S. Yadav during interaction in the field visit at SICB, Karfectar, South Sikkim on 2015, July 30.

[iv] However, at present, the number of livelihood schools has been increased to forty-one as per the latest information published in the SICB website. Retrieved from http://sicbsikkim.in/?action=livelihood_schools

[v] Those who are holders of Sikkim Subject Certificate or Certificate of Identification are classified as Sikkimese for availing any employment or welfare programmes of the state.

[vi] The specified amount is as per 2016 information which was collected during the field visit.

[vii] The contribution of tourism in the state's GDP is estimated to be around 8 per cent (GOS 2015), providing roughly 12 to 15 thousand jobs as highlighted in the *State Tourism Policy 2016.* Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, GOS highlighted that in 2017 domestic tourists who visited Sikkim was 13,75,854 and 49,111 foreign tourists. Retrieved from
http://www.sikkimtourism.gov.in/Webforms/General/DepartmentStakeholders/TouristArrivalStats.aspx

[viii] Sikkim Subject Regulation Act of 1961 has given the status of Sikkim subject to the predominant communities' viz., Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepali; further, the Representation of People Act, 1974 has classified the Sikkimese population into Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha and Sikkimese of Nepali origin. Presently, the Sikkimese population are divided into the following social categories, namely, Bhutia-Lepcha (BL), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Scheduled Castes (SC), Other Backward Classes (OBC) which is further classified into OBC Central List and OBC State List, and 'General' category who are basically the plainsman of pan-Indian communities.

[ix] GDR is a simple conceptual tool developed to calculate the percentage difference between the female and male trainees.

[x] The maximum amount of rupees five lakhs is not very clear because though the SIDICO official and the official website (http://www.sidico.org/employment_scheme.htm) confirms the amount, but the official brochure of the scheme mentioned the amount of rupees ten lakhs (http://www.sidico.org/cmses_1.pdf).

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Select Ethnographies on Water in India: a Review

--- Kanaka Himabindu Pottumuthu
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Abstract

Water, an essential resource for survival, has become a subject of central attention in the contemporary debates on sustainability. Research on water from various disciplinary perspectives suggests that the issue is not about quantity but about management of the water resources. Social sciences, particularly anthropology and sociology, have contributed a lot to our understanding of water as a resource, grounded in the empirical method. This paper is a review of selected ethnographic studies from different disciplinary perspectives, viz. anthropology, geography, urban studies and cultural politics on water. Based on ethnographic studies of water in both urban and rural India, the authors argue for increased attention of Indian scholarship to 'infrastructures' like water from an ethnographic perspective.

Key words: Ethnography, Management, Rural, Urban, Water

Introduction

India had experienced rapid transformation in the last three decades after economic liberalisation. Out of the total population of 1210.2 million, in 2011, about 377.1 million live in urban areas and 833.1 million live in rural parts of the country (Census of India, 2011). This has created a big challenge in providing access to water to everyone. As per census 2011, 70.60% urban get potable water, whereas only 30.80% rural population get potable water. It is widely argued that, 'water is the most obvious environmental resource over which conflict seems likely and that water wars will be wars of the future' (Ashton, 2002 & Dimitrov, 2002, in Baviskar, 2008, p. 69). Though certain movements like 'Save the Kelo' movement (Kashwan & Sharma, 2008) have had an impact on not allowing rapid development of industries which makes certain areas drought prone, however, the more recent drought like situation in Shimla and Chennai in 2019 is emblematic of the larger problem of water crisis. Newspaper reports state that the local water

board in Shimla gave preference to certain prominent persons to receive water more regularly, compared to others. Since summer is the peak tourist season in Shimla, hotels and residents faced extreme water shortage. Photographs of people lining up for water were flashed across newspapers. It has been repeatedly stressed upon that water is an important resource that requires not just technological but social and political reflections. The Chennai water crisis has also recently made headlines internationally. These instances highlight the urgency for social scientists to engage with this pressing issue affecting humanity, using their strength in ethnographic methods. In this paper, we review a few select ethnographies on water in rural and urban India. It begins with discussion on the studies on water and related issues and then takes an empirical approach to water in urban settings.

Low (1996), an anthropologist who has worked extensively in urban areas in the United States, discusses at length on the under-theorisation of the city in anthropology. She points out that urban analysis has been mostly confined to disciplines like architecture and geography. Anthropologists have concentrated on every day practices of urban spaces but with only limited impact on the literature of the urban. Recently, however, anthropologists have begun to look at 'infrastructure' of the cities as an ethnographic object (Appel, Anand & Gupta, 2018). Cities are fiercely contested territories for access to various infrastructures like electricity, housing, transport and water. Appel, Anand & Gupta point out that attention needs to be given to exclusions and distribution. Access to water is one such matter. Access to good quality regular supply of water is an 'aspiration' (ibid., p. 3) and 'failure' to provide for this aspiration can be problematic and can lead to social tensions.

Several studies have been carried out on water in urban areas of India, a select few of which will be discussed here. A study on water consumption in Bangalore conducted by environmental scientist Vishal Mehta and others (Mehta, Goswami, Kemp-Benedict, Muddu & Malghan, 2013) argues that water consumption of a city demands assessment of three factors – justice, ecological sustainability and economic efficiency. The authors came up with water demand models based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative aspects in understanding domestic water consumption (ibid., p. 48). They collected one thousand and five hundred random samples, looking at demographic, hydrological, spatial and infrastructure variables. The study concludes that apart from resource flows, waste flows should also be taken into consideration, and, 'urban metabolism' is a problem from both

biophysical sustainability and social equity perspectives, and that it is important to portray the spatial variation in resource flows (ibid., p. 41).

Taking such large mixed method studies as an example, we argue that a more in-depth, perhaps small scale, but empirical study can offer great insight into various dimensions of water, be it usage or waste. In this paper, we summarise some of the key studies on water done from an ethnographic perspective and make a case that more such studies are needed in order for us to foreground 'infrastructure' as crucial for sociological and anthropological research in India.

Scholars like Baviskar (2007, p. 1) have pointed out that 'unlike land and other immovable resources such as forests, where the rights of ownership and control are easier to demarcate and defend, water is harder to track and regulate.' This would lead to socio-cultural and political problems, even war, if water is regulated arbitrarily. In her book Waterscapes (2007), Baviskar talks about the autochthonous tradition, which is the revival of the 'dying wisdom' in villages about ecological conservation as a form of village institutions and practices. The essays in this edited volume show that water is treated as a natural resource which is omnipresent and has to be viewed through a cultural lens. Cultural politics provides an analytical framework examining questions like power and inequality, conflicts and compromises, as they shape waterscapes. In the new millennium, water scarcity has enabled people to understand the significance of water and also resulted in various national and international forums around water.

