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CITIZENS OF THE WORLD BUT NON-CITIZENS OF THE STATE: THE CURIOUS CASE OF STATELESS PEOPLE WITH REFERENCE TO INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE LAW

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Abstract

A stateless person, is one who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law (article 1 of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons). Here, nationality refers to the legal bond between a person and a state. This bond confers upon the national certain rights as well as duties. A person who is stateless lacks this membership and will be seen and treated as a foreigner by every country in the world. This phenomenon has also been described as “de jure statelessness”. In literature on statelessness, “citizenship” and “nationality” are usually used as interchangeable synonyms, both referring to the legal bond of membership described above. It is of interest to point out that a stateless person can also be a refugee, if in addition to not being considered as a nationality by any state they also meet the definition of article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention (i.e. have fled their country due to a fear of persecution).

1. Concept of Refugee

The term refugee is derived from the root word *refugié*, noun use of past participle of *refugier* "to take shelter, protect," from Old French *refuge*.¹ It was first applied in English to French Huguenots who migrated after the revocation (1685) of the Edict of Nantes. The word meant "one seeking asylum" until 1914, when it evolved to mean "one fleeing home" (first applied in this sense to civilians in Flanders heading west to escape fighting in World War I).² The main emphasis of this paper is to discuss the concern of internal refugees as for instance stateless people. It is to be noted that the Convention definition of refugee status excludes internal refugees from the scope of global protection. The strict insistence on this territorial criterion has prompted concern that there is a mismatch between the definition and the human suffering consequent to involuntary migration. There has been a very practical concern that the inclusion of internal refugees in the international protection regime might prompt states to attempt to shift responsibility for the well-being of large parts of their own population to the world community.

It has also been a matter of concern that any attempt to respond to the needs of internal refugees would constitute an infringement of the national sovereignty of the state within which the refugee resided. Refugee law, as a part of international human rights law, constitutes a recent and carefully

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¹Refugee, Online Etymology Dictionary, retrieved from: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=refugee>, visited on 21st September, 2017 at 2:00 pm

² id

constrained exception to the long-standing rule of exclusive jurisdiction of states over their inhabitants. While it was increasingly accepted in the early 1950s that the world community had a legitimate right to set standards and scrutinize the human rights record of the various countries, it was unthinkable that refugee law would intervene in the territory of a state to protect citizens from their own government. The best that could be achieved within the context of the accepted rules of international law was the sheltering of such persons as were able to liberate themselves from the territorial jurisdiction of a persecutory state.

None of the factors which dictated the exclusion of internal refugees limited resources, concern about state participation, or respect for sovereignty was so much a matter of conceptual principle, as it reflected the limited reach of international law.

1.1. Analysis and Application of the Concept

The most widely accepted legal definition of refugee is the one that has been provided by the Refugee Convention, which defines a refugee as:

“Any person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country.”³

However due to inadequacy of the definition, certain legislations have been enacted which have worked as appurtenance to the original convention

While analysing the definition certain pre-requisites of the definition it can be observed that with time certain nuances to the pre-existing terminologies appended to the definition have been developed. Nevertheless, certain key features so addressed by the definition have been dealt to further elaborate upon the definition such as well-founded fear of being persecuted⁴, race⁵, religion, nationality⁶, membership of a particular social group⁷ and political opinion.⁸

³ Who is a refugee? Refugee Council of Australia, available <<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/getfacts/international/definitions/who-is-a-refugee/>>, visited on 21st September 2017 at 2:00 pm

⁴ The criteria for determining what is well founded is composed of two elements, subjective- i.e. relating to the perceptions, emotions and experiences of refugee claimant and basis of evaluation of applicant's statements. Objective which may be assessed from the general situation of the country of origin. Trakroo,Ragini, Bhat,Aparna and others, Refugees and Law, Human Rights Network, Jangpura, New Delhi,2006.

⁵ Persecution because of race or ethnicity is a cause of refugee movement in many parts of the world. Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, caste, colour or creed though prohibited all over the world, but its rudiments are found in one form or the other (Ugandan citizens of Indian origin)

⁶ It is interpreted, in a broad sense to include the origins and membership of particular ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic groups. Article 1(A) of the 1951 Convention; As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.” Nationality, interpreted broadly, illustrates the points of distinction which can serve as the basis for the policy and practice of persecution

⁷ It may include any group of persons or any individual associated with a particular group, who demonstrates common characteristics (i.e. similar backgrounds, habits or social status) these common characteristics must be immutable or fundamental to a person's identity such that the person should not be able to change it.

⁸ Supra note 3

1.2. General Provisions for Determining Refugee Status

A person is a refugee in accordance with the 1951 Refugee convention as soon as she/he fulfils the criteria contained in the definition with reference to the inclusion clauses. However certain exemptions are also provided under exclusion and cessation clauses. The 1951, Refugee Convention details three groups of people who while fulfilling the criteria for refugee status are not considered to be refugees under international law. These include, persons already receiving UN protection or assistance⁹, persons not considered to be in need of international protection¹⁰ and persons not deemed to be deserving of international protection¹¹

The cessation clauses (Article 1 C (1) to (6) of the 1951 Convention)¹² spell out the conditions under which a refugee ceases to be a refugee. They are based on the consideration that international protection should not be granted where it is no longer necessary or justified. Once a person's status as a refugee has been determined, it is maintained unless he comes within the terms of one of the cessation clauses. This strict approach towards the determination of refugee status results from the need to provide refugees with the assurance that their status will not be subject to constant review in the light of temporary changes.¹³

1.3. Genre of Refugees

To avail the benefit of asylum it is imperative that the concerned people come within the ambit of refugee definition. As is being discussed in UN Global Compact¹⁴, there is a need to distinguish the genuine refugees from the in genuine ones and this can be achieved by recognising them under different categories, such as the Convention and Mandate Refugees¹⁵, Internally Displaced

⁹ Article 1D states that the convention shall not apply to persons already in receipt of assistance from a UN organ or agency other than the UNHCR. This category includes refugees under the protection of the UNRWA and similar organisations which may be set up in future.

¹⁰ Article 1E states that those persons who are granted most of the rights normally enjoyed by nationals in the country where they have been received shall not enjoy the protection of the 1951 convention.

¹¹ Article 1F of the 1951 Convention states that the provisions of that Convention shall not apply to any person with respect to whom there are serious reasons for considering that:

(a) he [or she] has committed a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity, as defined in the international instruments drawn up to make provision in respect of such crimes;

(b) he [or she] has committed a serious non-political crime outside the country of refuge prior to his [or her] admission to that country as a refugee; or

(c) he [or she] has been guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The grounds for exclusion are enumerated exhaustively in the 1951 Convention. While these grounds are subject to interpretation, they cannot be supplemented by additional criteria in the absence of an international convention to that effect.

¹² Article 1 C of the 1951 Convention provides that, this Convention shall cease to apply to any person falling under the terms of section A if: (1) He has voluntarily re-availed himself of the protection of the country of his nationality; or (2) Having lost his nationality, he has voluntarily re-acquired it; or (3) He has acquired a new nationality, and enjoys the protection of the country of his new nationality; or (4) He has voluntarily re-established himself in the country which he left or outside which he remained owing to fear of persecution; or (5) He can no longer, because the circumstances in connexion with which he has been recognized as a refugee have ceased to exist, continue to refuse to avail himself of the protection of the country of his nationality.

(6) Being a person who has no nationality he is, because the circumstances in connexion with which he has been recognized as a refugee have ceased to exist, able to return to the country of his former habitual residence; Provided that this paragraph shall not apply to a refugee falling under section A (1) of this Article who is able to invoke compelling reasons arising out of previous persecution for refusing to return to the country of his former habitual residence.

¹³ Refugee Status Determination, available at, <http://www.unhcr.org/3d58e13b4.pdf>, last visited on 11th October, 2017

¹⁴ 2017 UN Forum on Business and Human Rights, available at unglobalcompact.org, last visited on 5th December, 2017

¹⁵ A convention refugee is a person recognised under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. This Person is recognised and protected by a state that is party to the Convention.

Persons (IDP's)¹⁶, Refugees *Sur place*¹⁷, Stateless persons¹⁸ and Persons in regimes of temporary protection¹⁹.

2. Stateless People

2.1. Definition of Stateless Person

A *stateless person*, is someone who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law (article 1 of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons). Here, nationality refers to the legal bond between a person and a state. This bond confers upon the national certain rights (like the right to live in the country or participate in elections) as well as duties (like the duty of military service, where this is still in place). A person who is stateless lacks this membership and will be seen and treated as a foreigner by every country in the world. This phenomenon has also been described as “*de jure statelessness*”.

2.2. Concept of Citizenship and Nationality

In literature on statelessness, “citizenship” and “nationality” are usually used as interchangeable synonyms, both referring to the legal bond of membership described above. However, in some countries or contexts, the use of terminology may deviate from this. It is therefore important to make an effort to understand the exact meaning or content of the terminology in use in the country that is under study. For the purposes of interpreting and applying the internationally established definition of a stateless person in practice, it can also be important to keep the following in mind. The notion of ‘belonging’ within a state is determined by membership.²⁰ Citizens belonging to a territory are politically accepted and acknowledged and are legal members of the state.²¹ These citizens are admitted on the basis of rules of admissions determined either from birth, domicile or marriage.²² The conventional notion of belonging is typically dictated by these rules of membership. Citizenship constitutes the basis of the relationship between the individual and the state. The spheres of inclusion/exclusion of rights are determined by the state.²³ In search of For a person to be “stateless” it is not relevant how the person came to be without a nationality or whether there is the possibility for the person to acquire a nationality by taking action, the only thing that matters is whether, at the

A mandate refugee may include all those persons who qualify as refugees under the mandate of the UNHCR. The definition of a mandate refugee has been drawn from the statute of the UNHCR by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), resolution to cover a wider group of persons finding themselves in refugee like situations.

¹⁶ Those who are forced to leave their place of residence as a result of persecution, human rights violations, or civil and ethnic strife but who have remained in their country of origin or habitual residence are referred to as internally displaced persons (IDP's). Such persons are often not afforded the international protection given to refugees. Accordingly, the safety of these persons lies with the national government and any uninvited intervention would be considered interference in the internal affairs of the respective governments.

¹⁷ Refugee *Sur Place* means those refugees who are living outside of his country of origin being an immigrant or in other part of the world having valid legal documents but due to subsequent occurrence become refugees.

¹⁸ A stateless person, is someone who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law (article 1 of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons). A person who is stateless lacks this membership and will be seen and treated as a foreigner by every country in the world. This phenomenon has also been described as “*de jure statelessness*”.

¹⁹ Temporary protection regimes are sometimes established by states to protect persons in refugee like situations until such time as conditions in their country of nationality are deemed benign enough to allow for repatriation in safety and dignity. This is frequently used in cases of mass influx where individual status determination is not possible

²⁰ N. Chowdhory, Refugees, Citizenship and Belonging in South Asia, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0197-1_2

²¹ id

²² id

²³ id

present moment, the person is considered as a national by any state. It is also irrelevant to determine location of the person. Statelessness occurs in both migration and non-migration contexts. A stateless person may never have crossed an international border, having lived in the same country for his or her entire life. To determine whether a person is considered as a national by a state under the operation of its law, requires a careful analysis of how a state applies its nationality laws in practice, in that individual's case. In some cases, an objective analysis of the law would lead to the conclusion that the person is a national, but the state may not in practice follow the letter of the law, so the analysis must be based on how the competent authorities interpret the law. Nationality is almost always granted based on certain factual links between a person and a state: either links through family or through territory. To work out whether a person is stateless, it is usually sufficient to look at whether they have the nationality of any of the places with which they have such links, i.e. country of birth, country of nationality of parents, country of habitual residence and country of nationality of spouse.

2.3. Refugee Law and Statelessness

It is of interest to point out that a stateless person can also be a refugee, if in addition to not being considered as a nationality by any state they also meet the definition of article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention (i.e. have fled their country due to a fear of persecution). Refugees, as per the rule of statist claims on belonging, remain outside the ensemble of rights that prioritize rights to citizens over according similar rights to non-citizens.²⁴ In a general sense, the capacity of individuals to move into or away from a state effectively challenges the capacity of the state to control the 'status of the border'.²⁵ In a practical sense, migration empowers those who move as they challenge the government's ability to impose 'difference' by patrolling the 'dynamics of bodies' in the border areas since 'moving bodies' represent a cluster of people in search of transcontinental rights.²⁶ Stateless refugees are identified and treated as refugees - e.g. in UNHCR's statistics on statelessness only non-refugee stateless populations are counted. Hence under this discourse, concept of "*de facto statelessness*" is discussed. It is most often invoked to describe a situation in which a person holds a nationality and is considered as a national by a state under the operation of its law, but this nationality is in some way ineffective.

3. International Recognition of Refugees and Statelessness

Three treaties have been adopted to address problems of displacement and statelessness: the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and/or its 1967 Protocol, the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. A non-refugee, stateless persons enjoys protection under the 1954 statelessness Convention, while a stateless refugee qualifies for protection under both the 1954 statelessness and 1951 refugee Conventions.²⁷ In these cases, he or she will usually be classified and treated primarily as a refugee. The refugee Convention provides more comprehensive protection for stateless refugees, including the non-penalisation of unlawful entry and the prohibition of refoulement. To avoid "double counting", stateless refugees are reported within the refugee statistics of the United Nations High Commissioner

²⁴ Supra note 20

²⁵ Id

²⁶ Id

²⁷ Statelessness, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/statelessness.html>, last visited on 26th February. 2018

for Refugees (UNHCR), while only non-refugee stateless persons are accounted for in the statelessness statistics. A stateless refugee may, nevertheless, continue to face problems once the fear of persecution no longer exists and he or she is expected to return to the country of origin. Stateless persons may be unable to return because they are not recognized as nationals. Then, international protection as a stateless person may be necessary. The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness aims to help states to avoid statelessness and provides for acquisition or retention of nationality in various circumstances. It is equally applicable to non-refugee stateless persons and stateless refugees.²⁸

4. Consequences of Statelessness

Forced displacement²⁹ and statelessness are interconnected phenomena on many levels. Statelessness can be both a root cause and a product of displacement. Moreover, the circumstances and consequences of statelessness also add additional layers of insecurity and vulnerability for those who have been uprooted from their homes. It is critical for organisations working on refugee issues or aiding forcibly displaced populations to be aware of the ways in which statelessness can interact with displacement. Statelessness can be deduced as a root cause of displacement. For instance, in case of Rohingya's. The Rohingya³⁰ are an ethnic and religious minority in Myanmar. They are not considered to belong to Myanmar, despite having lived there for centuries. They are not recognized as nationals under the current nationality law, adopted in 1982. They have suffered from extreme and targeted human rights abuses for decades, leaving many Rohingya with no other choice than to flee the country and seek refuge abroad. Without identity papers or travel documents, the Rohingya often resort to dangerous and illicit routes to escape Myanmar. In exile, despite being in need of international protection as refugees, in many host countries the Rohingya also find themselves facing harsh conditions. Known as one of the most persecuted communities in the world, the Rohingya is an example of how persecution and violence against stateless populations can trigger forced displacement. It also illustrates that displacement does not resolve the vulnerability of stateless people – this remains with them in exile, where they await a solution.³¹

5. Reduction of Statelessness

Reduction basically involves finding a durable solution for “reducing” existing cases of statelessness. This procedure has two undersigned dimensions that of acquiring formal legality and that of having social and economy inclusion

²⁸UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Self-Study Module on Statelessness, 1 October 2012, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/50b899602.html>, last visited on 28th February 2018

²⁹Forced displacement refers to the situation of persons who are forced to leave or flee their homes due to conflict, violence, and human rights violations, Forced Displacement: A developmental Challenge, available at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1164107274725/3182370-1164201144397/Forced_Displacement.pdf, last visited on 28th February, 2018

³⁰For Rohingya There is no place called home, available at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/for-rohingyas-there-is-no-place-called-home/article19620567.ece>, last visited on 27th February, 2018

³¹Supra note at 22

5.1. The Legal Aspect of Reduction: Acquisition and Confirmation of Nationality³²

In most protracted situations, the stateless population has lived in a territory for generations and their country of residence is the centre of their family and social lives, their livelihoods and their broader interests. The most effective means to resolving such situations will therefore include recognizing the links of the population to the State through birth or long-term residence. As set out in the conclusions of UNHCR's 2010 Expert Meeting on Statelessness Determination Procedures: For stateless individuals within their own country, as opposed to those who are in a migration context, the appropriate status would be one which reflects the degree of attachment to that country, namely, nationality.³³ A simple technique for the reduction of statelessness is thus the modification of the domestic legal framework to bring it into line with relevant international standards for the prevention of statelessness and applying these changes with retroactive effect. This method was employed for instance in Algeria, where nationality legislation initially prevented women from transmitting their nationality to their children. New legislation in 2005 established that nationality was acquired by birth to an Algerian mother or father, without restricting application of the provision only to children born after the law came into effect, thus resolving existing cases of statelessness. Other countries in the region, for example Egypt, opted to allow acquisition of nationality by application during a transitional period.³⁴

5.2. Social and Economic Inclusion

Acquisition of nationality does not immediately guarantee the full and effective alleviation of statelessness: "Any attempt to eliminate statelessness would only be fruitful if it resulted in 'not only the attribution of a nationality to individuals, but also an improvement in their status'".³⁵ An effective strategy for the reduction of statelessness should look beyond the problem of formal nationality attribution and ensure that persons who were formerly stateless become fully participating members of society, enjoying all the rights and opportunities of citizenship on an equal basis with other nationals. With this in mind, UNHCR's Executive Committee has commented on the importance of promoting social and economic participation of stateless persons as an element of the reduction of statelessness. The Committee "encourages States [...] to consider measures to allow the integration of persons in situations of protracted statelessness, through developing programmes in the field of education, housing, access to health and income generation, in partnership with relevant United Nations agencies".

Such activities cannot be seen as a replacement for conferral or confirmation of citizenship. It must be understood that "no matter how extensive the rights granted to a stateless person may be, they are not the equivalent of acquiring citizenship".³⁶ Thus, while the promotion of social and economic participation undeniably is crucial to improving the lives of the stateless, efforts to reduce the problem

³² Promoting the respect of standards of treatment for stateless persons facilitates their integration and is thus a helpful step towards reduction of statelessness.