Water management has been a challenge for future economic growth and ecological sustainability. Appel et al. (2018, p. 3) underscore that 'infrastructures are critical locations through which sociality, governance and politics, accumulation and dispossession, and institutions and aspirations are formed, reformed, and performed'. Following them, we have considered some of such thought provoking studies in this review. In the sections below, we will discuss ethnographic studies on water, conducted in both rural and urban contexts.

Water Ethnographies in Rural India

Lyla Mehta, a sociologist, and Anand Punja, a sustainability professional, discuss the Adivasi Tadvi community's relationship with water (in the form of the river Narmada) in their village of Malu, in Gujarat (Baviskar, 2007). Their study explains the gap in the understanding of water supply between the government

and the public. Residents of Malu were relocated by the government because of Sardar Sarovar dam project. While displacement and employment were of equal concern to the people, loss of good quality lake water for day-to-day usage was also a major worry. Water in Malu was *meetu* (sweet) and clean. Displacement resulted in a sense of declining well-being. In Malu, despite having multiple sources of water, there is no reliable supply. Tadvi people classified water into three types: *meetu pani* (sweet water, which is of the best quality), *moru pani* (bland water but can be consumed) and *kharu pani* (salty water which cannot be consumed). People emphasise fine aspects like hardness of water and effects like dryness. Both government and non-government organisations feel that the effort of women in procuring water has been reduced by the decrease in distance to water source. But people are nostalgic about taste and quality. Some old villagers even keep jars of Narmada water in their homes.

Gender dynamics takes an interesting turn in the village. Fathers-in-law help their daughters-in-law in fetching water, not out of sympathy, but due to the limited time available. Men feel that if they do not help, they might not have adequate water for daily chores. This is a positive sign of change in gender relations, with men engaging in hitherto traditional 'female' tasks. On the contrary, these conflicts around water become serious in larger households among sisters-in-law. The loss of the river had a tremendous impact on people's lives in Malu, especially for women. The river offered them a chance to step out of home and interact with other women, exchanging news and gossip. Women told officials that they prefer the 'drudgery' of their submerged village to the conditions in the resettlement site. Now they are far away from both their kin and the river. For Malu residents, the river is equivalent to mother. Constricting the river with dams is considered inappropriate. Narmada, for the Tadvis, is not just a river but an ecosystem which played an important role in their social structure and identity.

In such water ethnographies state policies have also come under scrutiny. Baviskar's (1995) work in Madhya Pradesh is a case in point. Her research was amongst the Bhilala community of the Narmada valley, who were both agrarian and cattle rearers. She looks at deforestation and land encroachment issues, apart from their agrarian cycle. The forest department, without understanding the community and their discourse, had forced their ideology on people in the name of development which led to their displacement. The *sangaths* (community meetings) had argued that the disputed lands are traditionally owned/cultivated/used by the community people. The Bhilala community's close

ties with nature is elaborated through a detailed description of *indal puja* (homage offered to a supernatural entity) and singing *gayana*. Gayana is a song which is sung by the people of Bhilala to express their relationship with nature. The displacement due to Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) caused tremendous anxiety amongst the Bhilala. Decisions taken by the state in the name of development without consulting the people and with no proper displacement plan resulted in agitations. For Baviskar (1995, p. 230) 'the challenge to development has come in the form of political movements of people who are ecologically, economically and culturally marginalised'.

Another account of such ethnography is by Mosse (2003), a social anthropologist, who writes on the complex relationship between water and society in Tamil Nadu, from a historical, sociological and regional dimension. Mosse shows that water resources are produced, used, and set meaning by flowing social and political relations. He argues that 'water – a productive and symbolic resource – is integral to the historical making of the regionally-specific institution' (Mosse, 2003, p. 4). Political institutions have been shaped by water flows and had legitimised them. In the past, water flows were gifted by medieval kings and chiefs, who also controlled them by creating landscapes which marked their role in the hydrology and thus naturalised it. Mosse opines that at the beginning of the 21st century water would play an important role in various levels of political processes. He also pointed out policy representations of imagined institutions of *kudimaramat* (irrigation repair works by villagers) custom with cultural practices of Ramnad and Sivaganga kings and *zamindars*, government officers and other villagers. He pointed out the flaws in environmentalists' arguments (like, 'standard environmental narrative' by Madsen (1992) and 'new traditionalist' discourse by Sinha, et.al (1998)) and also administrative ideas which are not realistic. In doing so, Mosse makes a note of water being a resource for agriculture and a medium between social and political organisations.

Technology is another trope that is often mentioned in scholarly studies on water. Examining irrigation technology from an ethnographic angle in Karnataka, Shah (2003) suggests that indigenous knowledge ultimately has had to give way to the more powerful scientific paradigms. In looking at tank designs and paddy cultivation in Bellary, Dharwad, Kolar and Bangalore, she shows through folk songs and stories that constructions of tanks have been labour intensive. The availability of space and cheap labour made tanks possible. But the tank's design has to interact with local social structure, which Shah terms as 'social design'.

Artisan castes named *vodda* contributed to the tank's design. A tank usually is full between July-October or latest by November-December. Water distribution is done during irrigation, especially during the nights. While the water flows through the gravity system, the firsts in line receive more and the last ones receive less, logically. Certain traditions, rules and regulations are involved in this process, but in the *atchakat* system, the tail end farmers receive water first. The new generation add-on of bore wells has been accepted eagerly by the farmers. Shah suggests that destroying water outlet structures to make new ones is like rejecting water distribution designs, in that particular tank in the Bombay-Karnataka region where she conducted fieldwork.

Continuing with the discussion on tradition and technology like Shah, Luisa Cortesi's study in North Bihar, conducted between 2006-2008 shows that contrary to what is expected, most residents have a very casual attitude towards water quality. Megh Pyne Abhiyan (MPA) is a network of grassroots organisations working on water management in North Bihar. MPA has been trying to get dug-wells back in the places where they have disappeared, replaced by hand pumps. Repeated floods in Bihar had resulted in high dependence on benefits and relief operations. The usage of hand pumps was widespread. A discourse emerged about hand pumps being modern and dug-wells being traditional/backward. Hand pumps were considered as 'agents of transaction in the relations between people and water' (Cortesi, 2014, p. 322). Though dug-well is a sustainable scientific concept and filters contaminants naturally, there was not much interest in MPA's work amongst the general public.

Water Ethnographies in Urban Setting

Now we focus on a couple of studies on water conducted in urban settings. Bjorkman (2015), a political scientist, worked on water in Mumbai city. She procured maps from the BMC (Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation) of the Maharashtra state government for her research about 'pipe politics'. After managing to get the Mumbai-East blueprints, she had conversations with senior engineers for weeks and months. The BMC survey was operational until the early 1990s. In the early 1980s, BMC faced the issue of privatisation of the BMC board. The idea of providing water meter connections to households was partially supported by people but political parties such as Shiv Sena opposed it. She focused on apartments which claim to have world-class facilities but lack attention to water problems. The BMC engineer mentions about the water

pressure with which he manipulated valve, commissioned or decommissioned water mains and made a cross-connection. While doing so, he tries not to compromise on water flows and affecting flow to another area. Bjorkman explains the strategies of acquiring maps to trace water management of a big city. She sees the idea of corruption, often seen as the villain in getting access to water in big cities, as mediating the relationship between people's everyday encounters with unsystematic, unpredictable water flow, and various kinds of knowledge about the forces, actions, and activities that might be influencing those flows. Her work shows that water flows happen with power, authority and 'hydraulic spectacle' (Bjorkman, 2015, p. 198); 'if water comes it's because of politics', she argues (ibid.).