³³ UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Expert Meeting - Statelessness Determination Procedures and the Status of Stateless Persons (Summary Conclusions), December 2010, para 24, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d9022762.html>, last visited on 27th February, 2018

³⁴ Supra Note at 21

³⁵ "Stateless Persons: Some Gaps in International Protection" by Carol Batchelor, 1995 (citing, in part, the work of Manley O. Hudson, rapporteur of the International Law Commission), Id

³⁶ "Nationality and Statelessness – A handbook for parliamentarians" published by UNHCR and IPU, 2005.

will remain incomplete until legal integration is also realized. The promotion of social and economic participation and the realization of legal integration must go hand in hand. This was the approach, for instance, in Ukraine, where Crimean Tatars who had been deported to Central Asia under Stalin, began returning to Ukraine around the time of the dissolution of the USSR and were either stateless or at risk of becoming stateless.³⁷ The legal resolution of statelessness issues was accompanied by a programme devised to foster sustainable human development in a manner that contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability in Crimea through initiatives aimed at preventing interethnic conflicts and enhancing integration among different ethnic groups including through promoting “economic development, income and employment generation and sustainable access to basic infrastructure and services”.³⁸ Although this can be seen as a protection effort, it was actually carried out in the context of a programme to prevent and reduce statelessness. The approach adopted in Crimea brought long-term social and economic integration not only through a combination of legal and material assistance but also through “addressing the needs of the communities that received returnees, to foster mutual understanding and tolerance”.³⁹

6. Protection of Stateless Persons

The protection of stateless persons, of their fundamental rights and freedoms is a matter for which international law now provides firm groundwork. Today, protection cannot be considered as exclusively incidental to nationality. Instead, it is a function that attaches directly to the inherent dignity and integrity of the human personality, the totality of which is the province of the community of nations.⁴⁰

6.1. “Stateless Person” Status Determination

Under its mandate, for statelessness UNHCR can assist States which do not have the capacity or resources to put in place statelessness determination procedures, by conducting determinations itself if necessary and as a measure of last resort. It can also play an advisory role in developing or supporting State procedures.⁴¹ Individual registration of stateless persons by UNHCR may be appropriate where the country of residence lacks the capacity and/or will to protect and assist the individuals concerned and where UNHCR wants to keep track of protection interventions carried out on behalf of the individuals concerned.⁴²

6.2. Documentation

The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons also provides an avenue for stateless persons to acquire other forms of documentation, such as the certification of civil status (birth, marriage, adoption, death, or divorce) or of professional or education expertise. Its article 25 provides for “administrative assistance” for stateless persons, which includes the issuance of a range of

³⁷ Id

³⁸ Id

³⁹ Id

⁴⁰ G. Goodwin-Gill, “The rights of refugees and stateless persons” in K.P. Saksena (ed.) *Human rights perspectives and challenges (in 1900’s and beyond)*, Lancers Books, New Delhi, 1994.

⁴¹ *Handbook on the Protection of Stateless Persons (2014)* (explaining the definition of statelessness and procedural considerations for determining whether a person is stateless), available at <http://www.unhcr.org/statelessness.html>, last visited on 27th February, 2018

⁴² Id

documents that would ordinarily be offered by the juridical, administrative or consular authorities of a person's country of nationality. Human rights law also requires States to ensure that everyone can receive a birth certificate and marriage certificate as appropriate⁴³

6.3. An Adequate Standard of Living

Stateless people often do not enjoy an adequate standard of living. Due to problems relating to immigration status, lack of documentation or the simple fact of statelessness, stateless persons often have difficulties accessing education, work, healthcare, housing and more. As a result, their formal exclusion results in economic, social and cultural marginalization. Yet ensuring economic, social and cultural participation of stateless persons is a core objective within the context of both the protection of stateless persons and the reduction of statelessness.

6.4. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Trafficking

Statelessness can increase the vulnerability to Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV). Stateless people may easier fall victim to such violence because they live on the margins of society – often lacking a residence status and documentation. As a result of lack of access to the formal job market and other economic opportunities, it is for example known that some stateless persons in Thailand have resorted to engaging in prostitution or ended up being trafficked (see below). In Côte d'Ivoire, stateless women and girls – because they lacked documentation – were particularly vulnerable to harassment from law enforcement agents at check-points. Furthermore, due to their marginalized status, authorities will not necessarily pursue investigations involving stateless persons with the same effort as for other persons. As such, stateless women and men, boys and girls, are all vulnerable to SGBV. Stateless persons are often excluded from mechanisms existing in the country where they reside that would protect them from domestic violence, rape, sexual exploitation or forced marriage, or that would assist them in such a situation. Sometimes, stateless persons therefore seek marriage as a protective measure to secure them the recognition of or access to nationality – or at least some basic legal status. Such a relationship is marked by dependence on the part of the stateless individual, trapping him or her in the relationship while rendering her vulnerable to violence and exploitation. In some cases, the identification of a concrete link between citizenship issues and an increased incidence of trafficking has opened opportunities to address both problems concurrently. For example, the absence of recognition or documentation of nationality of members of Thailand's Hill Tribes was discovered to be a contributing factor in their high vulnerability to trafficking. In response, organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF teamed up to facilitate a birth registration and documentation campaign designed to prevent and reduce statelessness, protect stateless children and ward off the risk of trafficking. The programme included awareness-raising efforts through the development of such projects as a video entitled "A Right to Belong" that explored the issue of citizenship for Hill Tribe people in their own words. This is further evidence of the importance of

⁴³ For the right to birth registration see, for example, article 24 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. For the registration of marriages, see article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and article 3 the Convention on consent to marriage, minimum age for marriage and registration of marriages, 1962.

tackling issues of statelessness in conjunction with efforts to address underlying or resulting human rights abuses.⁴⁴

The international legal regime that has been put in place for tackling trafficking can be discussed as, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, both supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.⁴⁵ In addition, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women obliges States to “take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women”.⁴⁶ Moreover, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography set out further legal standards for addressing trafficking and related issues.⁴⁷

6.5. Resettlement

Resettlement is now recognized as a tool to address the situation of stateless persons with acute protection needs, even if the stateless persons in question do not also qualify as refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention. In its Conclusion 95 (2003), UNHCR’s ExCom: “Encourages States to cooperate with UNHCR on methods to resolve cases of statelessness and to consider the possibility of providing resettlement places where a stateless person’s situation cannot be resolved in the present host country or other country of former habitual residence, and remains precarious”.⁴⁸

Based on the foregoing, resettlement may be considered for cases where the individual:

1. does not have in the current or a former State of habitual residence a secure, lawful residence status which brings with it a minimum standard of treatment equivalent to that set out in the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons; and
2. has no reasonable prospect of acquiring such a residence status or nationality; and
3. has acute protection needs which cannot be addressed inside the country of current or former habitual residence.”⁴⁹

In addition, the ultimate goals of reduction of statelessness – social and economic participation and formal possession of a nationality – are clearly reflected in the way in which resettlement is to be organized: “Ideally, States should give similar status to resettled non-refugee stateless persons as that given to resettled refugees. Namely, a status that provides the person in question and their accompanying dependants the enjoyment of civil, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals and the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country. At the very minimum, the resettled individuals should be granted status as stateless persons under the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, encompassing

⁴⁴ Supra note 21

⁴⁵ The link between refugees and statelessness Introduction, available at <http://www.syrianationality.org/pdf/link-between-refugees-statelessness.pdf>, last visited on 27th February, 2018

⁴⁶ Article 6 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

⁴⁷ Convention on the Rights of the Child, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>, last visited on 27th February, 2018

⁴⁸ Supra note at 21

⁴⁹ Id

rights and obligations enshrined in this instrument”.⁵⁰ Most States have not yet included stateless persons in their resettlement programmes and almost all stateless persons who are resettled are at the same time refugees. More efforts need to be undertaken to promote resettlement as a solution for stateless persons in precarious situations without the prospect of a solution⁵¹

7. Conclusion

While analysing the current structure of refugee crisis reference can be made to philosophical views of Seyla Benhabib⁵² who has further postulated her theory on Rawls’s Theory of Justice⁵³ and Cosmopolitan theory of Immanuel Kant⁵⁴. Benhabib tries to develop a universal normative framework for cases of migratory movement. In doing so she puts forward the idea of political membership.⁵⁵ She is in favour of the right to membership of peoples within the framework of human rights, which should be incorporated into states’ constitutions through citizenship and naturalization provisions. She further defines political membership as the principles and practices of including refugees and immigrants within the political landscape of the state system.⁵⁶ Benhabib grounds her cross-border justice model heavily in Kant’s right to hospitality. The 1951 Convention and its preparatory work with reasonable care confirms the obvious, that the drafters intended that both refugees with and refugees without nationality should be protected. The elimination and reduction of statelessness are the current issues in question. A stateless person should be recognized as a refugee if he or she can establish a well-founded fear of persecution on Convention grounds, with respect to the country in which they were formally habitually resident. Such place of former habitual residence may be established in turn by evidence, for example, relating to immigration or residential status, time and activities or occupation in that country, economic and social connections, or family life. Each case will depend upon its particular facts, however, and no precise formula or time period is laid down. A stateless person’s claim may be rejected if he or she is proved to enjoy the protection of another State, for example, through having the right to enter and reside there. The claim of a stateless person to be a refugee will be strengthened by evidence showing that he or she is unable to return, or has been prevented from returning, to the country of former habitual residence.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Id

⁵¹ Id

⁵² Seyla Benhabib, ‘The Law of Peoples, Distributive Justice, and Migrations’ [2004] 72(5) Fordham Law Review 1761, 1779. At S.P. Sarker, Refugee Law in India, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-4807-4_1

⁵³ Rawls’s theory of justice revolves around the adaptation of two fundamental principles of justice which would, in turn, guarantee a just and morally acceptable society. The first principle guarantees the right of each person to have the most extensive basic liberty compatible with the liberty of others. The second principle states that social and economic positions are to be (a) to everyone’s advantage and (b) open to all.

⁵⁴ Cosmopolitan law is concerned not with the interaction between states, but with the status of individuals in their dealings with states of which they are not citizens. Moreover, it is concerned with the status of individuals as human beings, rather than as citizens of states. In Kant’s political theory, cosmopolitan law is the third category of public law, in addition to constitutional law and international law

⁵⁵ Supra note 52

⁵⁶ Id

⁵⁷ Goodwin-Gill, Guy S, Stateless Persons and Protection under the 1951 Convention, International Journal of Refugee Law, December 1992,

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THE PARADOX OF AUTONOMY IN THE DARJEELING HILLS: A PERCEPTION BASED ANALYSIS ON AUTONOMY ASPIRATIONS

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Abstract

Understanding on autonomy is premised on pluralistic ontologies based on identity, gender, class, race, caste etc. and their interactions and intersections, which in notional terms can be categorized under two broad typologies of – ‘reason’ and ‘aspiration’. Historically it seems to be evident that rational root of autonomy tends to co-opt the aspirational one, although existentially it is only the ‘self’ that defines autonomy. Similarly, it is also observed that the pluralities concerning autonomy often get subsumed under a single ethnic mobilization that lacks plural ontological understanding. In this regard, an inherent question arises: how should one negotiate autonomy! This paper, seeks to introduce perception in between reason and aspiration, as an ontological tool in analyzing an autonomy aspiration – the Gorkhaland Movement. In our analysis, the ‘self’ has been sub-divided into three components to understand the related perception, namely, ‘overarching self’, ‘constituents self’ and ‘individual self’.

1. Introduction

Notions related to autonomy are hardly singular, but sometimes, it bears the risk of becoming a victim of monistic ontological understanding. The question of autonomy, in general, is entwined with pluralistic ontological visions; e.g. a mobilization of the communities for fulfilling their autonomy aspiration or self-rule can be analyzed through the dimensions of identity, gender, class, race, caste etc. However, they often get subsumed under the banner of a singular ethnic mobilization which leads to a lack of plural ontological understandings. So any meaningful discussion on aspiration for self-rule saddled in overarching ethnic connotation should also negotiate with the interplay of other layered imperatives for analyzing the overall picture.

Usually, in overall terms, it is said that the notion of autonomy in the political context is primarily franchised only to those ‘civic communities’ who enjoy legislative and self-governing authority, which later on, has been used in connection with individual rights as well. But in India, the usage of this term got momentum in the context of the anti-colonial struggle, where it was entrusted with newer ontological questions like: ‘autonomy of whom, for whom, and in respect of what’ (MCRG 2004)! In a nuanced format, autonomy has two roots; one is ‘rational’ i.e. – the legal jurisprudential

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version and the other, the 'aspirational' root, or the desire of the people being governed. Here, it should be noted that the efficacies of autonomy have historically been sought to be appropriated by 'reason', putting the popular aspiration at bay. This schism leads to the paradox on understanding on autonomy 'pulled' between 'reason' and 'aspiration.' Conceptualizing autonomy amidst this dualism appears to be an academic challenge. The problem lies in the way 'self' defines autonomy and the way it chooses the issues of rights. In most of the cases, the legal-jurisprudential provisions, dripped in from the top, become the only possible form of autonomy (MCRG 2004).

So, in this dilemma we may encounter these two questions - how to conceptualize 'autonomy' and how is it being negotiated! Is it the 'reason' or the 'aspiration' that is essential component for the 'self' to negotiate autonomy! It is interesting to note here that the term 'self' can represent a 'group' as well as an 'individual.' Amidst this dialectic constraint, we seek to analyze the notion of '*perception*', in between 'reason' and 'aspiration', as our epistemological vantage point to examine the situationality of the ontologies of autonomy amongst the Darjeeling Hills dwellers. Although the notion of *perception* can be subsumed within the notion of 'aspiration', epistemologically it can help us analyzing an ethnicity based movement in a different manner. A recent study on perception based autonomy in three states of North East India by Fernandes and Borgohain (2017) highlights that the people from Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura understand the notion of autonomy in plural terms. Their perceptions about autonomy included the power to take political and economic decisions, control over natural resources as well as the rights and jurisdiction in their community or over the area they inhabit. In addition to these, people stated to perceive autonomy as a political power with no outside interference coupled with sovereignty over land, cultural affairs and identity formation (Fernandes & Borgohain 2017).

With these insights, this paper seeks to analyze the different perceptions of the 'self', related to autonomy aspirations, in the Hills of Darjeeling. In this paper, we have used the notion of 'self' with its varied connotations. We have the entire constituency of the Hills of Darjeeling as one 'self'; then the different ethnic communities within the Hills as the 'constituent self', which have emerged recently in the form of *Development Boards*; and finally the individual member within the different ethnic communities as an 'individuated self.' Simultaneously, we also aspire to take the epistemologies of autonomy - 'reason' and 'aspiration' - into perspective to analyze the ontologies of autonomy more holistically. To analyze the same, a select groups of people and political organizations have been interviewed on various issues accompanying the movement, namely, the rationale behind the movement, the council mode of autonomy vis-a-vis Sixth Schedule, the drawbacks of mobilization tactics, the issue of identity, the likelihood of attaining statehood in the emerging future, among others. The perceptions of these people and organizations are then analyzed under several categories to understand the movement and its various dimensions and its course of action. In a nutshell, this paper proposes to understand the pluralistic ontologies of an autonomy movement quelled by ethnicity through *perceptions* which is precisely our epistemology in this context.

The next section deals with the question of autonomy itself while the succeeding sections seek to deal with the politics and practises so far in the name of autonomy functioning in the Darjeeling Hills and its surrounding areas with a conclusion highlighting the lessons learnt so far.

2. Autonomy in Question

Autonomy aspirations in the Hills of Darjeeling had been one of the oldest in its genre in the country. Starting during the first decade of the 20th century or 1907 to be precise, it has been well documented by various scholars that the demand for a separate administrative set-up for Darjeeling in 1907 by the ‘leaders of Hill people’ or the ‘leaders of the “overarching self”’ may be regarded as the benchmark event in initiating the process (Datta 1991; Subba 1992; Samanta 2000; Sarkar 2013). Here, it must be stated that the autonomy movement in the Hills have experienced number of ebbs and flows, where the spikes represented the success of mobilization whereas the trough symbolized the lull before the next storm. The event of 1907 was followed by an event of submission of a memorandum by the ‘representatives of Darjeeling District’ to the Chief Secretary of Government of Bengal on November 8, 1917 asking for a creation of separate administrative unit, in the lines of ‘home rule.’ In this demand for a separate administrative unit, not only the district of Darjeeling was included but also the Dooars of Jalpaiguri as well. The grounds on which the demand was put forward were geographical, racial, historical, religious and linguistic as well (Dasgupta 1988; Subba 1992).

Later on, this aspiration in the Hills for a separate administrative unit further gathered momentum due to the role played by the Government of West Bengal during the *Bhasa Andolon* (1920-1992). This momentum, sparked by a host of factors, later paved the way for demanding a full-fledged state of Gorkhaland during 1980s in the name of security and identity of the Gorkhas living in India since generations. It is interesting to note that scholars have differed in identifying the major imperative that sustained the movement. This included ‘economic stagnation’ (Dasgupta 1988), ‘improper implementation of development policies’ (Chakraborty 1988), ‘economic negligence’ (Nanda 1987; Lama 1988), ‘uneven development’ (Datta 1991; Dasgupta 1999), ‘ousting’ of Nepalis from Northeast India (Misra 1986), ‘identity crisis’ (Subba 1992; Samanta 2000; Sarkar 2013), ‘de-territorialized subjectivity’ (Golay 2006), ‘growing tribalism’ (Chhetri 2017; Middleton 2013; Tamang & Sitlhou 2018) etc. Moreover, keeping the Darjeeling and adjoining areas as ‘Scheduled’ districts, ‘Backward Tracts’ and ‘Partially Excluded Area’, in subsequent Acts of 1874, 1919 and 1935 by the British (Samanta 2000; Sarkar 2013), along with economic poverty and the perceived ‘mal-governance’ of the hill-dwellers (Ganguly 2005) ultimately set in the motion for separatism from Bengal/West Bengal. However, West Bengal Human Development Report 2004 indicates that Darjeeling is ranked as second and fourth in gender and human development indices (Mohan 2013) which may partially refute the lack of development clause related to this movement.

Keeping the above literature into perspective, the select group of individuals and organizations during the field survey were asked to identify the most important form of autonomy and the factors compelling to ask for that in the Hills of Darjeeling; the unanimous answer cited was that when they travel beyond the Hills of Darjeeling, they are termed as ‘Nepalese’ - meaning the citizens of Nepal - which necessarily puts their identity under a scanner. To secure their identity, the movement activists want a visible Gorkhaland state on the map of India. For example; Roshan Giri¹, the then Gorkha Janamukti Morcha [GJM] General Secretary, explains, ‘it is assumed that Gujarat is for Gujaratis, West Bengal is for Bengalis and Punjab is for Punjabis but there is no home for the Indian Gorkhas.’

¹ Roshan Giri, the then general secretary of Gorkha Janmukti Morcha [GJM], in an interview conducted with him on January 27, 2016 as a part of field-work of this study, revealed this information.

Even, some journalists and leaders in our select sample, said that this demand is also an auto-reflection of their lack of *security* as they have been victims of various atrocities and ‘push back’ movements, especially in North East India in general and Meghalaya in particular, which resulted in the mass exodus of the ‘Gorkhas’ from these areas. Basically, they pleaded for a territorial arrangement, to secure the identity of the Indian Gorkhas, which they feel will embolden their citizenship status in India. Thus, this is the widely accepted form of ontology, amongst a host of others, on autonomy. When placed with a counter question e.g. will the *territorial identity* be sufficient to provide them the stable social identity in India! Few of them replied in affirmative tone while others like Bimal Rai² and C.K. Shrestha³ said that the territorial arrangement is only to have a permanent home and, securing identity – especially, the social identity - depends upon the talents and professions of the people. Bimal Rai said, ‘*Gorkhaland will not give us identity, identity will come with our talent.*’ In addition to that, Pramod Giri⁴ also mentioned that, ‘*identity is enshrined by profession and talent.*’ By saying so, they were perhaps pointing towards social identity and development of the Gorkhas in order to make their identity visible to others. The kind of identity the Bengalis have in the field of education, film, singing, literature etc.; the kind of identity the Gujaratis have in the field of business, such visible identities they want for the Gorkhas and that can only be attained if they have a separate state of Gorkhaland, Bimal Rai added.