More recently, Nikhil Anand, an anthropologist, has looked at water usage and politics in India, again in Mumbai. Anand (2015) has dealt with the interesting aspect of water leakage in Mumbai city. People in managerial positions point out water leakages from a financial perspective but there are technical constraints behind it as well. Residents in buildings have storage tanks, but in the city there are a lot of people living in slums and pavements who do not have access to such facilities. The issue then is about providing water to those deemed 'illegitimate' residents of a city. Anand mentions that his research motive is to analyse the pros and cons of the amount of water being lost or wasted in Mumbai. Water leakage, he points out, is not a problem occurring only in developing countries. For instance, approximately 30 per cent of New York city's water is estimated to be leaking (Murley, 2011 in Anand, 2015). Anand says that water leakages are way beyond the institutional or managerial control. At times the engineers also ignore the leakages for social or political reasons and feel that leakages are necessary for social equality and to avoid conflicts.

In another article, Anand focuses on people pressurising the system to draw attention to the 'materiality of water' (Anand, 2011, p. 544). The technology used in playing politics was termed by Anand as 'PoliTechnics' (ibid., p. 542). He discusses how a basic resource like water comes to define politics of a place. Anand's research on water issues stands as a benchmark in anthropology where we can identify the problems faced by citizens and suggest possible solutions to engineers in efficient management of water.

Conclusion

From the ethnographic studies conducted by researchers from various disciplines reviewed here, it is evident that water is a crucial aspect of living, with both social and political undertones. During an interview we conducted, Serish Nanisetti, the city editor of *The Hindu*, Hyderabad edition, said, 'water is equal to power'. Fernandes (2018) feels that rapid urbanisation and city-centric models have put pressure on water resources in India. Further, Mehta and Punja (as cited in Baviskar, 2007) rightly mention that water quality is not about the technical aspects but about taste, colour and odour. These aspects can be brought out only through in-depth ethnographic studies. The understanding of water is culture-specific and it is also important to get the adverse impact of supply logic. The authors cited here have shown that technology in itself cannot be seen as a solution in isolation; it has to go with the larger social dynamics. Traditional forms of water collection and distribution may have to be articulated differently if one has to counter modern technologies, whether it is hand pump or water filter. Development as understood in the form of dams result in other kinds of hardships for the displaced population. Using methods from other disciplines, such as looking at city administration maps and water supply chain, can also yield rich data if pursued from an ethnographic perspective. Corruption and leakage get new meaning when seen from this angle. The aim of this paper is to call for attention from social scientists working in and on India to ethnographically capture people's interactions with a resource that is political, economic and social.

This ethnographic review highlights the importance of water as a necessary infrastructure. Water is a political resource with multiple implications. Social scientists need new tools and ways of thinking to study water disputes. If we understand the role of history in analysing water disputes, it may be easy to analyse the present and plan the future. We end this review with a quote from our ethnographic study in Hyderabad during 2016-2017. One of the respondents in Hyderabad said, 'water is basic; if we manage water then no one will have any other complaints'. This statement briefly summarises the importance of water management in everyday discourse.

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Research in Progress: Resistance or Change? Manipur in the Neo-liberal Era

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Resistance or Change? Manipur in the Neo-liberal Era

--- Sapana Devi Karam

Abstract

Manipur has been considered as a conflict-ridden state of the Northeastern region of India. These issues and tensions are very complex and sometimes overlapping in nature. These conflicts in Manipur are rooted in territory, autonomy, separation and identity politics. Much of this assertion has been to protect 'cultural identity' as symbolised in dress, language and cultural tastes. Against this backdrop, the paper attempts to analyse the interplay between people and the conflict in the face of the neo-liberal period in Manipur. This paper examines the changes in cultural attitudes and cultural tastes owing to the forces of neo-liberalism, especially the changes taking place in the context of material and symbolic culture. In this context, the present study focuses on non-state actors and their activities towards restriction of outsider culture, especially the mainland India.

Key words: Conflict, Manipur, Middle class, Neo-liberal, Northeast

Introduction

This paper attempts to examine the changing socio-cultural aspects of Manipur in the neo-liberal period. Manipur has been considered a conflict-ridden state. The conflicts and tensions in Manipur are based on 'assertion of ethnic identity and protection of territoriality, demands for a separate sovereign state, and autonomy within the state' (Raile, 2012, p. 56). Much of this assertion has been to protect 'cultural identity' as symbolised in dress, language and cultural tastes. Thus, owing to this socio-political situation, the state has high presence and dominance of security and state military apparatus (McDuie-Ra, 2016).

However, the nature and forms of conflicts in Manipur have been changing. In comparison to 1960s and 1970s, the present scenario of insurgency's attitude towards the demand for independent sovereign state of Manipur has been blurred. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, tribals who were supporting the struggle for the sovereignty of Manipur, have started to mobilise themselves in demand for their

territorial rights (as separate area) and 'integration' movement of Nagas (with Nagas of Nagaland and Kuki for Kukiland) (Hanjabam, 2013, p. 110; Goswami, 2011). On the other hand, such sentiments seem to have gone away from 'people's mind' (mostly Meiteis) as Manipur is more 'integrated' into the mainland India 'culturally' than before.

Against this backdrop, the paper attempts to analyse the interplay between people and the conflict in the wake of the neo-liberal economy in Manipur and examine the changes in cultural attitudes and tastes owing to the forces of neo-liberalism. The focus of the present study is on the activities of non-state actors towards restriction of outside culture, especially from the mainland India.

The main focus of the study is the Imphal area. Methodologically[i], it is based on both primary and secondary data, collected for a study on education in Manipur. The data was collected from different stakeholders using interviews. This includes academicians, student union leaders, journalists, government retired officials, active service personnel and social activists. Snowball sampling has been employed in the data collection. In addition, observation method was also employed in the study. The data was collected within the period of 2016 to 2018 at periodic intervals.