Moreover, Shrestha during the field survey proposed another ontological alternative form of autonomy to do away with the national security grievances of the Gorkhas residing outside Darjeeling. He said; more Gorkhas are living in Assam than in West Bengal. It is equally true that the Gorkhas are scattered throughout India and the World. In this regard, Shrestha emphasized that the creation of Gorkhaland will only ensure *territorial identity* to the Gorkhas living in Darjeeling, but when asked what about those who will continue to live outside the proposed state! He replied; the creation of Gorkhaland will only provide a *symbolic identity* to the Gorkhas residing outside Darjeeling as well, although it will fail to guarantee their territorial identity. For the ‘Gorkhas’ living outside Darjeeling, he proposes the formation of *Gorkha National Satellite Council [GNSC]* which will basically be a national level body to look after the Gorkhas scattered throughout India. He conceptualized his idea of *GNSC* with the working of a satellite or a tower providing mobile network. According to him, this body will have the representation from the members elected across the communities [including the Bengalis from the aspired state also] which will look after the provisions and benefits to Gorkhas residing outside the jurisdiction of the proposed Gorkhaland. The representation in that body should be from the members enlisted under the *Representation of People’s Act, 1950 [RPA]*. It means that, there will be a non-territorial arrangement for the Gorkhas residing outside Darjeeling. Precisely, these are the epistemological submission on the ontology of autonomy.

3. Perceived Strategies to Achieve Autonomy

Moving forward from questioning about the most widely accepted form of ontology on autonomy to the ontological strategies to achieve that autonomy, the same political organizations and other select interviewees were asked about the same to fulfil their demand for autonomy i.e. to attain statehood.

² Bimal Rai is the Bureau Chief at Himalayan Darpan, a Darjeeling based Nepali daily. The interview was conducted on February 03, 2016.

³ C.K. Shrestha is a writer, novelist, dramatist, journalist and the founder of Gorkha Bharati Vichar Manch. An interview with him was possible only on February 02, 2016.

⁴ Pramod Giri is a Siliguri based journalist with the Hindustan Times. An interview with him was conducted on February 05, 2016.

We found varied epistemological understandings to pursue those ontologies. We will thus analyze those epistemological answers in this section subsequently with having the available literatures into perspective.

During 1947, the undivided Communist Party of India [CPI] for the first time raised the bogey for a separate, sovereign state called 'Gorkhasthan' (Subba 1992: 89-90) with their concept of 'right to self-determination' (Chakrabarti 1988: 24). Ratanlal Brahmin and Ganeshlal Subba were the two leaders who coined such a 'utopian' demand, although they were aware about its denial in the past. They did the same because they knew that neither 'Marxism' nor 'Leninism' but 'Gorkhalism' would sell there in Darjeeling (Subba 1992). This tactics of 'Gorkhalism' can be seen in the Hills of Darjeeling even after the breaking up of Communist Party of India [CPI], whose broken limb in the hills is nowadays recognize themselves as Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists [CPRM]. As the 'Left' failed to incorporate the identity issue congruously, the CPRM emerged in the hills by taking its new ontological definition of 'class' which is way different from that of the CPI [M], a CPRM leader added. The economic issues are always mired in the undivided CPI's definition of 'class' precisely this is the departure of the CPRM. The CPRM defines a 'new class' on the basis of identity, culture etc. To them, the emergence of 'Gorkha Muslim' is a finer example of 'new class'. This group is a blend of class, religion and ethnicity. The Gorkha Muslims are nothing but the descendants of the couples married across ethno-religious communities; i.e. the Muslims and the Gorkhas. When a marriage happens between these groups, the offspring so born, are calling themselves as *Gorkha Muslims*, according to a local Muslim at Darjeeling. Thus, it is also an important 'constituent self' around which the contemporary Darjeeling politics is revolving. The 'Left' [CPRM] is trying to get its hold back in the hills in this fashion (Saha 2016).

In addition, Ganeshlal Subba, the intellectual member of CPI unit at Darjeeling, knew that perhaps a separate administrative unit was possible in Darjeeling through Constitutional provisions but hardly there was any possibility of forming an independent 'Gorkhasthan' (Subba 1992: 90-91). Hence, in the sixties, the CPI shifted its focus from Gorkhasthan to the issue of 'autonomy' (Dasgupta 1988) but the demand by the Communists for Gorkhasthan (Subba 1992) in 1940s and 'Gorkha autonomy' in 1950s were an attempt to secure its base in the hills in the form of trade union in the plantation sector. Ratanlal Brahmin wanted to mobilize the people on the notions of '*exploited and dissatisfied*' feeling that was perceived to have been in existence in the Hills. In 1982 and 1985 the CPI [M] moved a private bill to grant autonomy to the three hill sub-divisions in the form of a district council (Dasgupta 1988). The bill of 1985 was moved by an elected Member of Parliament [M.P.], Anand Pathak but was defeated on the floor of the House [Parliament]. Although, it was expected to be defeated, but surprisingly and unexpectedly, there was no protest against the defeat of the Bill by the CPI [M] unit of Darjeeling (Subba 1992). When it was asked to the representative of Darjeeling unit of CPI [M] about their stand on Gorkhaland, Suraj Pathak replied that his party is against the idea of creating smaller states as it will compromise with the federal principle enshrined in the Constitution of India. The burgeoning power of these states, if so created, will reduce the discretion of the Parliament and provide the Centre with more manoeuvrability hampering federal relations since the smaller states will have less number of Members of Parliament [MPs], Pathak added. Earlier Jibesh Sarkar, the then

Darjeeling district secretary of the CPI [M] said that neither Gorkhaland can be achieved⁵ now nor it is desirable but it should not be denied by the use of force (Frontline: September 20, 2013).

When these apprehensions about the movement were posed before our select group of interviewees in order to understand their epistemological strategies to achieve the proposed state of Gorkhaland, Roshan Giri expressed his desire to adhere to the politics of '*negotiation*' both with the Centre and the state. On the other hand, Amar Singh Rai [GJM] wanted the State to first discard the *Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship 1950* and then start negotiation afresh. However, Suraj Sharma [journalist] and GJM legal advisor Raju Pradhan thinks that initially the State should designate Darjeeling as Union Territory [UT] which may be considered as the first step towards achieving statehood. Sharma cites that Punjab and Haryana before being granted full-fledged statehood were first designated as UTs. Political organizations like TMC and CPI [M] seem to highlight ambiguous statements. The hill unit of TMC blamed the hill-leaderships for turning up the history to churn the '*false dream of Gorkhaland*' whereas the latter decreed for achieving '*identity through regional autonomy*.' It is however far less than clear that what does CPI (M) mean by 'autonomy'. Amar Singh Rai alleged that the term 'autonomy' is a misnomer for continuation of the chauvinistic rule of the Government of West Bengal.

Moreover, the formation of Telengana state provided a new fillip to the demand for Gorkhaland spearheaded by the Gorkhaland Joint Action Committee, a platform of nine political and 'apolitical' organizations called for '*Janata Curfew*' or '*ghar bhitrai janata* agitation' for two days asking the inhabitants to stay indoors 'voluntarily' (Frontline: September 20, 2013). On the other hand, BJP in its successive manifestoes of 2009 and 2014 Lok Sabha elections stated that it will treat the issue of Gorkhaland with 'sympathy' if voted to power⁶. Even the then Prime Ministerial candidate from the ruling BJP, Narendra Modi in his election rally⁷ on April 10, 2014 in Darjeeling said, 'I tell my Gorkha brothers, your dream is our dream. Give us a chance to ensure development for you' (IBNLive: April 10, 2014). With the hope of this that the BJP would consider the cause of Gorkhas in Parliament, the GJM had supported the party in the Lok Sabha elections of 2009 and 2014. Then a BJP candidate contesting from Darjeeling, S.S. Ahluwalia claimed⁸ that 'BJP is in favour of creation of smaller states.' But the then state [West Bengal] BJP chief, Rahul Sinha, disapproved the claim by saying that 'the party's candidate for the Darjeeling constituency had only reiterated the BJP's stand in favour of smaller States [regional governments] and had never advocated the demand for Gorkhaland' (The Hindu: March 22, 2014).

However, BJP does not see the issue of Gorkhas and Gorkhaland alone. It holistically takes into consideration the problems and demands of Gorkhas in and around the Darjeeling Hills, Adivasis of Dooars and the Rajbangshis of Cooch Behar. If required, BJP may consider the creation of *North*

⁵ Frontline (September 20, 2013). Twist in Gorkhaland Demand, Online, Available at [HTTP] <http://www.frontline.in/the-nation/twist-in-gorkhaland-demand/article5084978.ece> [Accessed on April 13, 2016]

⁶ The Telegraph (April 09, 2014), BJP adds 'Gorkha' in manifesto, Online, Available at [HTTP] http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140409/jsp/bengal/story_18170975.jsp#.VtAQN_196M8 [Accessed on February 26, 2016]

⁷ IBN Live (April 10, 2014). Your dream is our dream, Narendra Modi tells Gorkhas, Online, Available at [HTTP] <http://www.news18.com/news/politics/your-dream-is-our-dream-narendra-modi-tells-gorkhas-680237.html> [Accessed on June 09, 2016]

⁸ The Hindu (March 22, 2014). There will be no Gorkhaland: West Bengal BJP chief, Online, Available at [HTTP] <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/there-will-be-no-gorkhaland-west-bengal-bjp-chief/article5843717.ece> [Accessed on June 09, 2016]

Bengal state rather than Gorkhaland, Manoj Dewan⁹ added. So, from our discussion it seems that the national party only plays with the demand for statehood of Gorkhaland as per their requirement during elections and this has been continuing since the inception of this movement. The newly formed [in 2016] Kalimpong based Jana Andolan Party [JAP] in its 2016 West Bengal Assembly Election manifesto mentions that India as a nation is still in the process of making. The JAP manifesto also highlights that regional identities adds strength to the pan-Indian national identity rather than posing a threat to the Indian national identity, much like Sanjib Baruah's interpretation of *Assamese Sub-nationalism* (Saha 2016).

For resolving the issues associated with the formation of proposed state of Gorkhaland, the Jana Andolan Party [JAP] has drafted a bill¹⁰ called *The West Bengal Reorganization Bill 2016*, for the Indian Nepalis, Bhutias, Lepchas, Sherpas, Adivasi, Rajbangshi and all other communities residing in Darjeeling and Dooars region of Jalpaiguri district. In response to such a move, BJP's Darjeeling MP asked the JAP to place the same in the state Assembly for its ratification by the Government of West Bengal. If the West Bengal Legislative Assembly ratifies such a bill, the Union Government [BJP] will be able to consider this. But this again seems to be a tactics to hoodwink as the Constitution of India empowers only the Indian Parliament to take initiatives for the creation of a new state under Article 3 without consulting the concerned state/s out of which a new state is supposed to be carved out. According to the Constitution, a bill for creation of a new state is to be introduced with the consent of the President of India and according to Article 74; the President is bound to act according to the advice of the Council of Ministers. Similar process was seen even during the contemporary era during the creation of Telengana, which happened without consulting the Andhra Pradesh [united] Legislative Assembly. Although this practice should be questioned as it has a tendency to curtail the regional voices, it is still not necessary to take consent from the concerned states to introduce such bills. Thus it becomes clear that although there appears to be a lot of *hullabaloo* on the issue of Gorkhaland but there is hardly any epistemological clarity amongst the political parties regarding the *modus operandi* to achieve the same. Political movement in the name of the proposed state thereby continues unabatedly.

Thus, it is clear from the above discussion that the ontologies of autonomy had always been dynamic which had its situational manoeuvrings, in its spirit. From separate administrative set-up in the second decade of Twenty First Century to Gorkhasthan in 1940s; and autonomous politico-administrative structures in post 1950s to a full-fledged statehood demand in 1980s. But, our epistemological understandings in this section remind us that there is a lack of praxis in the ontologies to achieve autonomy.

4. Questioning the Autonomy Practiced in the Hills of Darjeeling

As the struggle for autonomy in the Hills of Darjeeling has reached the milestone of 111 years now, it had witnessed several forms of autonomy burgeoning from the Darjeeling dwellers to the Union as

⁹ Manoj Dewan, a 52 years old Siliguri based representative to the Darjeeling unit of Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP]. A personal talk with him was possible only on February 09, 2016

¹⁰ Indian Gorkhas, *Gorkhaland Bill prepared by JAP (Jan Andolan Party) full text*, online blog, Available at [HTTP] <http://www.indiangorkhas.in/2016/04/gorkhaland-bill-prepared-by-jap-jan-andolan-party-full-text.html> [Accessed on June 22, 2016]

well as the state. A brief description of the autonomy burgeoning of this movement and its criticism is presented in this section.

Darjeeling had remained 'excluded' in the successive Government of India Acts in 1919 and 1935, and as a result the rules and regulations regarding landownership and taxation has been maintained in order to safeguard the interest of the tribal people from the encroachment by 'outsiders'(Samanta 2000: 23). It was in 1954 that this region was merged with West Bengal by the *Absorbed Areas Act* (Saha & Chakraborty 2017). It is astonishing that after India's independence, the '*Nepalis*' [Indian Nepali speaking people] felt insecure as they were branded as foreigners on Indian soil. Their fear further got entrenched when a section of the Assamese started a drive to push the *Bahiragatas* [the outsiders] out from Assam (Misra 1986) and the '*Nepalis*' were also a constituent of what the Assam dwellers had termed as '*Bahiragatas*'. Simultaneously, the then Chairperson of the Language Commission, B.G. Kher, characterized Nepali language as 'foreign' language in 1956. In this situation the '*Nepalis*' started demanding the inclusion of Nepali language into the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Scholars had argued that at the root of the demand for inclusion of Nepali in the Eighth Schedule was the understanding that no government machinery will be able to effectively implement or enforce the safeguards preserved for minorities [religious, cultural and linguistic] in the Constitution, unless Nepali is given constitutional recognition (Munshi & Chakrabarti 1979). When the demand is to recognise the local language [Nepali] as the medium of instruction in the hills, the Government of West Bengal engaged itself in the process of bargaining with the hill masses in order to neutralise their demand for a separate state. In several occasions, state had turned down their legitimate demand to introduce Nepali as the medium of instruction in the hills. After much contestation, Nepali was inserted into the Eight Schedule of the Constitution of India in 1992 (Saha 2016).

The historical transformation of this ethnic movement got reshaped in the form of demand for a separate politico-administrative institution in the hills. The leadership and the masses in the hills felt the need for such arrangements to carry forward their demands for autonomy. After a long struggle, a legislatively and financially inept politico-administrative body called Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council [DGHC] was formed in 1988. Despite the then prevailing mood of high anticipation from the Council [DGHC], the pattern of development, by DGHC and the leadership of GNLFF who led the Council hardly succeeded in actualizing the dreams of the people in the Hills. Although, DGHC was entrusted for economic, social, cultural and linguistic development of the people inhabiting the areas under its purview, its functioning not only failed to meet the expectations of the people but also found itself mired in alleged irregularities, favouritism in the case of employment, nepotism, autocratic leadership and highhandedness by the members of DGHC (Sarkar 2013). In addition to these, Ghising was unwilling to accommodate or listen to other leaders from the hills who also aspired for the creation of Gorkhaland. Critics allege that Ghising used different manoeuvres to outsmart his critics in the hills e.g. back and forth on the issue of implementing Sixth Schedule in the Darjeeling Hills, deferring elections (Sarkar 2013), playing politics over the worship of Durga in different forms etc (Middleton 2013; Saha 2016).

It is noteworthy to bring the issue of Sixth-Schedule in this context as an epistemological measure to bargain autonomy, which many ethnic movements in Northeast India showcase as a Constitutional arrangement for safeguarding their rights. This particular issue is important because of the fact that

earlier there was a proposal of granting Sixth-Schedule¹¹ status to the erstwhile DGHC but Ghising then declined the proposal by saying that the Sixth-Schedule status is for the tribal areas and Gorkhas are not tribes. But later on in 2006, he demanded the same provision for Darjeeling by saying that the Gorkhas are tribal (Saha 2016). The Indian Constitution provides with a provisions under the Sixth Schedule in Article 244[2] and 275[1] which states, 'If there are different Scheduled Tribes in an autonomous district, the Governor may, by public notification, divide the area or areas inhabited by them into autonomous regions' (Bakshi 2009: 341). This provision was thereby thought of as an arrangement for the Darjeeling Hills. But this was strongly opposed by GJM as a provision for the tribal areas whereas Darjeeling is a non-tribal area. They alleged that if Darjeeling is brought under this provision, it will mean that the region will be ruled by tribes and it will be a minority ruling the majority. Presently, there are almost 35 per cent people belonging to tribal¹² background (The Telegraph: January 24, 2006). It is also noteworthy that just five years before such political drama; Ghising introduced the *eighteen armed Durga* instead of the traditional image of Durga with *ten arms*. All these happened because of a tripartite meeting held in New Delhi on July, 2005, which agreed to bestow special arrangement under Sixth-Schedule for the Darjeeling hills which is a pro-tribal arrangement. Ghising introduced such idol worship to show the *distinctiveness* of Darjeeling hills in terms of its culture and practice (Outlook: October 11, 2005). Contrary to the above, there has been a growing 'tribalism,' among some sections of the people from the Hills of Darjeeling in order to get the Scheduled Tribe (ST) status so that they can bargain with the Government of India for their betterment (Middleton 2013; Tamang & Sitlhou 2018). This phenomenon re-asserts the notion that the Hill Dwellers have situational identity fixation (Saha 2016).

At the hindsight, the mass-appeal for achieving the goal of Gorkhaland under Ghising's leadership started showing cracks while the popular discontent of the masses swelled significantly. Ghising tried every trick to stay relevant in hill politics. But when his 'pet slogan' of conferring 'Sixth Schedule status to DGHC did not get desired support from the residents of Darjeeling; Ghising's days seemed to be numbered. Final attempt was hammered when his undisputed leadership got challenged by Bimal Gurung. His emergence as the new leader of the hills and the formation of GJM was preceded by the Prashant Tamang¹³ episode. Gurung arranged support for Tamang as a patron of the Prashant Tamang Fan Club for a popular Television programme called *Indian Idol* in 2007. Within two weeks of Tamang becoming the winner of this particular musical show, Gurung formed his party named GJM. He portrayed himself as the new *messiah* of the hill people, who felt alienated and victimized by the State in their struggle for self-rule and preservation of their unique identity. He, like Ghising, earlier was successful in unifying different sections of the hill people under the banner of Gorkha identity. This earned him support in the hills apart from his anti-Ghising and anti-DGHC campaigning (Sarkar 2013: 94-96). He overnight became the undisputed leader of the hills and with his style of functioning he provided an opportunity to the State to co-opt his leadership as well.

Gurung, who figured in the hill-politics after hard pressing the demand for Gorkhaland, he was also made to sit in for negotiation by the Government of West Bengal. As an outcome of repeated

¹¹ There is also a provision of granting autonomous councils to accommodate such dissents under the Sixth Schedule [applicable to tribal regions] of the Constitution of India, which can also be termed as protective discrimination.

¹² The Telegraph (January 24, 2006). Ghising on tribal status mission, Online, Available at [HTTP] http://www.telegraphindia.com/1060124/asp/siliguri/story_5759568.asp [Accessed on June 16, 2016]

¹³ Prashant Tamang of Darjeeling won the Indian Idol, a popular Television singing show, in September 2007.

negotiation with the Government of West Bengal, the GJM accepted the formation of *Gorkhaland Territorial Administration* [GTA] in 2011 which did not have specific legislative and financial powers, although it was empowered to frame few rules and regulations over the subjects handed over to it. Just on the eve of the signing of this Accord, the Trinamool Congress [TMC] assumed power in the Government of West Bengal and the supremo of the party found GJM as its ally to enter into the Darjeeling hill-politics. After the formation of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration [GTA], the West Bengal Government introduced a new ploy in the hill politics which was an antithesis to the demand for Gorkhaland under a united Gorkha banner. The state government started creating the Development Boards for the Lepchas, Sherpas, Bhutias, Mangars, Tamangs and others. It is regarded as an established fact that the Lepchas are the aboriginal people of Darjeeling and they want to preserve their culture and identity, which they deem to be distinct from that of the Gorkhas since 1920s. Moreover, they had been the rulers of Kalimpong which is still strongly etched in their mind. Now, as the Gorkhas are demanding a state in the name of Gorkhaland, it gives them a kind of *negative romanticism* to their past. If the Gorkhas have a new state, then the apprehension is that all the Darjeeling dwellers will be ruled by the dominant ethnic group i.e. the 'Nepalis'- in the name of 'Gorkhas.' That is why, during the *Nepali Bhasa Andolan* in the hills, the Lepcha-Bhutias were less presumptuous to come under the banner of *Gorkha*, as they perceived it to be a threat to their culture (Subba 1992; Sarkar 2013). Hence, this sort of ontological assertion of autonomy is self-defeating in nature as there is internal political dynamism quelled by intra and inter-ethnic conflict.

5. Contemporary Politics of Autonomy in Darjeeling

We have discussed in the earlier section about the 'reluctance' of the Lepchas and Bhutias to come into the Gorkha-fold and presumably there seems to be lot of imagination to this process by these groups. It is said that the seeds of this shrinking of solidarity among the Lepchas and Bhutias was sown during 1920s when the Nepali speaking people of Darjeeling demanded Nepali to be introduced as a medium of instruction in the schools (Subba 1992). Whether these ethnic [Lepchas, Bhutias etc.] groups were taken into confidence and how participative the process was if at all they were taken into confidence to bring them under the umbrella ethnicity of '*Gorkha*' is still questionable. As these groups are being provided different development boards by the Government of West Bengal, if the granting of the same can be termed as the whimsical act of the state? It is also still questionable. Apart from that, the cause of degeneration of solidarity among them has been felt by the emerging '*Nepali leaderships* as well'. When there are diverse ethnic groups in the hills, it is less likely that the other groups [Lepcha, Bhutia etc.] will have an inclination to always congregate under the umbrella of a single *Gorkha* ethnicity or solidarity under a *single* [Nepali speaking] ethnic group. This might pave the way for the emergence of *multiple leaderships* in the Hills of Darjeeling (Subba 1988).

The irony of this movement has also been the lack of understanding among the leadership of the Gorkhaland movement who have largely failed to realize their own cultural, ideological and racial heterogeneity in Darjeeling and thereby the chances of an emergence of '*negative solidarity*' (Subba 1988). Now, with the creation of different 'Development Boards' for various existing ethnic groups in Darjeeling these negative solidarities have spilled over, which have affected the Gorkhaland movement. This phenomenon has influenced a change in the contemporary politics of Darjeeling as well. It is observed that taking the advantage of such internal divide and the lack of foresight of the

leadership of the movement, the ruling party in the Government of West Bengal have started making inroads into the hill politics with the lure of ‘development’. Some of these ‘development’ measures of the state government included - declaration of providing land rights in Mirik (The Telegraph: May 10, 2017), opening up a campus of Presidency University at Dow Hills in Kalimpong (Business Standard: August 22, 2015), Rs 1500 crore investment proposal at ‘economic summit’ in Darjeeling (Business Standard: March 14, 2018) etc. among others. It is important to note here that the question of land-right has always been an important issue in most of the ethnic movement in the Northeast India as well where ‘identity and land’ appears to be a rallying point in these movements (Ray, Sarmah, & Chakraborty 2017). This is perhaps one of the important reason, apart from other developmental planks declared by the state government, that the Trinamool Congress [TMC] was able to capture the Mirik civic body in 2017 Hill election. The presumption gets more astute when we consider the following statement of a person from Mirik in a press briefing:

Whether it is in Gorkhaland or in Bengal, the land issue has to be solved. Since the land is not registered in our names, we get nothing. Every land transaction is unofficial. We cannot avail ourselves of house loans or even agriculture loans from government. Even to get an electricity connection, one needs a no-objection certification from the tea garden.

(The Telegraph: May 10, 2017).

Although the quoted only mentions about Mirik but there are sufficient literature which suggests that land has a role to play in ethnic struggles in these areas. Inter-ethnic conflicts between the Nepalis and Lepcha-Bhutia communities over land possession were noticed in Kalimpong in 1876 even before the First Settlement in 1882 (Hunter 1974: 122; cited in Sarkar 2010). Evidently enough, it was also reported that the Lepchas were fast losing their lands to the Nepalis (Bell 1905; Philpot 1925; cited in Sarkar 2010: 96). Astonishingly, most of the ethnic Nepalis were the ones who were encouraged to become *mandals*¹⁴ in Kalimpong and were also favoured to possess land by the British, because of their familiarity with the work as well as their Khaskura speaking abilities. Although only the hill-men of the ethnic communities [Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepali] were entitled to become *mandals*, eventually the Nepalis grabbed the opportunity bypassing the ethnic Lepchas and Bhutias (Sarkar 2010: 94). So, land remains embedded in the struggle for autonomy in the Hills of Darjeeling and identity as well. Taking advantage of the prevailing situation in the Hills, particularly with Gurung’s waning ‘popularity’, the lure of ‘development’ and the ethnic factionalism over land; the ruling party in the state succeeded in ‘eluding’ the hill people under its fold and also to vote for it in the Civic Body Election of 2017. This is for the first time a plain-based party became victorious in any civic poll at the Hills of Darjeeling since the formation of Gorkha National Liberation Front [GNLF] in 1980s. The expectations of the hill people were thought to be reflected in the victory of TMC, which would usher in ‘development’. But, events unfolded in a different manner as the Government of West Bengal declared Bengali as a subject to be taught compulsorily under the three-language formula throughout the state. Later on, after realizing the loopholes in this decision, this policy was rolled back but by then most of the damages was already hammered (The Indian Express May 27, 2017).

¹⁴ Mandals were basically responsible for revenue collection and this system existed in Bhutan. So, they possess a huge chunk of land and later became de facto landowners of this area. As Kalimpong was a part of Bhutan before it was merged with Darjeeling, it inherited this system of revenue collection as it is.

This issue, which the hill dwellers had termed as ‘linguistic imperialism’ by the state, gave Gurung a fresh chance to regain his waning popularity among the masses. It was a golden opportunity for Gurung, which he grabbed with both hands, to once again portray himself as the *messiah* of the hill people. However, this time the Government of West Bengal co-opted another GJM member, Benoy Tamang, a fellow activist of Gurung and the movement which was at its peak, ultimately started waning. This phenomenon reminds us of the fate of late Subhash Ghising, who similarly, if not identically, was forced out of Darjeeling as Bimal Gurung was ousted. In fact, Ghising was ousted by Gurung which created a vacuum in hill politics ultimately fulfilled by his co-optation and the formation of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration [GTA] in 2011 by discarding the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council [DGHC] altogether. In similar lines, Gurung whose popularity was declining was outsmarted by Benoy Tamang *albeit* with state patronage to become the new Chairperson of the GTA Board of Administrators without any fresh mandate. Thus, Tamang became the new Gurung who became the new Ghising during his heydays; a cycle of leadership follows the other where appropriation and extermination with the tacit indulgence of the state continues unabatedly.

6. Conclusion

The above discussions clearly pointed out that the widely accepted form of autonomy, among the available ontologies of autonomy, in the Hills of Darjeeling is anchored in the creation of a separate state named Gorkhaland. This is also reflected in the secondary literatures as well as in the perceptions of the select groups of interviewees during our fieldwork. Other than having a state for them, there is another ontological assertion, although not hard-pressed, for a national level body – the *Gorkha National Satellite Council* - for the ‘Gorkhas’ living outside the proposed area of Gorkhaland. But, the ontological strategies to achieve the aspired form of autonomy i.e. Gorkhaland varies from discarding the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship 1950 to making Darjeeling an UT as well as the reluctance of the hill-intelligentsia towards implementing the Constitutional provision of Sixth-Schedule to the drafting of *The West Bengal Reorganization Bill 2016*. However, scholars (Subba 1992; Samanta 2000; Sarkar 2013) have noted that there are other sections of people like Lepchas and Bhutias who have other ontological submissions on this autonomy question. This section of the people epistemologically feels lukewarm to subscribe to the term ‘Gorkha’ in their demand for a separate state. As the Lepchas’ claim that they are not ‘Gorkhas’, so anything in the name of Gorkha is merely against their ontology of autonomy, they believe. Lepchas’ ontological aspiration also reflects in their imagination to have a state, but epistemologically they want it in a different nomenclature, which will hardly accommodate the name Gorkha. Although there are pluralities in the ontological strategies to arrive at the aspired form of autonomy, there is a serious lack of epistemological unanimity amongst the people to bargain the same. This is one of the foremost paradoxes of this autonomy movement.

Secondly, the practice of autonomy in the Hills of Darjeeling puts a question mark over the fructification of this autonomy aspiration. Observers of this movement may notice a unique pattern where the state government is ultimately able to change the rhetoric of the movement once it gathers sufficient momentum. Whenever the popular aspiration of getting a full-fledged statehood reaches its zenith, as it happened during 1980s and 2000s, both Ghising and Gurung were co-opted through the statist version of ‘rational’ legal-jurisprudential form of autonomy by respectively signing the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Accord in 1988 and Gorkhaland Territorial Administration in 2011.

In the contemporary times, as observed in case of Gurung, this statist version of autonomy thriving on 'rationality' dismantled the leadership through the formation of different 'Development Boards' by activating the 'constituent self' within the overarching ethnic mobilization in the Hills. This paved the way for the ruling TMC to capture the Mirik local body at the cost of overall ethnic unity in the Hills. The final attempt was hammered out when Benoy Tamang, who replaced Gurung and became the new leader of GTA Board of Administrators in Darjeeling. As mentioned in the introduction regarding the roots of autonomy – 'reason' and 'aspiration' – the legal jurisprudential provisions based on 'rationality' again co-opted the situationality of the 'aspirational' root of this autonomy struggle. Whether it was during Ghising or Gurung, the results were the same. This shows that whenever the aspirational form of autonomy tries to make headway, it is the rational form of autonomy that pulls down the aspirational form of autonomy. Precisely, this is another paradox of autonomy in the Hills of Darjeeling.

Thirdly, within the autonomy movement in the Hills of Darjeeling there is now a tendency towards a '*tribal*' turn amongst the 'constituent self' in the absence of any epistemological unanimity amongst the section of the hill-leadership to realize the popular aspiration on autonomy. Now, every section of the hill-people aspires to achieve the constitutionally guaranteed Scheduled Tribe status, which earlier was negated by the majority in the leadership since according to their understanding the majority in the hills are non-tribal; paradoxically this arrangement now retreats in the imaginations of the people on their ontologies of autonomy. The 'constituent self', particularly the Lepchas and Bhutias among others, are epistemologically at loggerheads with the 'overarching self'. Here, we can see another paradox of autonomy layered within it. If the 'constituent self', who now are demanding the ST status, through the Constitutional provisions; even though at the cost of 'overarching self' in order to benefit the '*individuated self*' within the 'constituents'.

Fourthly, it is noticed in the ethnic-movements throughout the Northeast India that control over land act as positive catalyst in fuelling such conflicts, so is the case in the Hills of Darjeeling. Sufficient literature points to the role it plays in the conflict between Lepcha-Bhutias with Nepalis in Kalimpong. When the academia is still sceptical about private ownership as a form of autonomy, and when we already have examples of ethnic conflicts over ownership of land; the declaration of the Government of West Bengal to provide land-*patta* to the landless in Mirik and the aspiration of the landless people to ask for the same paradoxically seems another tactics of the state. This appears to be the underlying paradox often submerged within the monistic ontological understanding associated with the movement in the Darjeeling Hills.

Finally, we can now sum up by saying, although the notion of *perception* can be subsumed within the conceptual understanding of *aspiration*, we provided a nuanced epistemological understanding of this autonomy movement by analyzing it through *perception*.

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BJP AND COALITION POLITICS: STRATEGIC ALLIANCES IN THE STATES OF NORTHEAST

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Abstract

The BJP has dramatically increased its footprint across the states of Northeast India and has emerged as the 'fulcrum party' in Northeast India. Despite numerous contradictions in goals and values between the BJP and regional parties in Northeast India, it has formed 'strategic alliances' in order to achieve its goal of a 'Congress mukt Bharat'(CMB). The regional parties too have flocked to the BJP because of the 'linear relationship model' that determines centre-state relations, i.e. regional parties tend to align with that party which controls the purse at the centre. Anti-incumbency factor, the emergence of NEDA, assembly floor management, 'paratroopers' to the BJP, the growth of the RSS, the role of party strategists, and the co-option of regional leaders to the BJP have strengthened BJP's presence in Northeast India. This paper highlights the reasons for the growth of the BJP and its relations with regional parties in Northeast India and points out the contradiction and challenges that will shape this complex relationship.

The electoral success of the BJP in the sixteenth Lok Sabha elections (2014) can be attributed to a number of factors. While the 'Modi factor' may have been a trump card, the victory of the BJP 'could be attributed to its ability to appeal to voters who had not been well mobilised previously, and in places where the party had been weaker in earlier elections'.¹In states like Assam, it witnessed unprecedented electoral success. The political expansion of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in terms of electoral seats as well as its acceptance and popularity amongst the electorate in the states of Northeast India indeed presents a fascinating story which must be analysed.

Suhas Palshikar was of the view that the BJP has emerged as the central political force in Indian politics replacing the Congress², and now it has begun to spread its presence in the states of Northeast India. A party which is generally perceived as a 'North Indian', 'Hindu Party', 'Marwari Party' by most of the people of Northeast India, has now it has been able to transcend this 'North Indian' image and become a dominant political player in the states of Northeast India. Through alliances with regional parties, the BJP has usurped the role of the Congress and it now determines the fortunes of the region which connects 'mainland' India to Southeast Asia. Chief Ministers of 4 states in Northeast India (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura) are from the BJP, furthermore this party is part of the ruling coalition in Nagaland and Meghalaya. Only the state of Sikkim and Mizoram

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¹ Louise Tillin (2015) Indian elections 2014: explaining the landslide, Contemporary South Asia, 23:2, 117-122, DOI: 10.1080/09584935.2015.1030354, P.118

² John Harriss (2015) Hindu Nationalism in Action: The Bharatiya Janata Party and Indian Politics, South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, 38:4, p.717

remains out of its ambit. This paper examines the reasons for the expansion of BJP in Northeast India and the nature of coalition politics in the states of Northeast India under the ‘Modi era’.

The Saffron Surge: 2014-2019

The saffron surge is prominent as the BJP has expanded its presence to a number of states of Northeast India.

States	BJP : No. of Seats in Lok Sabha before 2014 general elections	BJP: No. of Seats in Lok Sabha after 2014 general elections
Assam	4 (2009 Lok Sabha election)	7 (2014 Lok Sabha election)
Arunachal	0	1

BJP is yet to open its account in states of Sikkim, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura and Meghalaya.

Prior to 2014 general elections, the BJP only had 4 seats from Northeast India, i.e. state of Assam, in the Lok Sabha. Now the number of seats for the BJP has doubled and its vote share too has increased substantially. The vote share of BJP too has increased after state assemblies elections in Northeast India. The party has now assumed pan-Indian dimension, and this has strengthened BJP’s claims that it has grown beyond a ‘Hindi-belt’ party. At a press conference, BJP President Amit Shah opined “we have an MP in Ladakh and Kerala. We have a government in Kohima and in Kutch.” A total of twenty five Lok Sabha seats from Northeast India may prove to be critical for the BJP in due course of time.

Assembly Seats Won (Congress Vs BJP)

Sr. No.	State	Post 2014				
		Assembly election Year	Congress	BJP	CM /party	Parties supporting NEDA
1	Arunachal Pradesh	2014	42	11	Nabam Tuki. Congress	
		2017	1	49	Pema Khandu, BJP	BJP
2	Assam	2016	26	60	Sarbananda Sonowal, BJP	BJP
3	Manipur	2017	28	21	Nongthombam Biren Singh, BJP	BJP
4	Meghalaya	2018	21	2	Conrad Sangma , NPP	Member NEDA
5	Mizoram	2013	34	0	Lal Thanhawla, Congress	
6	Nagaland	2018	0	12	Neiphiu Rio, NDPP	Member NEDA
7	Tripura	2018	0	36	Biplab Kumar Deb, BJP	BJP
8	Sikkim	2014	0	0	Pawan Kumar Chamling, SDF	Member NEDA

A comparative picture of Congress and the BJP in the State Assemblies of Northeast India

In addition to the goal of Congress Mukt Bharat (CMB), winning assembly seats and having favourable allies is also important for it will help the BJP control the Upper House of the Parliament.

Reasons for the Saffron Surge

The saffron surge has been felt in two folds- *firstly*, increase of vote share and assembly seats in state of Northeast India; *secondly*, the surge is also linked with change of perception and greater acceptability of the BJP as a party by the electorate who had earlier perceived it as a ‘marwari party’. In both these instances, a greater insight is needed for the dramatic transformation of fortunes of the BJP in Northeast India. The increase in vote share and seats of the BJP in assembly elections can be attributed to a number of factors.