Neo-liberalism and Manipur

With the opening of the national market to the global market economy in the early 1990s, the 'neo-liberal era' brought many changes in India. Privatisation in different sectors of society has increased rapidly. Defining neo-liberalism, Harvey says, 'Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes human wellbeing can be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurship, freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade' (Harvey, 2007, p. 2). The role of the state is to guarantee the proper functioning of the markets with minimal intervention (Kotz, 2000). According to Steven Ward, 'under neo-liberalism, people are situated as less socially connected citizens of the state, and they are more situated as more as self-interested, competitors, self-actualised entrepreneurs and rational consumers in a dynamic and ever-changing global marketplace' (Ward, 2012, p. 2). The neo-liberal era emphasises the role of the market in all sectors of the society including education (ibid.). Consequently, private enterprises in the sector of education and health are on the rise (Nayak,

2014). This new economic configuration was subsumed under the term globalisation (Harvey, 2007) and now there is no region where globalisation has not penetrated, and Manipur too has not escaped its clutches.

It is interesting to discuss the case of Manipur because 'attention to post-liberalism in the borderland has been limited owing to the dominance of security and state-led development in its governance' (McDuie-Ra, 2016, p. 144). This could also be a reason for the late influx of neo-liberal market forces in the state. In the past, even at the turn of the century, some underground outfits have propagated resistance to anything 'Indian' and restrictions to acculturation of Indian values (Singh, 2010). For instance, banning of Hindi movies in theatres, telecast of Hindi language programmes on TV and Hindi songs in public places since 2000 (ibid.), even shutting down of showing Hindi movies in cable television (though this is now relaxed at present for home viewing, but not in public spaces like cinema theatres), discouraging wearing of mainland dresses, especially North Indian dress code such as *saree, salwar*, and western outfits such as jeans, skirt (by women), and so on and so forth, which they considered a threat to traditional Manipuri culture (Hussain, 2001) as it 'undermines Manipuri cultural values' (Bhaumik, 2009). However, the restriction on dress code was ephemeral.

In the initial period of such restriction, it was very common to collect and burn down the CDs containing Hindi films, breaking of music system if someone was listening to Hindi songs in public vehicles or personal car. Hindi films and music was totally shut from being displayed in public space (Singh, 2010). For people, it was also one of the fears of violence, and threat if someone dares to play Hindi music or films in public. Due to such ban on Hindi films in the state, a few cinema hall owners have converted their cinema halls to shopping plazas (Naorem, 2006).

As a result of such restriction on Hindi entertainment programmes, three effects have been seen – first, South Indian entertainment programmes such as Telugu, Malayalam or Kannada movies have started selling in CD parlours for viewing on home TV with English sub-titles; second, interestingly, Korean movies, soap operas and their pop culture have become popular in Manipur; and third, Manipur digital film industry rapidly developed and expanded its production (Naorem, 2006). However, the former has not gained popularity among the people as much as the second, especially among the youth. McDuie-Ra (2012) stated that youth in

Imphal are heavily influenced by the cosmopolitan lifestyle of East Asian countries such as Korea and Japan and also the Western culture as introduced by Korean/Japanese movies and soap operas. This shows the 'divergence from Indian popular culture (Bollywood, cricket, etc.)' (ibid., p. 61). Korean movies and their drama series have become a favourite form of entertainment, especially among the youth (Das, 2014). Even other states of Northeast India where Hindi was not banned, such as Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, have witnessed the spread of the Korean wave (Kuotsu, 2013). It could be considered as an after-effect of banning Hindi movies and this has been successful because of the technological changes in telecasting through satellites in the early neo-liberal period.

Restriction on Hindi entertainment programmes shows the role of non-state actors, their share in power (McDuie-Ra, 2016) and their influence in the state. Although there has been restriction and resistance to so-called mainland attire and entertainment, especially Hindi programmes, there is no such strong case in terms of learning of the Hindi language in schools as part of their education. It could be argued that the resistance conducted by the interest groups or underground outfits was specifically to express cultural non-integration; but resistance to learning Hindi is not seen as a threat so that Manipuris who migrate are not at a disadvantage for not knowing Hindi. The resistance is not to get 'exploited' (financially and symbolically) but at the same time not to handicap the people of Manipur in terms of cultural capital (by allowing them to learn Hindi). All these are portrayed as an attempt to protect the interest of the Manipuris.

Nevertheless, such resistance and restrictions has not spread uniformly in the state. Being a multi-ethnic diverse state, different resistance imposed by non-state or any interest group, has different effects on different sections of the society. The above instances of banning Hindi entertainment programmes have more effect in the valley areas especially with Meitei ethnic groups. Such practices have been strongly imposed in the valley areas, because bulk of the population of the state live in the valley areas; thus it is the centre of political power as well (as most of the State Legislative Assembly seats are from the valley). Hence non-state Meitei actors were in the forefront of asserting their power and influence through such means. Indeed, this could be seen as fear of assimilation with the dominant culture, especially of Hindi heartland. In the hill areas, resistance did not take such form, partly because the tribals wanted to assert their culture vis-à-vis the Meiteis.

Neo-liberal penetration in Manipur has come about only in the second decade of this century, perhaps owing to the negative image of the state being conflict-ridden. Now perhaps the image is changing owing to the political view that movements of 'resistance' and 'secession' are because of lack of job opportunities and 'development' (Bhaumik, 2009; Dutt, 2003). The central government has given a push in this regard with its Act East Policy (Dubey, 2015).

Manipur at Present: Resistance or Change?

Regardless of issues and tensions in the state, gradually Manipur has started participating and entering into the mainstream scenario, especially in material and symbolic culture, with the existing resistance unconsciously taking a backseat. Gradually, commercial activities have been slowly penetrating into the state in the last few years, especially since the early 2000s. Commercial activities have emerged in the valley. Recently, a number of mini shopping malls have also come up (Mamcy Mall, Bazar India, Vishal Shopping Mart, etc.). It was in 2013 that a multi-national brand ADIDAS landed in Imphal in Mamcy Mall and then later followed by other brands (Khangenbam, 2015). There were no food chains like KFC, McDonalds in the state but in the beginning of 2019, a KFC restaurant has opened up in Imphal city. This is the emerging new cultural taste for the Manipuri people, especially among the urban elite and growing middle class people. As a result, it has changed the culture of consumption in the state. Thus, it has become a cultural symbol of the upper middle class and for the aspirant middle class. A respondent stated that till recently, the well-off families were conscious that if they indulged in such consumption, non-state members would come and place a demand (in form of a letter) for money (usually in terms of lakhs). However, such things are not happening anymore and people appear to have come out of that fear.

In this sense, Manipur is no more marginal in material and symbolic culture as compared to other mainland states. The emerging consumerist urban middle class culture is visible rapidly. Big multi-nationals are making their presence felt. For many of the elite and middle class who have had such taste from outside Manipur, now Imphal is part of the global elite consumer culture. Imphal has become well known as an important centre for medical tourism, especially for those in Myanmar; and with the opening of international air services to Myanmar, this integration is only growing to get deeper (*Straits Times*, 2019). A few educated people have started establishing private schools. Many of them have established

private coaching institutions and other commercial activities in the state. Such penetration has been helped by young people who have been educated or have worked in mainland cities and brought such mainland traits and culture. As a result, the forces of neo-liberalism have been expanding in the state.