Anti-Incumbency Factor

The governments in the states of Assam and Tripura were bound to face this challenge.³ In such a scenario, any government will face a difficult time from the electorates, but the failure to anticipate the level of discontentment amongst the masses must be pinned down to the party high command. An ostrich type attitude did not help the Congress or the CPI-M in Assam and Tripura respectively. The need for ‘parivartan’ in 2014 marked the beginning of ascendancy of the BJP in Assam when it captured seven Lok Sabha seats in Assam. The BJP kept issues of ‘cow politics’ and ‘Ram Mandir’ aside and struck an alliance with the BPF and the AGP and through the slogan of ‘jati, mati, bheti’ stressed to keep the cultural and territorial sanctity intact for its sons of soil. In 2016, the war cry of a new “battle of Saraighat” by the BJP helped galvanise the ‘khilonjiyas’ against the ‘outsiders’.⁴ As Bhattacharjee point out, “Alignment with regional groups who led mass political movements in order to drive out the “Bengali Muslims” have obviously benefited the RSS and BJP camp.”⁵

A post poll survey conducted by CSDS shows that ‘the levels of discontent against the performance of the Tripura government and the Chief Minister were fairly high — close to a third of respondents were “fully dissatisfied”. Past surveys have shown that such high levels of discontent are a clear indicator that a government is on its way out.’⁶ In Meghalaya too, which went to polls in 2018, the CSDS polls show that people were dissatisfied with the ruling Congress Government. Bucking the anti -incumbency factor will always be a test for any party, more so when a pro-Modi wave was being felt strongly across the nation.

Northeast Development Alliance (NEDA): The Anti-Congress Alliance

Regional parties have flocked to the NEDA. Formed in May 24, 2016, this political coalition seeks to bring about an alliance between BJP and non-congress and regional parties. Such an attempt was made earlier too when the North-East Regional Political Front was floated by the Naga People’s Front (NPF) and AGP in October 2013. NEDA was formed the same day the Sarbananda Sonowal took Oath of Office for the post of Chief Minister. For Ram Madhav, a key strategist for the BJP, there

³ Tarun Gogoi led Congress government in Assam was in power for three terms, from 2001-2016; In Tripura, the CPI-M was in power for 25 years and Manik Sarkar was the Chief Minister for twenty years.

⁴ Akhil R. Dutta (2017) BJP’s Electoral Victory in Assam, 2016: Co-opting the Khilonjiyas. *Social Change*, 47(1), p.3

⁵ Malini Bhattacharjee (2016) Tracing the Emergence and Consolidation of Hindutva in Assam, *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 16, 2016 vol LI no 16, p.87

⁶ Discontent powers vote for change, *The Indian Express*, March 5, 2018

Available at <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/northeastern-states-2018-assembly-elections-tripura-polls-meghalaya-nagaland-left-front-5086021/>, accessed on 26.8.2018

would be spill over effects and “these parties have joined the NEDA holds tremendous significance in that it would immensely help the states of the region resolve several inter-state and intra-state issues that have been pending for long.”⁷ The ambitious Act East Policy will require synergy amongst political parties and NEDA can play an active role in coordinating policies, services and goals. But ‘Act East implies different things for different states in the region - for Meghalaya it is Act South to find new motorable routes to Bangladesh; for Tripura it is Act West to improve its trade with Bangladesh through the Chittagong port; for Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, Act North is critical for India's geostrategic interests. NEDA can offer foreign policy aid and advice to these states in order to better engage with its five neighbouring countries.’⁸

The formation of Northeast Democratic Alliance (NEDA) was vital in holding the ‘flock’ together. Parties such as People's Party of Arunachal, Asom Gana Parishad, Bodoland People's Front, Ganashakti Party, Manipur Peoples Party, Manipur Democratic People's Front, National People's Party, United Democratic Party, Hill State People's Democratic Party, People's Democratic Front, Mizo National Front, Sikkim Democratic Front, Indigenous People's Front of Tripura and the BJP constitute the NEDA.⁹ There is a general tendency among the regional parties in Northeast India that they tend to align with the party in power at the centre. Several instances reveal that parties have changed track and leadership to ensure that a ‘linear relation’ exists between the regional and the party at the centre. Past history has revealed that regional parties of Northeast India have been rather fickle minded when it comes to supporting the party at the centre. The states of Northeast India are very resource dependent on the Centre and therefore ‘shifting alliances’ has become a norm. The formation of BJP led NEDA is an attempt to consolidate these floating alliances. Barring 13th Lok Sabha where the BJP consolidated its position, and the 6th (1977) 11th (1996) and 12th (1998), the most Lok Sabhas’ has been dominated by the Congress. During the decline of Congress era, India witnessed the proliferation of political parties. Over the years, there have been several instances where regional political parties have changed alliances to suit their political convenience.

During the 1990s, regional parties such as the AGP was part of the ruling coalition governments led by V.P. Singh, H.D. Deve Gowda and Inder Kumar Gujral, which was supported from outside by the Congress. Another regional party, the BPF which was part of the ruling Tarun Gogoi led Congress government in 2006, is now a member of the NDA. The ‘slipperiness’ in terms of shifting alliances is not just limited to regional parties, but occasionally ‘mainstream’ national parties have also indulged in the unthinkable. In the state of Mizoram, when elections to the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) in April 2018 delivered a hung result, the Congress and the BJP formed an alliance ‘United Legislature Party (ULP)’, to prevent the Mizo National Front (MNF) from controlling the Council. It critically reveals a few things- *firstly*, though the central leadership of BJP and the Congress were uncomfortable with the ‘marriage of convenience’, there is little they could do because control over their own party members and politicians in Northeast India is a tad more difficult when compared to top down control approach of mainstream parties in central India. It is largely because regional leaders are more politically entrenched and hold considerable clout in their own constituency.

⁷ BJP gets 10 regional parties under NE Democratic Alliance umbrella, The Indian Express, June 24, 2016

⁸ BJP Acts East With New Anti-Congress Bloc, Puts Himanta Biswa In Charge, available at <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/hours-after-sonowal-oath-ceremony-bjp-forms-anti-congress-bloc-in-northeast-1409824>, accessed on 26.8.2018

⁹ In spite of PM Modi’s push for a digital India, NEDA does not have any official website till date, and neither any document is available which clearly states its members or its structures. Furthermore, it has not yet released any public document stating its objectives and goals.

Secondly, what is also revealed that the fickle nature of coalition politics in the peripheral India, is rarely highlighted by the national media. Such a coalition of two bitter parties forming an alliance to keep a regional party away from assuming power, even at the grassroots level is unthinkable in any of the mainstream states. Indeed, out of sight is out of mind and therefore such fickle coalition politics is quickly brushed under the carpet. *Thirdly*, in peripheral states, for the sake of occupying public offices, parties whether regional or national, and for the leadership too, ideology hardly matters and everyone wants to enjoy the 'spoils' of such a system. What makes the proposition of shifting alliances in Northeast India more of a permanent feature is that the states continue to be dependent on the centre for all the funds. The Northeastern states are resource rich but revenue generation continues to be negligible and hence continue to be economically dependent on 'New Delhi'. By the creation of NEDA, it is expected that the states of Northeast India would move from 'briefcase politics to development politics.'¹⁰ Critically looking at the NEDA, it is part of a backup plan for BJP to be part of ruling coalition in states where it does not have enough seats or negligible political presence. The states of North East India need the BJP because they are resource dependent on the Centre where BJP controls the 'briefcase'. The BJP needs the smaller states of Northeast India to claim that they are home to seventy percent of the Indian population. The BJP needs allies, even if small, for the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls. Amit Shah pointed "We want to win more than 21 seats out of 25 seats from North East."¹¹ These seats are critical for the BJP because it seeks to balance any losses that emanates from the Hindi heartland. More importantly, in quest of a CMB, for the BJP, it simply helps to 'rub it in'. Essentially, it is an anti-Congress bloc.

Post Elections Strategy and Floor Management Skills of the BJP

The 2014 Lok Sabha results have tremendously boosted the self-confidence of the BJP leadership and the Modi- Shah combination has made sure that the winning juggernaut continues and spills on to the Assembly elections. Since then, elections have taken place in 27 assemblies where the BJP was won Haryana, Himachal, Uttarakhand, Tripura, UP, Assam and Gujarat with relative ease. With pre and post poll alliance with regional and other parties, it has formed government in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Nagaland.

With the help of smaller parties, defections and favourable governors, The BJP has been able to form government in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya. The state of Arunachal Pradesh has seen political turmoil and politicians have defected from one party to another in the last two years. In 2014, Assembly elections in Arunachal Pradesh saw BJP get only 11 seats and the Congress 42 seats. However after large scale defections, and quick succession of four chief ministers, BJP now has 48 MLAs and has formed the government in the state. In Manipur, after the 2012 assembly elections, the BJP had only 21 seats in a 60 member Assembly. Yet, with quick the help of local parties like the NPP and the NPF, the BJP was invited by the Governor Najma Heptullah (who is a member of the BJP) to form the government. On being accused of being no neutral, she remarked "I know Congress is still largest party, it's not incumbent. It's the responsibility of Governor vested by the Constitution

¹⁰ Under BJP and its allies North East has moved from 'briefcase politics to development politics': Amit Shah, available at <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-under-bjp-and-its-allies-north-east-has-moved-from-briefcase-politics-to-development-politics-amit-shah-2617072>, accessed on 26.8.2018

¹¹ Amit Shah sets target of 21 Lok Sabha seats from northeast - Times of India, May 24, 2018

to weigh and measure stability.”¹²Likewise, in Meghalaya too, inspite if getting only two seats in a 60 member assembly, it is now a part of the NPP led ruling coalition. Indeed, while the Congress won the largest number of seats and also staked claim before the respective governor to form government but the BJP managed to secure a majority there with post-poll alliances and their leaders were sworn in as chief ministers.¹³The Congress has emerged as the ‘new untouchable’ for the smaller regional parties in Northeast India.

RSS and its Support Base

The RSS has been able to expand base across the country and the states of Northeast India have also come under its radar. The RSS has painstakingly deepened its roots in the states of Northeast India where ethnic diversity and tribal aspirations have led to demands for sovereignty and creation of new states. The states of Northeast India, RSS faces problems which are peculiar from those of mainland India. While several Vivekananda Kendras and schools, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, medical camps, and coaching centres have been set up in different states, the issues of ‘Hindu’ refugees, eating habits in Christian dominated states, the push for Hindi language have proved that it won’t be any easy to win over the hearts of peoples in Northeast India. Though ‘sister’ institutions and organisations like Yuva Vikas Kendra, Ekal Vidyalaya, Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, Rashtra Sevika Samiti and Vivekananda Kendra, the RSS has been able to make its presence felt by reaching out to tribal youths and ‘to concentrate on clean slates.’ According to Bidyut Chakraborty, “RSS has a strong network in the North-East and with the BJP being in power at the centre and in some of the states, it is natural that the RSS would try to be more visible, and expand its already present organizational network.”¹⁴¹⁵Issues of Ram Mandir or protection of cows or ‘nationalism’ is unlikely to cut ice in this part of the country. The Namami Brahmaputra festival and the ‘deendayalisation’¹⁶ of institutions in Assam has only led to more criticism. Additionally, its base in Nagaland and Mizoram continues to be weak. It has however picked up emotive issues such as conferment of Bharat Ratna to Rani Gaidinliu, the legendary Naga freedom fighter to strengthen its claim that it will honour those regional heroes who have been ignored by erstwhile governments. Its ‘one nation, one culture’ might just be tweaked to suit its political interest in the coming years.

Role of Chanakya

The rate at which BJP has expanded its footprint across the length and breadth of India, is surely going to make its rivals more worried than ever before. The Congress has been rather slow when it comes to choosing allies or in making decisions on support to a regional party. When it comes to hung electoral results, the BJP was more decisive and proactive, willing to sacrifice any ministerial claim

¹² ‘Governor Najma Heptulla invites BJP to form government in Manipur, explains why she didn’t call Congress’, available at <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-governor-najma-heptulla-invites-bjp-led-group-to-form-government-in-manipur-2352509>, accessed on 22.08.2018

¹³ Post-poll alliances were preferred by governor in Goa, Manipur and Meghalaya, The Times of India, May 16, 2018

¹⁴ RSS initiates a mass contact programme in North-East India, Konkan, parts of UP, Available at <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/JucGzLSVI6LxzkWywXLoTI/RSS-initiates-a-mass-contact-programme-in-NorthEast-India.html>, accessed on 26.8.2018

¹⁵ Referred to Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right, Tapan Basu, Pradip Datta, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar and Sambuddha Sen, in ‘Target northeast: How RSS plans to make region saffron’, The Hindustan Times, Dec15, 2014.

¹⁶ ‘Deendayalisation’ broadly refers to naming of public educational institutions and roads by the BJP government in Assam after Deen Dayal Upadhyay who was the co-founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangha.

but in the process making sure that it is part of the non- Congress led ruling coalition in states of Northeast India. After learning the hard lesson in Goa and Manipur where the Congress was unable to form the government inspite of getting more seats than the BJP, the Congress high command dispatched its leaders Kamal Nath, Mukul Wasnik and Ahmed Patel to Shillong to cobble up an alliance to form a government, but here too it was shrewdly out maneuvered by the BJP tacticians.

It becomes very clear that the BJP for the sake of 'Congress Mukta Bharat' (CMB), the BJP is willing to be 'junior partner' to regional parties, especially in Northeast India. However, the CMB goal for the BJP would not have been possible without its 'Chanakya'- Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma. A former AASU leader and a Congressman, Dr. Sarma joined the BJP in July 2015, is now the chief trouble shooter for the BJP and is the main architect of the 'rainbow coalition', wherein the BJP seeks to coexist with its regional partners through dialogue from a margin rather than pushing forward claims and demands through a top down approach. In spite of having substantial Christian population in Meghalaya and other states of Northeast India, what really helped swing regional parties towards the BJP is that it controls power at the Centre. Sarma's skills at negotiation and man management and his ability to hold the attention of the audience through rousing speeches, have all been a striking feature of his political journey. During his days in the Congress, Tarun Gogoi, the Chief Minister (2001-2016) was constantly dependent and defending Sarma for all his acts and deeds. But things started to go sour eventually and in 2015, Sarma along with other 'young turks' eventually joined the BJP, it was beginning of the end of the Tarun Gogoi Congress regime in Assam. Himanta Biswa Sarma has continued to maintain healthy relations with his Congress counterparts in other states and has made new friends in the last three years which has cemented his stature in the BJP. Indeed the "mainstreaming the northeast region" in the country's politics has been the focus for this 'Chanakya', and Himanta Biswa Sarma has proved to be BJP's man in Northeast, again.¹⁷ His political acumen and the ability to reach out to regional politicians has culminated in the BJP entering new frontiers and has also strengthened its position amongst communities which were seldom seen as being part of the 'mainstream'.

Co-option of Regional Leaders to the BJP

The electoral support for BJP has been on the rise for the last few years but seldom has it translated into seats. The BJP had won only 4 seats in 2009 Lok Sabha polls and 5 seats in the Assembly (2011 polls) from the state of Assam. It had virtually no political strength or leadership in other states of Northeast India. But now it is beginning to flex its muscles and through pre-poll alliances and co-option of regional leaders to its fold, it has taken significant strides to sideline the grand old party and establish itself as the 'fulcrum party' of the Northeast India. The electoral victory in the Assam in 2016 proved to be a major turning point for this party for it helped open the gateway to other states in Northeast India. Perhaps, such an upturn in political fortunes would not have been possible without co-option of regional leaders under its umbrella.

¹⁷ Himanta Biswa Sarma is BJP's man in Northeast, again, The Deccan Chronicle, March 3, 2018; Also refer to Vikas Tripathy and Sandhya Goswami's article (2018) National Narrative and Regional Subtext: Understanding the Rise of BJP in Assam in Studies in Indian Politics, 6(1), 60-70., where they argued that three factors contributed to BJP's success in Assam; firstly, the need for a strong state-level leadership and declaration Sarbanand Sonowal as the CM candidate; secondly, a strong anti-incumbency wave in Assam and projection of state politics into a two party system, i.e. Congress versus BJP; and thirdly, the induction of Himanta Biswa Sarma into the BJP, all were critical factors.

The expansion of the BJP to the 'frontier states' is definitely far more complicated because of its ideological moorings. Till recently, in Northeast India, the Congress was seen as a 'custodian' of tribals, dalits and religious minorities, but slowly regional parties (AGP *etc*), parties which seek to represent minority religions (AIUDF *etc*) and parties which represent tribal communities (ASDC, BPF *etc.*) have started to carve out its own political space and each of these parties have witnessed the emergence of leaders who are beginning to get more vocal and want a share of the pie. While the BJP and the Congress will continue to strive for political space in Northeast India, barring the AIUDF, no other party is untouchable for the BJP and *vice versa*.

Regional leaders have 'paradropped' on BJP before elections. In the state of Assam, leaders from the AGP and the Congress started joining the BJP well before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Trouble signs were already apparent with growing anti-congress sentiments in Assam. The question was who could really fill the political space which was bound to be created due to poor performance of the Tarun Gogoi led Congress Government? The AGP is a shadow of its past and the fear of being swamped by 'outsiders' led to the call for protection of 'Jaati, Mati, Bheti' by the BJP, struck the chord of the Assamese people. Sarbananda Sonowal, the current CM of Assam from BJP was a AGP legislator from Moran in 2011. Similarly, other AGP leaders such as Hitenda Nath Goswami, Chandra Mohan Patowary, Naba Doley, Padma Hazarika and Jagdish Bhuyan joined the BJP prior to the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Likewise, prominent congress leaders like Himanta B. Sarma who joined the BJP in 2015, was a Congress legislator from Jalukbari. Other Congress leaders such as Bolin Chetia Saikia, Pradan Baruah, Pallab Lochan Das, Piyush Hazarika, Rajen Borthakur, Abu Taher Bepari, Kripanath Mallah, Binanda Kumar, Jayanta Mallah Baruah followed the footsteps of Dr. Himanta B. Sarma. Most of the 'paratroopers' won elections on the BJP ticket and now have been well rewarded and hold ministerial positions in the Government of Assam.

In the state of Manipur, politics is essentially a power struggle between the Naga and Kuki hill tribes and the Meitei community which dominates the valley. The elections were held in backdrop of an economic blockade when new districts were created in the Naga dominated areas. Anti-incumbency factor must have definitely factor with the Nagas being critical of Ibodi led Congress Government. But the BJP has major challenges to deal with and the Naga Peace Accord will test the 'elasticity' of this coalition government. The current Chief Minister N Biren Singh was a member of the Congress from Heingang Constituency, joined the BJP in October 2016. Likewise other Congress leaders such as Francis Ngajokpa, Y. Erabot Singh, Vungzagin Valte, S. Achouba, T. Shyam Kumar, Y. Suryachandra, Ngamthang Haokip, S.Bira, Ginsuanhau, Paonam Brojen, T. Lokeshwar Singh have joined the BJP. Leaders belonging to the Trinamool Congress N Biswajit Singh, Joykishan Singh, Oinam Lukhoi and T. Robindra Singh also joined the BJP before the assembly elections. Once again, ministerial positions have been awarded to such regional leaders.