Indeed, technology and media have contributed towards bringing this transition in Manipur as well, with the introduction of smart phones, private cable network, and more so with the Indian government's Look East Policy (re-launched in 2014 as 'Act East Policy') [ii] . Recently many billboards, a number of banners, advertisements on mainstream Indian television channels, including in Hindi, have become popular, which was not possible till recently. McDuie-Ra observes about Imphal that 'the frontier city has been connecting slowly through symbolic gestures such as the Indian-ASEAN car rally and with the opening of the land border with Myanmar and the arrival of national and international capital and its trappings such as billboards, advertisement, and the consumer goods' (McDuie-Ra, 2016, p. 144). Further, he states that the local people and their practices have been reshaped, along with their connectivity to other regions, despite the politics of 'belonging' and political situation in the state.

In addition, we cannot ignore the role of media, including both visual and print media. Recently, the Northeastern states of India have been the focus of national media, and even that of Bollywood (Hindi film industry). There can now be seen a representation of Northeast Indian, including Manipur in Bollywood films. Films such as *Mary Kom*, *Jagga Jasoos*, *Uri*, and *Penalty* are few such examples of Bollywood films which have aspects of Northeast and also Manipur in their narration. The underground outfits have not yet accepted the release of such films in theatres in Manipur, even though the films are more or less based on Manipur and Northeast India. However, these reflect the newly growing connectivity with mainland India.

Interestingly, modern technology, especially private DTH (direct to home) TV, has increased the accessibility to watch films without having to go to theatres. Big private players like Tata Sky, Dish TV bring Bollywood films to the TV sets at home, while streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc. bring it directly to the individual smart phones. These technologies have changed the way films and visual entertainment is watched and consumed. These technologies have circumvented the ban on Hindi films and programmes in public space in such a way that it has become infructuous. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that

traditional attempts of resistance to Bollywood and Hindi entertainment programmes are not much successful now; technology has broken down the fence of such resistance. Thus, now, it is not surprising that many young people from Manipur are also participating in mainland (Hindi heartland) TV entertainment programmes and talent shows, such as dance and singing competition, and other entertainment activities, which was unimaginable until the recent past. However, these Manipuri singers or young emerging singers have to face threats from the underground groups for singing Hindi songs[iii].

On the other hand, many sports players are coming out and playing for India and earning national recognition, especially in sports such as boxing, weightlifting and football. Mention can be made especially of women sportsperson MC Mary Kom (six times world women's boxing champion), and Bala Devi Ngangom in football (team captain of Indian women football). Mary Kom was nominated to Rajya Sabha because of her achievements in boxing. Because of the rich sports culture in the Northeast, especially Manipur, the National Sport University has also been established in Manipur in 2018.

The education sector is also one such domain which has been affected by neo-liberalism. Private educational institutions, especially professional colleges are increasing; private higher secondary schools are flooded in the state, especially in the urban areas in the valley. In this contemporary era, people are consciously or unconsciously being oriented towards the economy rather than the community. This can be seen with many new associations and organisations which are emerging. For instance, the parents' association for exemption of fees for those months when teaching does not take place due to long duration of closure of schools. On the other hand, teachers' have made the counter-demand against the school authority that the demands of parents should not affect their salary and so on[iv]. Such a scenario indicates the logic of individual economic interest taking precedence ahead of societal or community concerns.

People who have resources are the ones enjoying such educational opportunities and in turn expand their social capital, developing a new taste of urban culture and becoming a symbol of middle class culture. The emerging middle class consumerist culture has considerably reshaped Imphal and Manipur.

Conclusion

The present social and cultural landscape in Manipur has experienced rapid change in comparison to around ten years back. Different national as well as international brands for clothes, jewellery, furniture, automobile stores have flooded in and around Imphal city, such as in the areas like Thangmeiband and Sangaiprou-Airport road. This leads to a change in the symbolic capital and socio-culture of Manipur. Manipur is no longer at the margin as far as consumerism is concerned, as it is no different to other cities in India. For instance, in the near past, going out in the evening was not considered safe, owing to frequent security checking by the state forces or due to unfavourable incidents, especially among the youth. But now-a-days, one can easily find people coming out in the evening for leisure time. Shops also stay open till late in the evening. In fact in the last three to five years, going out in the night has become fashionable in the areas in and around Imphal city.

In terms of development, Northeastern states including Manipur, are considered to be lagging behind compared to mainland India (Sharma, 2012). It is also believed that it is the lack of development that has given rise to the conflicts in the region. So, the major role of the Indian government is now to focus on the development of the Northeast region; hence, one witnesses significant government activism in the planning for connecting the state with the railway network, upgrading the status of the Imphal airport to international airport, establishing international market at Moreh, Indo-Myanmar border, construction of Asian Highway (Dubey, 2014), taking Asian car rally through Imphal to other parts of Asia and so on (McDuie-Ra, 2016).

However, an important question to be posed is that will this kind of development finally bring peace to Manipur and will it lead to the resolution of all the conflicts? Though people want development in the state, the local people have a fear of the influx of outsiders. Thus, development is always double-edged. People have shown fear of assimilation with so-called Hindi-land culture and there is also a deep concern about the influx of outsiders, as there is a fear that they may become a minority in their own homeland in near future. As a result, the demand for re-implementation of the Inner Line Permit System (ILP)[v] and demand for recognition of the Meiteis as a Scheduled Tribe has been raised.

It is yet to be seen whether neo-liberalism will result in greater acceptance of the mainland culture of Hindi speaking regions, or whether it will manifold the existing tensions involving the Inner Line Permit System and the demand for Scheduled Tribe status to the Meiteis, or will it result in the emergence of new conflicts? Manipur is in a period of transition, despite laden with conflicts and various social tensions. Gradually, the neo-liberal economy has made significant penetration into the socio-cultural landscape of the state, generating new values of individualism and consumerism, and thereby undermining the resistance movement of the non-state actors against contemporary Indian middle class consumerist cultural values.

Notes:

[i] This paper is based on my ongoing PhD work.

[ii] Look East Policy was launched by former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in 1991. The main aim of the policy is for economic integration by strengthening the ties between India and ASEAN countries. In 2014, the NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi re-launched the policy as 'Act East Policy' at East Asia and India Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). See, Sajjanhar, A. (2016). Taking stock of India's 'Act East Policy'. *ORF Issue Brief,* (142).

[iii] Manipuri Girl Trolled for Singing Hindi Song at Indian Idol. *The Shillong Times* (January, 2017). Retrieved from http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2017/01/04/manipur-girl-trolled-for-singing-hindi-song-at-indian-idol/

[iv] On 23rd July, 2009, a 27 year old man was killed in an alleged fake encounter; and a bystander, a pregnant woman was also shot dead in Imphal city. Owing to this, schools were forcefully shut down by the All Manipur Students' Union (AMSU) for more than three months. Owing to prolonged shut down of schools, some parents' association put forward the demand that school should exempt the fees of those months for which teaching has not taken place. On the other hand, the private school teachers' association owing to the fear of cutting down of their salary, in turn, demanded to the school authorities that the issue of exemption of fees should not affect their salary. (Private School Teachers not given Salary. *E-pao* (January, 2009). Retrieved from http://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=17..271009.oct09)

[v] The Inner Line Permit System is the permit system under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 Act which has been implemented in some Northeast states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland (Government of India, 1873). According to official Gazette, there are prohibitions to all citizens from other regions of India to reside or pass through boundary of such regions without a valid pass issued by the relevant authority under the regulation. Manipur in the past had a well-regulated policy that was functional under permit systems and Foreigners Department to maintain check and balance towards entry and exit of outsiders. In 1949, when Manipur merged into India, the transit and exit system of Manipur was removed from Manipur on 18th November, 1950.

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Research in Progress: Adivasis, the Fifth Schedule and Urban Development: a Study of Greater Ranchi

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Adivasis, the Fifth Schedule and Urban Development: a Study of Greater Ranchi

--- Aashish Khakha

Abstract

The Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution was created for special administration of tribal areas to prevent land alienation through land transfer regulation, where no land or immovable property in these areas can be transferred by way of sale or lease to persons other than the tribals/Adivasis. However, in Jharkhand, a state which falls in the Fifth Scheduled Area, when state-led urban development projects are carried out, in the name of 'progress' and 'development', one finds a blatant violation of not just the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution but also of historical laws such as the Chhotanagpur Tenancy (CNT) Act (1908). One such example of development is the creation of the new capital township of Jharkhand known as 'Greater Ranchi'. This township is being built on the outskirts of the city, in the Dhurwa area, on former Heavy Engineering Corporation Limited (HECL) land. This land had been given by the state to the corporation, after displacing the Adivasi people living in the area. This paper looks into the various contestations surrounding the urban development of Greater Ranchi and examines its impact on the above-mentioned laws and the Adivasi society living in that area.

Key words: Adivasis, Fifth Schedule, Greater Ranchi, Jharkhand, Scheduled Tribes, Urban Development

The Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution: the Case of Jharkhand

By the early 20th century, following World War-I, when the British realised that they would have to leave India, they came out with the Government of India Act (Govt. of India Act, 1919)[i]. They began to form Councils, such as Bengal, Bihar and others, for participation of Indians in governance. It was during this phase that the Areas under the Scheduled districts, which were predominantly inhabited by tribals, came to be described as the Backward Tracts. This later came to be rechristened as the Excluded Areas and the Partially Excluded Areas. The areas

with the Inner Line Permit (ILP) came to be known as The Excluded Areas. The rest where there was some presence of the non-tribals were referred to as The Partially Excluded Areas. After Independence, during the Constituent Assembly Debates[ii], the Excluded Areas and Partially Excluded Areas of the Northeastern region became the Sixth Schedule Areas and the Partially Excluded Areas in the rest of India came to be known as the Fifth Schedule Areas. The Fifth Scheduled Areas were stated to be administered through the Governor and the Tribes Advisory Council (TAC). They had the power to bring about peace and good governance and prohibit the sale of tribal land to non-tribals. This provision was made following the recognition by the national leadership for protection and special administration of these areas. These were due to three key characteristics namely: distinct cultural features, vulnerability to external exploitation and development gaps between tribal people in comparison to non-tribal people (Xaxa, 2008, p. 65).

Following the provisions of the Fifth Schedule, the states which came under this jurisdiction introduced laws restricting the alienation of tribal land to non-tribals. Jharkhand, which was carved out of erstwhile Bihar in 2000 (Tirkey, 2002, p. 3) did not enact such laws, as there were already such provisions in the form of the Chhotanagpur Tenures Act (1869) (which was further amended as the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act, 1908, after the Birsa Munda rebellion of 1895-1900)[iii]. And so was the case with the Santhal Pargana Act (1876) (which was brought about after the Santhal Hul rebellion of 1855-57[iv], and rechristened as the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act in 1949).

Notwithstanding such historical and legal provisions, there has been continuing violation of constitutional and legal provisions. Alienation of tribal land from tribes to non-tribes and from tribes to state has accelerated in post-independence India. Under the name of nation building and development, thousands of acres of tribal land were taken away for various projects such as power dams, irrigation, mines and industries across India, and especially in Jharkhand. It is around these projects that most of the urbanisation process in Jharkhand has taken place. Jharkhand has been witness to rapid urban growth in about two decades. It provides an apt case for understanding the process of urbanisation in tribal India.

Urbanisation in Jharkhand

In 1901, the urban population of Jharkhand was 1,17,975 comprising of 13 towns. It constituted 1.94 per cent of total urban population of India (Harshwardhan & Tripathi, 2015, p. 69). The urban population in Jharkhand, as elsewhere in India, emerged mainly out of administrative centres required for effective administration of the region. However, a few of the towns had grown out of economic activity which had to do with extraction of minerals, mainly coal. The need for the transportation of minerals led to the introduction of railways which gave further boost to urbanisation. In fact, it was the access to minerals that led to the setting up of a modern industry in the form of the Tata Iron and Steel Company. This gave spurt to new economic activity leading to urbanisation and making of the city of Jamshedpur, which is the largest city in Jharkhand.

The character of urbanisation in post-independence India has moved along the same lines as in colonial period. It has developed around mines and industries that are invariably linked to exploitation of mineral resources. Alongside these, there has been steady growth and expansion of administrative centres, resulting in the push of the urbanisation process in Jharkhand. In 1951, there were 35 towns, which meant an increase of 22 towns in comparison to 13. Jharkhand saw the establishment of a number of industrial and other infrastructure projects, especially power and dams. The industrial projects were greatly contingent on minerals which Jharkhand has in abundance. The site of these economic activities attracted a large number of labour forces from outside and paved the way for the emergence of these places as towns. In fact, all important towns in Jharkhand are centred on industry. Since most of these projects came between mid-1950s and 1970s, Jharkhand experienced an accelerated process of urbanisation during this phase.

Since 1981, there was however decline in the growth which continued till 2001. But post 2001, there has been rapid growth in urban population. In 2004-05, 11 per cent of the working population in Jharkhand were engaged in mining and quarrying, utility services and in construction sites. This has increased to 23 per cent in 2009-10. The total population of the state grew by 22 per cent during 2001-11, but the growth of the urban population had been much higher at 33 per cent during this period (ibid., p. 70). In 2001, the share of urban population to the total population of Jharkhand was 22.4 per cent, which increased to 24.05 per cent in 2011. Here we see that it witnessed unprecedented urbanisation in the decade

2001-2011. Paradoxically, however, the tribal population, the natives of the region, have been missing from this process of industrialisation and urbanisation. As per the 2001 census, they formed 9.8 per cent of the tribal population. Interestingly even in 2011, their share remains the same though, as noted above, there has been rapid urbanisation during this phase[v].