Meghalaya went to polls in 2018 and its verdict left enough scope for national parties to influence regional players. Congress which was in power for nine years, was always going to face an uphill task given the anti-incumbency factor and the defection of regional leaders to the BJP fold. But in a Christian dominated state, the BJP also realized that 'cow politics' will gravely hurt its chances; it did not mention anything about beef consumption in the Meghalaya party manifesto. It essentially implied that BJP for the sake of CMB, was ready to embrace a 'soft hindutva' image which spoke on diversity and respect for each other cultures and eating preferences. Prior to the elections, eleven

MLAs resigned from the Meghalaya Assembly which included seven of the Congress, one NCP, and four Independents.¹⁸ Subsequently many of them have joined the BJP. A.L. Hek, Billy Kid Sangma, Adolf LU Hitler Miller joined the BJP. Likewise Sanbor Shulliai (NCP), John Manner Marak (NPP) and other independent members also joined the BJP prior to elections. The election resulted in a split verdict, and Congress getting the most number of seats, BJP with two seats, still managed to have a piece of the pie. NPP leader Conrad Sangma submitted a letter of support to the Governor (who incidentally is from the BJP) from 34 MLAs, including 19 from NPP, six from United Democratic Party (UDP), four from People's Democratic Front (PDF), two each from Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) and the BJP, and an independent. While the BJP was willing to play a junior partner in the whole alliance, man management skills by Dr. Himanta B. Sarma and Ram Madhav proved to be pivotal in formation of the NPP led government in Meghalaya.

The state of Nagaland witnessed assembly elections in 2018. Politics in the state of Nagaland has been dominated by personalities and tribal identities, and solution to the Naga question is a dominant theme. It must be recalled that it must have been the only state in India to an opposition-less assembly, when eight Congress MLAs joined the Naga Peoples Front (NPF) led Democratic Alliance of Nagaland (DAN) in 2015. The NPF though it severed ties with the BJP before the elections, continues to be part of the BJP led NDA outside Nagaland. Several leaders joined the BJP in the process which include T. Lotha (NCP), Y. Patton, S. Paangyu Phom, Tovihoto Ayema, Longrineken, Jacob Zhimoni (NPF). The elections threw in a hung verdict where in the twelve seats won by the BJP proved to be vital. The BJP played its cards smartly and decided to go with its pre poll alliance with Neiphiu Rio led Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) rather than TR Zeliang led Nagaland Peoples Front (NPF).

The demise of the CPI(M) in Tripura is as spectacular as the rise of BJP led alliance with Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT). The BJP (35 seats) and the IPTF (8 seats) completely demolished the CPI(M) which won 13 seats and the Congress did not even open its account. While seeking a 'Communist Mukh Bhatrat' in Tripura, the BJP picked up issues of the 7th Pay commission and the need for honouring Bir Bikram Kishore Deb Burman of the Manikya dynasty whose contribution to Tripura was systematically ignored by the CPI-M. These issues along with the anti-incumbency factor certainly helped BJP extend its footprint in this left bastion and along with IPTF, which has a largely Christian support tribal base. But Tripura was one state where the RSS groundwork proved to be vital. Deeper introspection will reveal that, the establishment of its political foothold in Tripura would not have been possible without a fair number of political 'paratroopers' to the BJP. Prior to the assembly election in 2018, a number of regional leaders joined the BJP from across the political spectrum. In August 2017, 'led by Sudip Roy Barman, the MLAs - Ashish Kumar Saha, Diba Chandra Hrangkhawl, Biswa Bandhu Sen, Pranjit Singh Roy and Dilip Sarkar — along with hundreds of former Trinamool Congress leaders and workers, had joined the BJP.'¹⁹ Likewise, several Congress leaders also joined the BJP prior to the elections - Sudip Roy Barman (MLA from Agartala) , Ashish Kumar Saha (MLA from Town Bordowali seat), Diba Chandra Hrangkhwal (Karamchhara), Biswa Bandhu Sen (Dharmanagar), Pranajit Singh Roy (Radhakishorepur) and Dilip Sarkar (Badharghat). all got BJP tickets from the same constituencies. All these are urban and semi-urban seats, the traditional

¹⁸ Four Meghalaya MLAs join BJP two months ahead of assembly polls, The Indian Express, January 3, 2018

¹⁹ 6 TMC ex-MLAs in Tripura recognised as BJP legislators - Times of India, December 11, 2017

Congress stronghold in the state. Two other former Congress MLAs, Subal Bhowmik (MLA from Sonamura) and Manoj Deb (Kamalpur), have also received BJP tickets.²⁰ In due course, given that the BJP is opposed any creation of any more new states, it remains to be seen how the demand for Tipraland will shape the BJP-IPTF alliance.

In the state of Arunachal Pradesh, after the by-poll in 2017, the BJP now has 48 MLAs in the 60-member House along with nine PPA legislators, one Congress and two Independents. When elections were held in 2014, the results were totally in favour of the Congress.

Party	Seats won by the party
Bharatiya Janata Party	11
Indian National Congress	42
People's Party of Arunachal	5
Independent	2

Source: Election Commission of India, available at eci.nic.in

The change of fortunes for the BJP in the state of Arunachal Pradesh infact is closely related with the history of political instability in the state. Since January 1999 till July 2016, Arunachal Pradesh has witnessed eight chief ministers with none of them completing their five year tenure.²¹ The fluid nature of politics in Arunachal Pradesh can be seen by the fact that Pema Khandu, who became Chief Minister in July 2016, changed party affiliation twice in three months from the Congress to Peoples Party of Arunachal Pradesh and then joined the BJP in December 2016. BJP never won the mandate of the people but when Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu along with 42 Congress MLAs quit the party and joined Peoples Party of Arunachal (PPA) which is partner of NEDA, BJP's quest for a CMB was truly on track. It must be recalled that such shift in party allegiance is not new in the state of Arunachal Pradesh when in 2003 when under almost similar circumstances Gegong Apang took away MLAs from Congress and formed a BJP government only to return to the Congress fold.²² Essentially, in Arunachal Pradesh, the rise of fortunes of the BJP was not so much because of 'para-trooping' of leaders to this party, rather it was 'transplantation process' where in personnel were replaced, parties were created and all for the cause of saving the 'body politic'.

Sikkim goes to polls in 2019. In the 2014 Assembly elections, the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) won 22 and the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) won 10 seats in the 32 member Assembly, the BJP and the Congress did not open their account. It has lost considerable vote share in the recently held Gram Panchayat election in 2017, and now is increasingly come under pressure from the BJP leaders of Sikkim. Pawan Kumar Chamling who has become the longest serving Chief Minister of a state, is seeking to overcome the anti-incumbency factor. In 2017, three former SDF ministers – RB Subba, KN Upretri and Birbal Limbo and some middle-rung leaders joined the BJP.²³ The SDF does not have any formal alliance with the BJP at the state level but it continues to be a partner in NEDA. The BJP

²⁰ Tripura Assembly polls: All ex-Congress MLAs in BJP first list of 44, The Indian Express, January 28, 2108

²¹ Arunachal Pradesh is tired of political instability, available at <https://www.dailyo.in/politics/arunachal-pradesh-pema-khandu-congress-nabam-tuki-trans-arunachal-highway-nefa-tathagata-roy/story/1/12038.html>, accessed on 26.8.2018

²² BJP Forms Government In Arunachal Pradesh As Chief Minister Pema Khandu, 32 Others Join Party, nDTV.com, available at <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/bjp-forms-government-in-arunachal-pradesh-as-chief-minister-pema-khandu-32-others-join-party-1643769>, accessed on 26.8.2018

²³ Sikkim Democratic Front downplays three ex-ministers joining BJP, The Indian Express, December 26, 2017

is keen to have an alternative to the dominant SDF in Sikkim, and it may have to 'piggy back' on other parties to achieve its goal. Bhaichug Bhutia's recently formed the Hamro Sikkim Party (HSP) and already there are murmurs of a covert alliance between the BJP and the HSP. It won't be surprising to see that as Assembly elections come closer, more defections from the ruling party to others will become a reality.

Mizoram is going to have elections in December 2018, where the Congress and the MNF are dominant players.

Party	Seats 2013	Vote Share 2013	Seats 2008	Vote share 2008	Seats 2003	Vote share 2003	Seats 1998	Vote share 1998
INC	34	44.61	32	38.89	12	30.06	6	29.77
MNF	5	28.66	3	30.65	21	31.69	21	24.99
MPC	1	6.15	2	10.38	3	16.16	12	20.44

Source: Election Commission of India, available at eci.nic.in

Mizoram is probably one of the last bastions for the Congress, and it won't be easy to hold on to it. New parties are Zoram Exodus Movement (ZEM) and People's Representation for Identity and Status of Mizoram (PRISM) are likely to challenge the incumbent government. The MNF has ruled out any alliance with the BJP though it is a member of the NEDA, for the forthcoming assembly elections. 'Chakma politics' will be a dominant theme and interestingly the BJP (5 members) and the Congress (6 members) have jointly formed the Chakma Autonomous District Council to keep the MNF out. The BJP which virtually has very little presence in a Christian dominated state. In October 2017, the Maraland Democratic Front (MDF) and the BJP formally merged to counter the Congress in Mizoram. It remains to be seen how marriage of convenience between the NDF, MNF, BJP and NEDA works. Most regional parties would prefer the BJP rather than the Congress at this stage because it controls the 'purse' but the cliché 'nothing is permanent in politics', might just become a defining feature of politics in this frontier region.

One Nation, Multiple Contradictions: Challenges Ahead

For the BJP, getting together a group of anti-Congress regional parties might be as easy task, but the real challenge is managing the contradictions between 'one nation and regional aspirations'. The BJP policies and goals are often contrary to what the states of Northeast stand for. Palshikar argues that the expansion of BJP and its electoral success has made it more centrist and 'it has acquired a capacity to signal different meanings to different sections of its followers.'²⁴ To expand its political foothold in the states of northeast India, the BJP has adopted a 'soft hindutva' stand, sidelining issues such as 'beef politics'. The Northeast rather than being a monolith is a land of diversity-of cultures, aspirations and needs; and it is for this reason, that managing the 'ungovernable' region will be a herculean task. The 'friendship model' as espoused by the BJP where regional parties are working under an 'umbrella' framework may be punctured with holes due to glaring contradictions between the BJP's vision of 'akhand Bharat' and the demand for greater autonomy by the states of Northeast India. Moreover the resource dependence of the eight states on the Centre may lead greater strains on the economy.

²⁴ Suhas Palshikar (2015) The BJP and Hindu Nationalism: Centrist Politics and Majoritarian Impulses, South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, 38:4, 719-735, DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2015.1089460, p.722

Firstly, the challenge of territorial integrity and the demand for creation of new states and greater autonomy is perhaps the biggest challenge to the BJP at the Centre and for the NEDA. The issue of Nagalim, Bodoland and now Tipraland and inter-state boundary disputes is bound to shake the foundation of NEDA and will lead to uncomfortable questions which neither the Centre or the state leadership can answer.

Secondly, the centre has signed a number of peace accords with many insurgent groups. The status of such accords is under wraps and there is no sight to what constitutes a 'meaningful dialogue' or an 'honourable solution'. The peace talks with insurgent groups of Nagaland, Assam, Manipur have been rather stalled and no solution seems possible.

Thirdly, the issue of cultural diversity and lifestyle differences will always haunt the BJP-RSS leadership. With Narendra Modi at the helm of all political affairs, Hindu chauvinists expect him to pursue religious/communal polarization for there are political gains to be made.²⁵ But it may not be an easy policy to pursue in the states of Northeast India. Cultural insensitivity towards people of Northeast India by the 'Sangh' leaders have often been exposed and eventually if stressed upon too much by the 'Nagpur' leadership, it may just backfire. Though hindi cinema is popular across India, it continues to be banned by insurgent groups in Manipur. Likewise, imposition of Hindi and other such 'hindi-belt' ideas by the Centre is often treated as cultural imperialism. The resistance and contradictions between regional forces and the BJPs need to increase its footprints in the Northeast can be seen by the fact that even the immersion of ashes of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in the Doyang river was opposed by the Lotha Hoho, which is the apex body of the Lothas, on the ground that such rituals were 'alien to Naga culture'.²⁶

Fourthly, controversial issues like NRC and refugee politics and changes to the Indian Citizenship Act by the Centre will lead to more problems than solutions. Already in the states of Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, there are operations by state forces and non-state forces to flush out 'non-NRC people' from its territory. Additionally, several organizations like Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chhatra Parishad (AJYCP) in Assam too are asking for an 'Inner Line System' in Assam like that of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram. It is indeed a box of pandoras.

Fifthly, economic dependence of the states of Northeast India on the Centre continue to be high. According to the 14th Finance Commission, "Taking into account the disabilities arising from constraints unique to each State like low level of economic activity and the consequential low revenue capacity in terms of low tax base, low per capita income; the disability arising from large forest cover and hilly terrain; remoteness and having international borders; infrastructure deficit etc.", the following was allocated:

"Apart from estimated share in Central Taxes of Rs. 3,13,375 crore during 14th Finance Commission (FFC) award period, FFC also recommends grant-in-aid of Rs.63,206 crore for North Eastern States.

²⁵ James Manor (2015) A Precarious Enterprise? Multiple Antagonisms during Year One of the Modi Government, South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, 38:4, p.748

²⁶ After protests, Vajpayee's ashes immersed in Nagaland's 'unnamed river', The Hindu, August 27, 2018

Share of central taxes have increased by 251%, grant-in-aid by about 44% and in overall there is an increase of 183% in untied resources transferred to eight NE States under the recommendations of FC.

During 2015-16, Rs.32, 657 crore (i.e.79%) as devolution of taxes, and Rs.11, 433 crore (i.e.89%) as FFC grants have been released to the 8 North Eastern States.

For speedy development of North-eastern States, a Rs.740 crore is budgeted this year for schemes approved by North Eastern Council (NEC).

For Revenue deficit grants, Rs. 51,137 crore has been recommended to 6 North Eastern States assessed to be in deficit post devolution of central taxes, for local bodies Rs.8,866 crore and Central share to SDRF Rs.3,202 crore.”²⁷

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²⁷ “As against share of 6.16% of total tax devolution during 13th Finance Commission award, North Eastern States now get 7.94% of total tax devolution under 14th Finance Commission (FFC) award”, Press Information Bureau , Government of India, Ministry of Finance, available at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=136681>, accessed on 26.8.2019

	State	2013-14			2014-15			2015-16 (BE)			Increase over 2014-15	
		FC Tax Devolution	FC Grant	Total	FC Tax Devolution	FC Grant	Total	FC Tax Devolution	FC Grant	Total		
1	Arunachal Pradesh	1046	763	1809	1110	921	2031	7232	159	7391	5360	264%
2	Assam	11575	508	12082	12284	1130	13414	17401	3283	20684	7270	54%
3	Manipur	1439	1741	3180	1527	1827	3354	3238	2122	5360	2006	60%
4	Meghalaya	1302	883	2185	1382	783	2165	3371	643	4014	1849	85%
5	Mizoram	858	1083	1941	911	1055	1966	2414	2166	4580	2614	133%
6	Nagaland	1001	1994	2996	1063	2023	3085	2614	3224	5838	2753	89%
7	Sikkim	763	258	1021	809	515	1325	1925	49	1974	649	49%
8	Tripura	1630	1071	2702	1730	1002	2732	3369	1175	4544	1812	66%
	Total	19613	8302	27915	20815	9257	30072	41564	12821	54385	24313	81%

Source: Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Finance.

Three BJP ruled states – Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh share the top three spots for non-utilisation of central funds allocated under various projects.²⁸ While many states of Northeast India have delayed in implementation of development projects, some have even failed to submit utilization certificates too.²⁹ Intriguingly, there is also a sharp increase in assets of policy makers in Northeast India. Reports by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) reflect that in states of Northeast India, with the only exception of MLAs and contestants from Tripura, there has been a substantial increase in the assets of MLAs and contestants contesting elections.³⁰

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for a corrupt free 'swachh' nation may indeed be hard to achieve when policy makers are involved in several scams. The call for 'minimum government, maximum governance' has come under severe scrutiny; Ruparelia points out that in pursuit of a neoliberal vision, the Modi government has only "weakened the principle of collegial responsibility and challenged the checks and balances and separation of powers."³¹ Statue politics and hyper-nationalism may just work for the 'mainstream states', but given its failure to deliver on its big promises,³² the BJP may have a more arduous task of fostering unity amongst the masses and winning the hearts of the people on the margins. The strength of coalition politics will lie in the ability of parties to achieve common goals through common means. In Northeast India, coalition politics of BJP-NEDA-Regional Parties is based on the 'common minimum', whereby the agenda of 'anti-Congress' brings them all together. Additionally, dilution of 'saffron colour' has helped the regional parties come closer to the BJP. However there are several centrifugal forces which will pull such parties apart too. How long will this bonhomie last is anybody's guess, but the results of 2019 Lok Sabha elections will be a real turning point. The consolidation of the 'Modi-BJP *lahar*' especially in the Northeast India will depend on numerous factors. *Firstly*, with Lok Sabha elections just a few months away, what emerges is a 'conditional alliance system', the regional partners of the BJP will be more critical of the BJP and will demand more share of the pie. *Secondly*, with Assembly and General elections nearby, more regional leaders of states of Northeast India are likely to join the BJP. The next few months will witness an intense political bargaining game between the BJP and the regional players. *Thirdly*, given past history, if the BJP fails to get a clear majority in the forthcoming elections, change of political partnership and utility as well as futility of NEDA will come under scrutiny. *Fourthly*, in states such as Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh where tribal politics, issues of ethnic identity and the margin of victory in assembly elections is just between 2000-5000 votes, political personalities become more important than the party they represent. As such national parties may find it difficult to reign in vocal and dissident leaders for they will break away to form new parties. *Finally*, the relationship between the BJP and its regional partners in Northeast India is 'dialectical' in nature. Regional parties need the BJP for it controls the distribution of resources and the BJP needs them to help achieve the goal of CMB. It is a 'marriage of convenience', but how much will this region and its people benefit from this relationship, only time will tell.

²⁸ Three BJP ruled states in Northeast share top three spots in non-utilisation of central funds, available at <https://nenow.in/north-east-news/non-utilisation-of-central-funds.html>, accessed on 26.8.2018

²⁹ Centre blames North Eastern states for non-completion of projects on time, The Indian Express, March 2, 2016

³⁰ Asset growth of MLAs shows politics is a profitable profession in Northeast, The Hindustan Times, February 26, 2018

³¹ Sanjay Ruparelia (2015) 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance': The Restructuring of Power in Modi's India, South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, 38:4, 755-775, DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2015.1089974, P.77

³² Raju J. Das (2018) Contradictions of India's Right-wing Government and Growing Disenchantment, Journal of Contemporary Asia, DOI: 10.1080/00472336.2018.1535082, P.5

A STUDY OF SUB-NATIONAL FINANCE WITH REFERENCE TO MIZORAM STATE IN NORTHEAST

Vanlalchhawna*

Abstracts

The present study examines the broad structure and trend of state finances of Mizoram. Like all other special category states in the North East India, Mizoram depends heavily on central revenue transfers as the state's ability to generate its own resources is limited due to low level of industrialisation and poor infrastructure facilities. Liberal revenue transfers, coupled with fiscal restructuring and consolidation, initiated by Central government and successive Finance Commission since the Eleventh Finance Commission and state's own fiscal reform measures resulted to a significant improvement in state's fiscal condition during the last one and half decades. The state has achieved revenue surpluses, a significant reduction of fiscal deficits and outstanding liabilities relative to Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). Though the dismantling of Planning Commission disrupted fund flow to the state, increase in share in central taxes have been able to offset the resource losses. Meanwhile, the state's fiscal health has been continually stressed by poor performance of power sector, sick public sector undertakings and high revenue expenditure of the state.