According to 2011 census, there are 228 towns and urban agglomerations in Jharkhand. Yet most of the districts where these towns are located have very low level of urbanisation. Only four of the districts in the state are highly or moderately urbanised. These are East Singhbhum with 55 per cent urban population, Dhanbad with 52 per cent, Bokaro with 45 per cent, and Ranchi with 35 per cent urban population (ibid.). This clearly shows that the tribal land was already being exploited despite the CNT and SPT acts being brought in.

Urbanisation of Ranchi

Christopher Lakra mentions that 'the township of Ranchi itself has grown out of a number of tribal villages. In this sense Ranchi could be called a "tribal city"' (Lakra, 1999, p. 19). The Draft Master Plan for Greater Ranchi[vi], which was framed by 1964, states that, 'Ranchi, the Headquarters of the Chhotanagpur Division is fast growing into the most industrialised town in the eastern region. The most important phase of development of Ranchi started with the decision to locate such important undertakings as Heavy Engineering Corporation (HEC), Headquarters of Hindustan Steel Limited and National Coal Development Corporation. The rapid growth of the city is apparent from the multifarious and sporadic activities going around in and around the town. The activities in the colonies of the Heavy Engineering Corporation and Hindustan Steel etc. are well planned but the private building activities present a chaotic state of affairs. Some ancillary industries are coming up without much regard to well recognised zoning regulations. It is obvious, therefore, that a Master Plan for Ranchi should be drawn up to channelise the growth of the town in accordance with the best-known planning principles.' (Urban & Rural Development in India, 2005, p. 362).

Further it mentions that, 'During the decade 1951-1961, the population of Ranchi town showed an increase of 31.50% that is, from 1,06,840 to 1,40,253. The rate of growth is not commensurate with the potentialities of the town – firstly, because the town suffered in this decade due to the shifting of the Eastern Command Headquarters from Ranchi to Lucknow; secondly, because, full impact of

industrial growth was not felt until 1961. There has been lately a marked trend for the rural population to migrate into urban areas and this influx is likely to continue for quite some time in the near future. These developments are going to increase pressure on urban lands and other civic amenities of the town. All these factors have been taken into consideration while drawing up the Master Plan for Ranchi.' (Thakur, Sinha, Prasad, Sharma, Pratap, Mandal & Singh, 2005, p. 362).

The Case of Greater Ranchi

The acquisition of land for the development of Greater Ranchi came about soon after the establishment of Jharkhand as an autonomous state. The state was carved out from the Adivasi areas of the Chhotanagpur and the Santhal Parganas, in the southern part of Bihar, on 15th November, 2000. The birth of this state was the culmination of the century old Jharkhand Movement, which advocated for an autonomous state for the Adivasis of the Chhotanagpur Plateau (Munda & Mullick, 2003, p. 4). This is the longest such movement for an autonomous state in India. After its creation, Ranchi was chosen to be the capital of the state, as it was not just the centre of the Jharkhand Movement, but also housed key official government office buildings. The development of Greater Ranchi came about because, according to the planners of the city, it was observed that the holding capacity of the existing city, which includes the Ranchi Municipal Corporation (RMC), and the Census Towns (CT) of Kanke, Arsande, Ara, Bargarwa and Tundiul, had almost reached saturation level. The establishment of a new township was seen necessary by the state to make room for future citizens and prevent undesirable developments in the already congested city limits. As per state records, the land to the government was allotted from 2004 onwards from the land allotted to Heavy Engineering Corporation Limited (HECL) in the Dhurwa area of Ranchi. The land, measuring around a sprawling 7,200 acres, was itself gifted to HECL by the Nehru government in 1958, by displacing 23 Adivasi villages. There was further displacement of Adivasi villages from 1959 to 1973 by the then Bihar governments to make more space for HECL.

A Soviet-era inspired industrial complex, HECL was envisioned as a 'mother of industries' for producing heavy machinery, equipment and components for steel, cement, aluminium, mining, mineral processing and power industries. This was supposed to be the face of the 'development of a new India' (Vidyarthi, 1970, p. 30). However, the company grew below par in the subsequent years and did not take off as expected by the state. A large portion of the land acquired by HECL

was lying vacant and unused. This area was 'given back' to the Jharkhand government for the development of the new state capital known as 'Greater Ranchi'. The question here remains, 'Development for whom?'

In an interview[vii] with two senior architects of the Ranchi Building Construction Department, it was said that HEC was Nehru's dream base for an industrial India. This was supposed to be the 'mother industry' to every other industrial unit in the country. Around 7,000 acres of Adivasi land was acquired in the name of setting up the HEC unit. This was done in collaboration with Russia, and was even modelled on the Soviet industrial plants which had impressed Nehru. At that time, Jharkhand was part of Bihar. When the bifurcation of Bihar came about, Jamshedpur was the initial choice for the capital of Jharkhand. It was so as it was the most prosperous area of the state and hub of the Tata industries. But since Ranchi was the district capital of Southern Bihar and a major administrative centre since the British times, it was decided to make Ranchi the capital of Jharkhand. Economically, Ranchi was a predominantly undeveloped area. When the bifurcation of Bihar took place, a lot of *dikus*[viii] flooded into Jharkhand as the economic prospects were more in the new state, as compared to Bihar. They illegally took over tribal land and set up several real estate properties in Ranchi. After that they slowly penetrated the countryside and set up small shops, taking over the tribal land there as well. This was a blatant violation of the CNT Act. For this they should have been charged and dealt with; but nothing of the sort happened. It is in this backdrop, that the issue of Greater Ranchi comes into picture. This was the dream project of the first Chief Minister of Jharkhand, Babulal Marandi. He had announced the benefits of having a new capital for the state. The architects reflect that, what was the purpose of building a new capital when one existed already?

This acquisition of land by the state for the purpose of creating Greater Ranchi has raised intense contestations from the original landowners of the area. Dr.Vasavi Kiro, member and co-founder of the Indigenous Women India Network (IWIN), has been one of the most vocal opponents of this state-sponsored land grab mission. She says that the Greater Ranchi project is the biggest state violation of the Chhotanagpur Tenancy (CNT) Act in Jharkhand. The CNT Act was instituted in 1908 and is one of several laws provided by the Constitution to safeguard Adivasi lands from being sold to non-Adivasis. The law was brought about by the British government after the Birsa Munda Movement to govern Adivasi land issues and prevent Adivasi land alienation to outsiders (Britishers

and non-Adivasis). In the post-colonial era, it was meant to prevent foreseeable dispossession, and to preserve the Adivasi identity. However, as Dr.Kiro points out, more than 10 crore Adivasis have been displaced in the last 70 years of Indian Independence in the name of 'development'.