Key words: state finances, revenue transfers, Finance Commission, Planning Commission, Gross State Domestic Products

1. Introduction

India is a federal state. The Constitution of India demarcates the powers between union, state and local government. Seventh Schedule to the Constitution laid down the functional domain of Union and State government in terms of Union, State and concurrent lists while Eleventh and Twelfth Schedule provided for urban and local bodies. Efficient provision of public goods and services are the key issues in the allocation of functions between the central and the sub-national units of government. The principle of federal finance contended that 'public services with nation-wide benefits are assigned to the central government while those with regionally limited benefits are to be provided for by lower-level government'; further, 'federation-wide service should be financed by the federal government with federation-wide taxes and the services of member jurisdiction should be financed by taxes in their regions' (Oates, 1999, Musgrave & Musgrave, 2013). In India, Central government plays a dominant role in defence and provision of large infrastructure facilities while states have a high share of expenditure on internal security, law and order, and social and economic services. State

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governments accounted for about 60 percent of the total expenditure on social and economic service in the country (RBI, 2009).

Indian federalism is marked by high vertical and horizontal imbalances i.e., low revenue share for states but high expenditure responsibilities and wide interstate differences in revenue capacity. Fiscal transfers have been instrumental in correcting the vertical and horizontal imbalances (RBI, 2007). The Finance Commission, appointed by the President of India every five years, addressed revenue and expenditure needs of both central and state government and recommends devolution taxes and grants-in-aid of revenue to the states. In addition, Planning Commission, now defunct, provides for plan grants which are meant for taking up of new schemes and Central ministries disbursing grants for specific schemes to the states under the banner of Central Plan Schemes (CPS) and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS). Over the years, the share of transfers to the state as a percentage of centre gross revenue witnessed a steady improvement. The major share from central taxes has been appropriated by general category states while revenue gap grants played a crucial role in special category states (Srivastava and Rao, 2009). In spite of liberal fiscal transfers to the states, the extent of fiscal dependence was relatively quite high for the special category states and the low income states.

This paper evaluates the state of government finances with reference to the State of Mizoram in the North Eastern Region of India. The study broadly covered the period between 2004-05 and 2014-15 during which the Central and State government initiated several significant fiscal reform measures. The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 gives a brief analysis of macroeconomic performance and growth trend of the state economy. Section 3 is an overview of the fiscal profile of the State highlighting the broad trend of revenue transfers, own tax revenue, expenditure, revenue account, fiscal deficit and State's outstanding liabilities. The outcome of State's FRBM Act is also examined in the section. It also highlights the impacts of recent change in fiscal regime on state finance. Section 4 briefly touched upon the performance of the State's power sector. The fiscal impacts of the operation of State Public Sector Enterprises are indicated in section 5. Section 6 provides an overview of fiscal decentralisation at the level of local bodies in the State. Section 7 concludes the paper.

2. Mizoram Economy: Performance and Growth Trends

The State of Mizoram was created in 1987 following the peace agreement between Government of India and Mizo National Front who led insurgency movement for about two decades since the mid-1960s. The State, being created due to political compulsion without any consideration for its financial viability, managed itself within the constraints imposed by the existing fiscal arrangements, as provided by the Finance Commission and the Planning Commission (now defunct). Under Gadgil formula by which plan assistance to the states are given, Mizoram was categorised as one of the Special Category States¹. Mizoram depends heavily on central transfers. Public services and investment, which accounted more than half of its GSDP, and mainly funded by central transfers, is the main driving force of development and growth of the state economy. Though the state has huge potentials to be exploited in hydropower, tourism, and horticulture sectors, the level of private

¹ To be qualified as Special Category States, the following criteria must be fulfilled: (i) hilly and difficult terrain, (ii) low population density and sizeable share of tribal population, (iii) strategic location along borders with neighbouring countries, (iv) economic and infrastructural backwardness, and (v) non-viable state finances.

investments is rather low. Poor infrastructure base and absence of skill manpower including entrepreneurship inhibit private investment in the State.

Mizoram economy recorded an impressive growth rate in recent decades, mainly driven by service sectors. Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) at constant price grew at the rate of 8.7 per cent per annum during 2004-05 to 2013-14 (Table 1). During 2004-05 to 2013-14, the composition of real GSDP showed a continued shift from agriculture to service sector while the industrial sector witnessed a fluctuating trend. Agriculture and its allied sector showed a marked decline from 23.50 per cent in 2004-05 to 18.07 per cent in 2013-14. This is attributable to falling productivity of Jhum cultivation, decreasing share of agricultural workers and declining contribution from forestry. Recently, horticulture sector gained a new momentum, showing significant improvement in production. The sector alone contributed almost 8 per cent of GSDP. The main contributing crops are fruit, vegetable, spices, flowers and plantation crops (Economic Survey 2014-15).

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Table 1: Real GSDP at Factor Cost (Prices: 2004-05)

Sectors	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Ag & Allied	23.50	22.32	21.37	21.96	21.74	21.12	20.98	20.86	19.46	18.07
Industry	16.60	19.93	19.24	19.58	20.17	18.55	16.44	17.27	16.44	15.73
Mining & quarrying	0.30	0.19	0.35	0.41	0.54	0.29	0.26	0.35	0.22	0.14
Manufacturing	1.40	1.34	1.49	1.61	1.37	1.19	1.08	1.48	1.58	1.74
Registered	0.21	0.27	0.17	0.17	0.11	0.12	0.17	0.25	0.17	0.11
Unregistered	1.19	1.06	1.32	1.43	1.26	1.07	0.91	1.23	1.42	1.63
Construction	10.78	14.22	13.43	13.34	15.28	14.16	11.96	12.44	11.46	10.50
Electricity, gas and Water supply	4.12	4.19	3.97	4.23	2.99	2.91	3.14	3.01	3.18	3.35
Services	59.90	57.74	59.40	58.46	58.09	60.33	62.58	61.87	64.09	66.20
Transport, storage & communication	2.68	2.72	2.94	2.99	2.81	2.49	2.26	2.71	2.80	2.88
Railways	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Transport by other means	2.09	2.00	2.03	2.00	1.83	1.52	1.33	1.72	1.84	1.96
Storage	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03
Communication	0.57	0.70	0.88	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.89	0.96	0.93	0.89
Trade, hotels and restaurants	9.59	9.74	10.02	10.27	9.95	9.81	9.10	8.59	8.52	8.40
Banking & Insurance	2.72	2.90	3.30	3.39	3.30	3.40	3.00	3.76	3.45	3.16
Real estate, ownership of dwellings and business services	13.62	13.82	14.31	14.04	13.48	13.23	12.51	13.76	14.04	14.25
Public administration	18.46	16.57	16.58	15.	16.47	17.48	19.73	16.28	17.87	19.51
Other services	12.84	12.00	12.24	12.11	12.08	13.91	15.98	16.76	17.42	18.01
Total GSDP in Rs crore	2682	2869	3006	3336	3781	4249	4979	4852	5203	5608
Annual growth rate (in percent)	-	6.99	4.76	10.99	13.34	12.37	17.19	-2.56	7.23	7.78

Source: Opendata.govt.in (Open Government Data Platform India)

The share of industrial sector increased from 16.60 per cent in 2004-05 to 18.55 per cent in 2009-10, and then it declined to 15.73 per cent in 2013-14. Construction is the major industrial activities in the State; its share varied between 10.50 per cent and 15.28 per cent during 2004-05 to 2014-15. Manufacturing activities also increased from 1.40 per cent in 2004-05 to 1.74 per cent in 2014-15. Since the State does not have any heavy or medium enterprises, the sector is mainly dominated by micro and small enterprises.

The period 2004-05 to 2013-14 was marked by a consistent rise in the percentage share of service sector. Service sector which accounted for 59.90 percentage share in 2004-05 rapidly rose to 66.20 percent in 2014-15. The overall increase has been contributed by transport, storage & communication, banking & insurance, real estate etc., public administration and other services. During 2004-05 to 2014-15, the contribution of transport, storage & communication increased from 2.68 per cent to 2.88 per cent, banking & insurance sector from 2.72 per cent to 3.16 per cent, real estate sector from 13.62 per cent to 14.25 per cent, public administration from 18.46 per cent to 19.78 per cent and 'other services' from 12.84 per cent to 18.01 per cent respectively.

3. Fiscal Profile of the State: An Overview

3.1. Broad Fiscal Trends of the State

Table 2 represents the broad fiscal trend of the State from 2004-05 to 2014-15. The aggregate revenue receipts of the state, as a percentage of GSDP, increased sharply from 56 per cent in 2004-05 to 59.09 per cent in 2006-07; thereafter, it declined steadily to 44.09 per cent in 2014-15. State's own revenue, as a percentage of GSDP, which showed an improvement from 4.29 percent in 2004-05 to 6.11 percent in 2006-07, declined to 4.07 per cent in 2014-15. Revenue from state's own taxes consistently increased from 1.48 per cent in 2004-05 to 2.13 per cent in 2014-15. Value added tax (VAT), constituting around 80 per cent, emerged as a significant source of own tax revenue of the state. Own non-tax revenue receipts, as a percentage of GSDP, also showed an upward trend from 2.82 per cent in 2004-05 to 3.47 per cent in 2008-07, until it declined steadily from 2.40 per cent in 2009-10 to 1.94 per cent in 2014-15.

Central revenue transfers, as a percentage of GSDP, showed a decline from 51.70 per cent in 2004-05 to 49.76 per cent in 2005-06. In 2006-07, it reached as high as 53.74 per cent before declining to 48.01 per cent in 2007-08, after which it rose to 52.43 per cent in 2008-09. In 2014-15, it has declined to 40.03 per cent of GSDP. Tax devolution witnessed a steady rise while plan grants remained highly volatile and unpredictable and non-plan grants a declining trend after initial improvement. Tax devolution increased from 5.81 per cent of GSDP in 2004-05 to 11.83 per cent in 2011-12, which declined to 7.29 per cent in 2014-15. Plan grants, as a percentage of GSDP, saw a downward trend from 28.44 percent in 2004-05 to 20.70 per cent in 2007-08; later, a rising trend from 28.01 per cent in 2008-09 to 30.60 per cent in 2009-10; and finally, a decline from 27.87 per cent in 2010-11 to 23.97 in 2014-15. Due to frequent changes in funding pattern, rationalization of central schemes and delayed finalisation of state annual plan by the Planning Commission, the State could not finalise its own plan allocation, adversely affecting development works. Non-plan grants, as a percentage of GSDP, which increased significantly from 17.46 per cent in 2004-05 to 20.32 in 2005-06, declined steadily to 8.76 percent in 2014-15.

As a percentage of GSDP, public expenditure declined from 78.73 per cent in 2004-05 to 62.18 percent in 2014-15. Revenue expenditure of the State, as a percentage of GSDP, which underwent an upward trend from 51.98 per cent in 2004-05 to 53.45 per cent in 2005-06 declined to 50.02 per cent in 2007-08. Thereafter, it rose to 55.99 per cent in 2012-13, only to move back to 45.22 per cent in 2014-15. Salary expenditure which was 15.95 per cent of GSDP in 2004-05 declined to 14.02 per cent in 2006-07; later, it increased to 19.34 per cent in 2010-11, which then subsided to 13.80 per cent in 2014-15. There was a decline in interest payment, from 3.12 per cent of GSDP in 2004-05 to 2.75 per cent in 2008-09, which rose to 4.36 per cent in 2014-15. Pension expenditure which registered an upward trend from 6.77 per cent of GSDP in 2004-05 to 7.65 per cent in 2006-07, declined steadily to 2.45 per cent in 2014-15. Capital expenditure, as a percentage of GSDP, registered an overall decline during 2004-15. Capital outlay, after an initial increase from 12.29 per cent of GSDP in 2004-05 to 15.18 per cent in 2006-07; however, it declined to 7.42 per cent in 2014-15.

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Table 2: Fiscal Profile of the State: An Overview (Percent to GSDP)

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Revenue Receipts	56.00	55.66	59.85	53.45	57.97	56.34	55.71	54.71	56.34	46.27	44.09
State's Own revenue	4.29	5.90	6.11	5.45	5.53	4.45	4.57	4.96	5.41	4.12	4.07
State's Own Taxes	1.48	1.85	2.06	2.03	2.07	2.05	2.15	2.56	2.77	2.23	2.13
State's Own Non-Taxes	2.82	4.04	4.05	3.41	3.47	2.40	2.42	2.40	2.64	1.89	1.94
Central transfers	51.70	49.76	53.74	48.01	52.43	51.89	51.14	49.75	50.92	42.16	40.03
Shared taxes	5.81	7.60	8.76	9.52	8.38	7.50	9.75	11.83	9.76	8.33	7.29
Plan grants	28.44	21.85	25.44	20.70	28.01	30.60	27.87	26.51	28.04	22.74	23.97
Non-plan grants	17.46	20.32	19.54	17.78	16.05	13.79	13.52	11.40	13.13	11.09	8.76
Total Expenditure	78.73	75.22	69.76	68.21	62.68	69.70	68.64	65.55	67.46	63.16	62.18
Revenue expenditure	51.98	53.45	52.20	50.02	50.56	51.39	53.75	52.89	55.99	47.75	45.22
Salary	15.95	14.66	14.06	15.42	16.15	16.76	19.34	16.45	17.10	14.63	13.80
Interest payments	3.31	3.00	2.35	2.55	2.75	3.12	4.11	4.27	4.60	4.76	4.36
Pensions	6.77	6.22	7.29	5.45	4.93	4.84	1.74	3.92	3.58	2.76	2.45
Capital expenditure	26.75	21.77	17.56	18.20	12.12	18.31	14.90	12.67	11.47	15.41	16.95
Capital outlay	12.29	15.18	14.18	14.26	9.64	10.89	10.16	7.08	7.54	5.82	7.42
Revenue surplus/Deficit	4.02	2.21	7.65	3.44	7.41	4.95	1.96	1.82	0.35	-1.48	-1.13
Gross Fiscal Deficit	-8.77	-13.36	-5.81	-10.26	-2.06	-5.92	-8.25	-6.84	-7.21	-7.28	-8.32
Primary Deficit	-2.01	-7.14	1.15	-4.35	2.49	-1.09	-6.51	-6.65	-3.63	-7.28	-5.87
Outstanding Liabilities	85.32	85.58	85.42	80.25	71.22	60.15	61.15	65.05	63.51	54.47	52.41

Sources: State Budget Documents, Government of Mizoram

The state has been able to keep revenue surpluses since the early 2000 till 2012-13². Revenue surplus was as high as 7.65 per cent of GSDP in 2006-07. Revenue surpluses were largely contributed by increase in gross transfers from the Central Government, improvement in collection from own taxes and expenditure control and rationalization by State Government. However, revenue account has turned to negative balances since 2013-14 due to revenue expenditure increase pushed by rise in salary expenditure in the backdrop of the implementation of Sixth Pay Commission recommendations, outgo of interest payment, high subsidy for foodstuffs purchased under PDS and low recoveries of service charges from social and economic services provided by the State Government. Expenditure on food subsidy alone amounted to Rs 206.77 crore in 2011-12. Relative to GSDP, revenue deficit was 1.13 per cent in 2014-15. Fiscal deficits, as a percentage of GSDP, remained consistently high due to bulging revenue expenditure. Excepting 2008-09, during which fiscal deficit was as low as 2.06 per cent of GSDP, fiscal deficits remained higher than the annual targets recommended by FC-XIII. In 2014-15, fiscal deficit, relative to GSDP was 8.32 per cent, well above the target set by the FC-XIII for the fiscal year which was fixed at 3 per cent of GSDP. Though fiscal deficit targets could not be achieved, the state reduced its outstanding liabilities well below their annual targets. The outstanding debt and liabilities of the State, which accounted for 85.32 per cent of GSDP in 2005-06, has been fallen to 52.41 per cent in 2014-15.

3.2. Estimates of the Revenue Efforts of the State

One key issue in state fiscal management has been the state's ability to raise its own revenue from its own sources such as taxes and non-taxes in relation to GSDP growth. One indicator of a good tax system is that the revenue receipts must be responsive to the change in economic condition. Over the last decade, the state economy registered a robust growth rate. The revenue effort of the State is examined by estimating the relationship between various sources of own tax and own non-tax revenue and the State Gross Domestic Product during 2004-05 to 2014-15. The results of the exercises are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Revenue Buoyancy of Own Tax and Own Non-tax Revenue (2004-05 to 2014-15)

Particulars	Coefficients
Professional tax	0.91
Land Revenue	1.40
State Excise Duty	0.71
Sale Tax (VAT)	1.26
Vehicle Taxes	1.21
Goods & Passengers taxes	0.92
Total Own taxes	1.22
Total Own Non-Taxes	0.55

Sources: State Budget Documents, Government of Mizoram

The regression coefficients are the estimates of the elasticity of the various tax and non-tax revenue receipts of the State with respect to Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). Among own tax revenue

²State Government signed MOU with Ministry of Finance in 1999 to implement economy measures and resource mobilisation for obtaining a one-time grant of Rs 82.45 crore and interest free loan of Rs 93.50 crore to meet committed non-plan liabilities brought about by the implementation of 5th CPC. The package also included a provision for Rs 50 crore every year for 5 years from NLCPR. The State Government also implemented Medium Term Fiscal Reform Programme (2000-05) under FC-XI's State's Fiscal Reforms Facility under which the Centre provided Incentive Fund. The State legislated its own fiscal policy rules in 2006

receipts, professional tax, State excise duty and Goods & Passengers taxes have elasticities less than one indicating that these taxes are not responsive to increase in GSDP. State's own non-tax revenue also registered elasticity less than one (0.55). Revenue receipts having elasticity greater than one indicated that every unit increase in GSDP is associated with more than a one unit increase in the variables concerned. For instance, land revenue has the coefficient value of 1.40 which indicated that a one unit increase in GSDP brought a 1.4 unit increase in land revenue. Revenue buoyancy of own taxes (1.22) is much higher than own non-taxes revenue sources (0.55). Own tax revenue buoyancy has been mainly contributed by an improvement in revenue receipts from State Sales Taxes (VAT) introduced in 2006. VAT contributed 80 percent of total own tax revenue of the State. Land revenue whose rates are revised upwards and collection methods strengthened also contributed to own tax revenue buoyancy.

3.3. Fiscal Consolidation and Fiscal Policy Rules in Mizoram

Government of Mizoram formulated its fiscal policy and guidelines in line with the recommendations of the successive Finance Commissions including instructions from the Ministry of Finance. The Twelfth Finance Commission (2005-10) recommended fiscal responsibility legislation to each state as a precondition for availing the debt-relief scheme recommended by it. Responding to this, the State Government passed The Mizoram Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, in 2006 and has drawn up the Fiscal Correction Path as per guidelines issued by GOI on Debt Consolidation and Relief Facility³.