The situation has gotten worse with the coming of the BJP government in 2014. In December 2014, after the coming of the Raghubar Das government, the contract for construction on the Greater Ranchi site was given to Ram Kripal Singh (RKS) Construction Private Limited, a private construction firm. On 9th June, 2015, a local newspaper reported in a small column that the foundation stone of the new township will be laid on the site on 12th June, 2015. There was a protest outside the Jharkhand Assembly on the next day. From the narratives on the ground it has come to light that, on 11th June, around 200 police personnel and 16 magistrates descended upon the site at Dhurwa. They began demanding to know from the people that where are the people who are protesting? 'Meeting kahan hai?' they would ask. On 12th June, 2015, at 7:00 A.M. the government authorities, including the Chief Minister, quietly came to the inaugural site for the foundation stone to be laid. However, around 500 people had gathered at the site to protest the inauguration. There were also several political leaders from across the political spectrum who had come in solidarity and protest. When the Chief Minister asked what the issue was, the villagers said that he had assured them a day before that he would not inaugurate the site. They informed about several illegal people who have come from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and have settled in the land and are also claiming rehabilitation from the government. 'Do you still want to live like Adam?' was the Chief Minister's reply.

The same day a huge procession of over 5,000 people armed with traditional weapons and farm tools and shouting slogans against the government went all over Ranchi. They came from over 18 villages of the Namkum, which also falls in the Greater Ranchi area. They first assembled at Rajendra Chowk under the aegis of Greater Ranchi Pariyojana Sangharsh Samiti (GRPSS). They then headed through Main Road and Shaheed Chowk to reach the Ranchi district collectorate at Kutchery Chowk, where they continued to protest for a while before submitting a petition to the then Ranchi Deputy Commissioner, Manoj Kumar. As Kumar was not in office, the petition was accepted by his office staff. Prafulla Linda, convener of GRPSS said in an interview on the same day that, 'There is no guarantee that peace will prevail tomorrow. Within Namkum block, the government has decided to acquire 39,682 acres under Greater Ranchi Project. All

these acres are fertile land. Agriculture is our mainstay. Land is our identity. Don't make us landless.' An Adivasi farmer said that, 'Last month, government officials came to survey our land. But we were not allowed to even visit our plots. The government is trying to acquire land in a hush-hush manner.' In fresh revelations, in a series of documents, which Dr.Kiro uncovered with the aid of Right to Information (RTI), she unravels the extent of corruption which has burgeoned with the growth of the Greater Ranchi project.The following table provides the details of the villages whose land has been proposed to be taken over for the development of Greater Ranchi:

Village Name	Total Land (acres)	Available Land (acres)	Proposed Transfer of Land for the CISF (acres)	Proposed Transfer of Land for the Government of Jharkhand (acres)
Ani	612.68	583.69	-	583.69
Murmu	685.40	670.90	-	560.90
Kute	395.61	369.31	110.00	321.31
Labed	72.37	72.37	48.00	72.37
Tiril	564.03	551.48	-	551.48
Bhusur	405.06	59.69	-	59.69
Jagannathpur	984.04	377.73	-	107.45
Total	4865.15	3236.95	158.00	2256.89

(Here HEC will be left with 270.28 acres of land in Jagannathpur Village)

Source: RTI filed by Dr. Vasavi Kiro

What we find here is that the government has systematically mapped out the areas proposed to be taken over for the CISF and the state itself. By doing so, it intends to displace the original Adivasi inhabitants in the name of 'development.' Binit Mundu, member of the Adivasi Women's Network, points out a critical point here that there can be no Municipality within a PESA area. Legally, the Municipality Extension to PESA has not yet been done. By this regard, the Ranchi Municipality is an illegal body set up to manipulate land away from Adivasis and give it to the non-Adivasis.

As of now 600 Adivasi families from these villages have filed cases of land grab in the Jharkhand High Court (which will also be shifted to the site). As per the new Land Acquisition Act (2013)[ix], if tribal land has been taken away for the purpose of development and no work has been done on it for 5 years, the land has to be legally transferred back to tribals. A legal roadblock that has come in the way is the Supreme Court judgement of March 2018, which says that High Courts cannot deal with cases pertaining to the new Land Transfer Act, specifically with clause 24 (2) of the Act which deals with the lapse of the transfer period of the land. This combined with the recent Supreme Court judgement of 21st February, 2019, which orders the forcible eviction of tribals and forest dwellers in 16 states, raises serious questions about the judiciary's role in aiding the land grabbing mechanism of the state. What comes out very clearly in the case of Greater Ranchi is not only the sheer violation of the CNT Act, but also of the Fifth Schedule, PESA as well as the new Land Transfer Act, at the hands of the state. This is a scenario of complete injustice meted out to the Adivasis of the region. Is there anything great about displacing millions of Adivasis to build a city for the dikus? This remains question for everyone to ponder upon.

Notes:

[i] The Government of India Act (1919) was an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It was passed to expand participation of Indians in the government of India. The Act received royal assent on 23rd December, 1919. This Act embodied the reforms recommended in the report of the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford. It initially covered ten years, from 1919 to 1929, after which it was reviewed by The Simon Commission.

[ii] See the Constituent Assembly Debates (30.7.1949 to 18.9.1949).

[iii] See Rana, L. N. (2010). *Jharkhand - Aspects of freedom struggle and constitution making.* Allahabad: K. K. Publications. (p. 5).

[iv] See Rana, L. N. (2010). *Jharkhand - Aspects of freedom struggle and constitution making.* Allahabad: K. K. Publications. (p. 4).

[v] See Annual Report, Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2013-14).

[vi] This Draft Master Plan of Greater Ranchi was prepared by Syed Mobin Ahmed, Town Planner, Ranchi Improvement Trust. The consulting associates were R. L. Bawa (Chief Town Planner, Bihar) and A. K. Srivastava (Assistant Town Planner, Bihar). Interestingly enough, this draft plan did not fix any target range of time, whether it is for 20 or 25 years, nor does it have its date of publication. Normally these two are planning prerequisites of a Master Plan or Draft Master Plan. [Source: Thakur, B., Sinha, V. N. P., Prasad, M., Sharma, N., Pratap, R., Mandal, R. B., & R. B. P. Singh. (Eds.) (2005). *Urban and regional development in India* (Vol. 2). New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company].

[vii] Interview conducted on 7th February, 2019 in Ranchi.

[viii] Diku is a term used by tribals to denote non-tribals.

[ix] As per the Government of India, this is an Act to 'ensure, in consultation with institutions of local self-government and Gram Sabhas established under the Constitution, a humane, participative, informed and transparent process for land acquisition for industrialisation, development of essential infrastructural facilities and urbanisation with the least disturbance to the owners of the land and other affected families and provide just and fair compensation to the affected families whose land has been acquired or proposed to be acquired or are affected by such acquisition and make adequate provisions for such affected persons for their rehabilitation and resettlement and for ensuring that the cumulative outcome of compulsory acquisition should be that affected persons become partners in development leading to an improvement in their post-acquisition social and economic status and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. Within this Act, The Scheduled Tribes are defined as Land Owners.' (See the Land Acquisition Act, 2013).

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