The Mizoram FRBM Act 2006 was revised and updated in line with the FC-XIII recommendations. The FC-XIII recommended that Government of Mizoram should maintain revenue surplus from the fiscal year 2011-12, gradually reduced its fiscal deficit to 5.2 per cent 2012-13, 4.1 per cent in 2013 and ultimately to 3 per cent of GSDP by 2014-15 and its outstanding liabilities at 82.9 per cent of GSDP in 2012-13, 79.2 per cent in 2013-14 and eventually at 74.8 per cent in 2014-15. The FC-XIV further mandated that during their award period, fiscal deficit of all States will be anchored to an annual limit of 3 per cent of GSDP with a flexibility of 0.50 with certain conditions. The results of the State's own fiscal correction path are highlighted in Table-4.

³ Reports of Twelfth Finance Commission Report (2005-10), November, 2004.

Table 4: Select Fiscal Indicators of the State's Own Fiscal Correction Path (2005-06 to 2014-15)

Items	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
GFD as percentage of GSDP	-5.81	-10.26	-2.06	-5.92	-8.25	-6.84	-7.21	-7.28	-8.32
Revenue Deficit (-) /Surplus (+) as Percentage of GSDP	7.65	3.44	7.41	4.95	1.96	1.82	0.35	-1.48	-1.13
Revenue Deficit (-)/Surplus (+) as Percentage of TRR	12.78	6.44	12.79	8.80	9.92	7.18	0.61	(-) 3.19	(-) 2.56
Total Liabilities-GSDP Ratio	85.42	80.25	71.22	60.15	61.15	65.05	63.51	54.47	52.41
Total Liabilities-Total Revenue Receipts (%)	142.74	150.14	122.87	106.76	109.58	99.70	112.73	1322.63	118.86
Total Liabilities-State's Own Revenue Receipts (%)	1398.23	1473.61	1286.99	1351.65	1335.78	1153.67	1173.12	1322.68	1288.20
State's own Revenue Receipts-Revenue Expenditure (%)	11.70	10.88	10.95	8.66	8.50	9.31	9.67	8.62	8.99
Capital Outlay as Percentage of GFD	(-) 244.17	(-) 139.02	(-)467.90	(-)183.81	(-)123.17	(-)232.76	(-)104.66	(-)80.01	(-)89.21
Interest Payment as Percentage of Revenue Receipts	12.18	10.20	8.50	8.58	8.10	6.82	6.35	5.97	5.55
Salary Expenditure as Percentage of Total Revenue Receipts	23.49	36.01	39.23	29.76	34.72	28.67	30.36	40.77	31.29
Pension Expenditure as Percentage of Total Revenue Receipts	3.93	4.76	4.75	5.54	7.37	7.44	8.17	11.01	9.88
Non-development Expenditure as Percentage of Aggregate Disbursement	27.95	30.94	28.71	25.85	24.07	26.88	26.33	25.93	22.51
Gross Transfer from the Centre as Percentage of Aggregate Disbursement	77.04	70.39	83.66	74.46	72.10	80.76	61.02	53.55	52.65
Own Non-Tax Revenue as Percentage of Total Revenue Receipts	6.77	6.39	5.98	4.27	4.35	4.19	4.69	4.08	4.39

Note: GSDP figures relates to 2004-05 prices

Sources: State Budget Documents, Government of Mizoram

Gross fiscal deficits as a percentage of GSDP, excepting 2008-09, have been found to be much higher than the norms prescribed by FRBM Act. However, compared to the pre-FRBM periods, the average value of GFD-GSDP ratio declined significantly in the post-FRBM period. An assessment given by RBI (2015) suggested significant improvement in the state's key deficits indicators, including fiscal deficits, expressed as period averages of pre-and post-FRBM. Revenue deficits as ratios of GSDP, on an average, which registered 2.5 percent in the pre-FRBM periods (2000-06) improved to a surplus of 3.3 per cent of GSDP in the post-FRBM periods (2007-13). Similarly, fiscal deficits as percentages to GSDP have come down in the post-FRBM periods relative to pre-FRBM era. Prior to the enactment of FRBM, the GFD of the State, on an average, was 14.5 per cent of GSDP. The ratio, on an average, came down to 6.4 per cent, in the post-FRBM period. The primary deficits have also come down to 2 per cent of GSDP in the post-FRBM periods from 8.3 per cent in the pre-FRBM periods. Another significant outcome of the FRBM Act was reduction of outstanding liabilities as a ratio of GSDP. Besides lower GFD-GSDP ratio, the reduction was contributed by rescheduling of central loans for a fresh term of 20 years with lower interest rate and a debt write-off for the repayment for 2006-07.

3.4. New Transfers Regime and its Impacts on State Finances

The demise of Planning Commission brought a paradigm shift in the pattern of central transfers to the States. Central plan assistance to Mizoram had gone down significantly. The Fourteenth Finance Commission (FC-IV) awards comprising of shared taxes, post-devolution revenue deficits grants, grants for urban local bodies and State Disaster Response Fund would be the main revenue transfers from the Centre. Except shared taxes, all other awards are tied grants. Central transfers, especially shared taxes, would play a significant role in ensuring the availability of adequate resources for investment in critical sectors of the State economy. The broad changes in the composition of plan assistance to the State of Mizoram, post-Planning Commission, could be observed from Table -5. Plan funds comprising of Normal Central Assistance (NCA), Additional Central Assistance (ACA), Special Plan Assistance (SPA), Special Central Assistance (SCA) etc. have all gone. Only central plan schemes and centrally sponsored schemes for specific projects and programme are available to the State. Grants for state plan schemes declined significantly from Rs 2264.16 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 593.4 in 2016-17.

Table 5: Flow of Plan Grants Post-Planning Commission (Rs in crores)

Sl.No	Particulars	2014-15 (Actual)	2015-16 (Revised Estimates)	2016-17 (Budget Estimates)
1	Grants for State Plan Schemes	2264.16	737.9	593.4
(i)	Block grants of which	1771.61	690.02	575.67
	Normal Central Assistance	789.09	-	-
	Grants for External Aided Projects	43.99	186	332.13
	Grants for NLCPR	49.35	134.5	98.77
	Grants for BADP	35.34	40.71	40.71
	Grants for NSAP	7.19	24.34	24.34
	Grants for AIBP	-	81.46	38.51
	Grants for JNNURM	5.7	81.93	12.16
	Grants for NeGAP	4.05	12.16	12.16
	RKVY	116.92	128.92	22
	Central Assistance under SCA (untied)	200	-	-
	Special Plan Assistance (NLUP etc)	52	-	-
(ii)	Grants under Proviso to Article 275 (1) of the Constitution	18.78	7.08	23.27
(iii)	Other Grants	473.77	28.12	4.56
2	Grants for Central Plan Schemes	24.5	-	-
3	Grants for Centrally Sponsored Schemes	662.77	1520.36	1386.38
4	Grants for Special Plan Schemes	45.02	152.42	122.64
	Total Plan Grants (1+2+3+4)	2996.45	2410.68	2101.41

Source: Annual Financial Statement (Budget) 2016-17, Government of Mizoram

Besides streamlining CSS, the Union Budget 2015-16 introduced change in the funding pattern of Centrally Sponsored Schemes from the usual pattern of 90:10 to 50:50 for the Special Category States. Uncertainties prevailed on the funding pattern of many of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes during 2015-16, due to which regular budget for Mizoram was presented only in October 2015. Any reduction or deviation from the estimated transfers caused severe dislocation in State budgetary management. Moreover, delay in the presentation of regular budget distorts allocation of plan funds, adversely affecting development works. Under the new funding pattern, Mizoram would have to spend more funds on State Matching Share to avail many of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes. The Centre has since rolled back the sharing ratio to 90:10 in most of the cases and 80:20 in some cases for the Special Category States. The State Government is carefully monitoring the process of availing central schemes by various departments to avoid severe hardships in providing State Matching Share (SMS).

Based on the recommendations of FC-XIV, Mizoram's share in the net proceeds of Central taxes has been fixed at 0.463 percent. The inclusion of criteria like demographic change and forest cover have helped the state in realising higher revenue share from tax devolution as compared with the FC-XIII which recommended a share of 0.269 per cent. Mizoram's share in central taxes, based on FC-XIV estimates, amounted to Rs18197 crores, accounting as much as 59.50 per cent of the total transfers for the state (Table 6). The actual volume of tax devolution depends on several factors including the

buoyancy of the Central taxes, economic booms and recessions and fiscal policy of the Central Government. Besides tax devolution, FC-XIV further recommended post-devolution revenue deficits (PDRD) grants amounting to Rs12183 crore during 2015-20, constituting 39.83 per cent of the total transfers. State's share in central taxes and post-devolution revenue deficit grants would be the main sources of untied transfers for the state during 2015-20 while other grants such as grants for urban local bodies and State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) are tied grants that cannot be utilized for other purposes.

Table 6: Fourteenth Finance Commission Awards to the State of Mizoram

Year	Share of Central Taxes (SCT)	Post-Devolution Revenue Deficit Grants (PDRD)	Urban Local Bodies		State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)	Total
			Basic	Performance		
2015-16	2670	2139	11.54	0	15	4835.54
2016-17	3081	2294	15.97	4.71	16	5411.68
2017-18	3559	2446	18.46	5.34	17	6045.8
2018-19	4118	2588	21.35	6.06	18	6751.41
2019-20	4769	2716	28.85	7.93	18	7539.78
Total	18197	12183	96.17	24.04	84	30584.21
% to total	59.50	39.83	0.31	0.08	0.27	100.00

Source: Economic Survey 2015-16, Planning & Programme Implementation Department (Research & Development Branch), Government of Mizoram.

In the light of the changing fiscal environment, the State Government of Mizoram has redrawn its fiscal correction path (Table 7). Own tax revenue-GSDP ratio has been projected to increase from 2.13 per cent in 2014-15 to 2.26 percent in 2017-18. The State Government determines to maintain the increasing trend by improving tax collection efficiency, better tax compliance and introduction of new taxes and further revision of VAT rates. State land administration has been streamlined by introducing new land revenue rules in 2013, reforms and rationalization of registration fees and stamp duty has been initiated, e-payment for tax collection has been introduced, The Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1995 has been replaced by The Mizoram Liquor (Control & Prohibition) Act, 2014, and finally, VAT rates on tobacco products have been revised upward from 20 to 30 per cent

On the expenditure front, State Government projected to reduce revenue expenditure from 45.22 per cent of GSDP in 2014-15 to 43.59 per cent in 2017-18. Public subsidy on essential items provided through Targeted PDS is being streamlined by introducing end-to-end computerisation and digitization of ration cards. The implementation of Food Security Act in 2016 is also expected to bring down the monthly requirement of food grains as blanket coverage of total population will be replaced by entitled beneficiaries. The Government of Mizoram has already closed three loss-making State PSEs in 2015 and undertook downsizing and restructuring for other two PSEs by offering voluntary retirement schemes.

The State Government further projected to have surpluses in its revenue account and a significant decline in fiscal deficits from 2015-16 onwards through augmentation of own revenue receipts and better expenditure management. As a ratio to GSDP, the revenue account would improve significantly

from a deficit to a surplus account. Revenue surplus, as a percentage of GSDP, projected to increase as high as 13.73 percent in 2017-18. Similarly, GFD-GSDP ratio would decline to 0.15 per cent in 2016-17. State's debt and liabilities- GSDP ratios have been projected to decline from 52.41 per cent in 2014-15 to 48.34 per cent in 2017-18.

Table 7: Select Fiscal Indicators of the State's Own Fiscal Correction Path (As per cent of GSDP)

Indicators	2014-15 (Actuals)	2015-16 (BE)	2015-16 (RE)	2016-17 (BE)	2017-18 (Projection)
Own Tax Revenue	2.13	2.30	2.19	2.13	2.26
Own Non-Tax Revenue	1.94	1.78	1.90	1.80	1.90
Total Central Transfers	40.02	46.44	48.96	45.46	53.17
Total Revenue Expenditure	45.22	42.88	46.77	41.12	43.59
Revenue Surplus (+)/Deficits (-)	(-) 1.13	7.63	6.28	8.26	13.74
Gross Fiscal Deficit	8.32	0.77	1.10	0.15	(-) 4.83
Outstanding Debt and Liabilities	52.41	44.07	49.12	46.93	48.34

Source: Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement 2016-17, Government of Mizoram

4. Potentials and Impacts of Hydropower Sector on State Finances

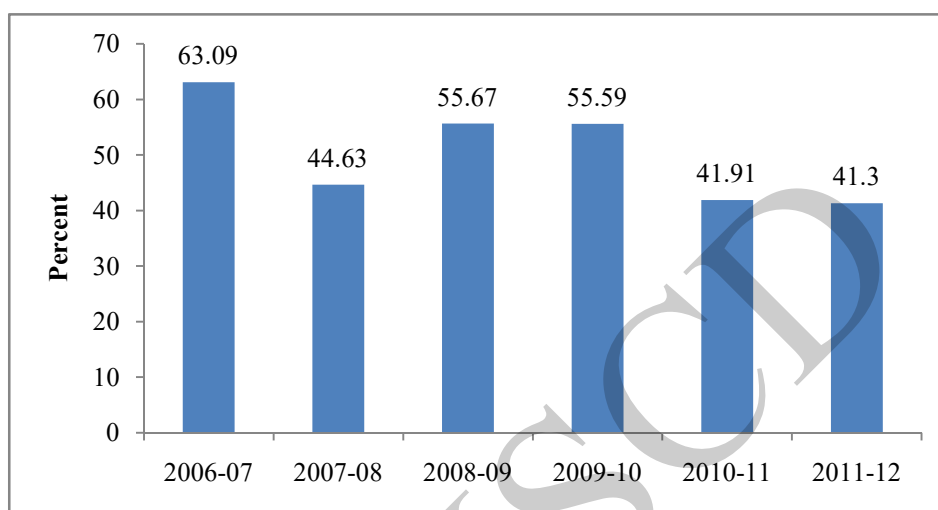
Power sector reform has been one of the most important components of economic reform agenda undertaken since 1991. Constitutionally, power is under the concurrent list implying that both central and state have The Electricity Supply Act 1948 was amended in 1991 paving the way for private sector participation in generation, transmission and distribution of power sector. The enactment of Electricity Regulatory Commission Act in 1998 stipulated the formation of Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) and State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SERC) to carry out the regulatory roles in the power sector in their respective level. The Electricity Act 2003, by repealing all the earlier acts, created a liberal and transparent framework for the development of power sector in the country.

In Mizoram, generation, procurement, transmission and distribution of power is entrusted to Power and Electricity Department. Despite power sector reforms initiated across the country since the early nineties, the state remained largely immune to any such initiatives, especially unbundling of the sector into generation, distribution and transmission. Due to poor management and financial performance, the State's power sector remained highly inefficient, causing huge fiscal strain to state's exchequer. Presently, the sector is plagued by high distribution and technical loss, low revenue recovery from the operating costs due to inadequate tariff, absence of full metering and inefficiencies in billing and collection.

The State Government signed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Ministry of Power in 2002 for reform initiatives in the power sector. The Central Government provided grants to implement the objectives of the MOA while the state government would initiate distribution reform and improve performance efficiency. Other objectives included are setting up of Power Corporation / board / autonomous body and SERC/JERC, 100% metering of all consumers, 100% electrification of villages, computerised billing centres etc. Due to these initiatives, technical and commercial losses have been reduced significantly (Chart 1). Power & Electricity Department is yet to be corporatized.

The State's power sector is highly subsidised. Cost recovery from the power sector have been not only low but also falling continuously over the last decades, showing an increase in the expenditure of implicit subsidies in the sector. Cost recovery was 32.3 percent in 2002-03 but fell to 9.2 percent in 2011-12. Revenue lost per unit of the cost of operation represents a huge loss of public revenue. Fiscal risks have also been observed in the implementation power projects by way of delays and cost overruns of the projects.

Figure 1: Aggregate Technical & Commercial Loss



Sources: (i) Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Civil, Revenue and Commercial for the year ended 31 March 2011 (Report No 2), Government of Mizoram; (ii) Annual Report 2011-12, Power & Electricity Department, Government of Mizoram.

Mizoram's hydel power potential is estimated at 4500 MW. As on 2015-16, only 11 Small Hydel Projects with installed capacities of 29.35MW had been set up in the state. Five projects with installed capacity of 68.70 MW remained under construction. Tuirial Hydel Power Projects, having 60 MW capacities, the biggest so far in the State, has been under construction by NEEPCO Ltd. There are five upcoming projects with an installed capacity of 835 MW.⁴

5. Fiscal Impacts of State Public Enterprises

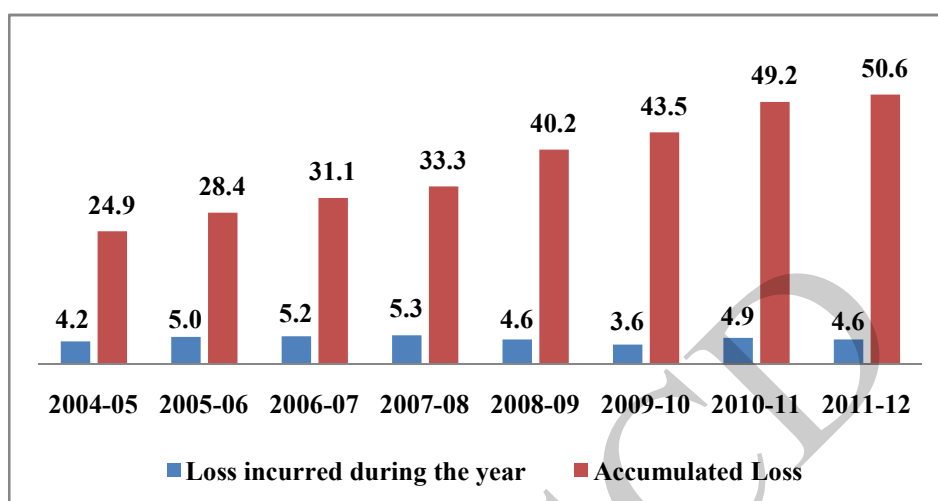
As on 2015-16, the State has five State Public Sector Enterprises⁵. Budgetary outgo from the State Government includes subscription of their equity capitals, provision of loans, grants and subsidies including guarantees given for their loans taken from banks and other financial institutions. These PSEs are to carry out activities of commercial nature and to generate surpluses which should be ploughed back to State in the form of profits and dividends, thereby becoming one of the sources of State revenue. They were rather incurring losses continuously over the years. During 2011-12, annual

⁴This includes (i) Tuivai (210 MW), near Ngopa Village, Champhai District to be constructed on PPP Mode with VGF from Ministry of Economic Affairs; (ii) Kolodyne-II (460 MW) near KawlchawVillage, MoA signed with NHPC, Saiha District; (iii) Bairabi (80 MW), near Bairabi Village, Kolasib Dist MOU under process with Sikaria Power Ltd; (iv) Tuirini (38MW), near Saitual Village, Aizawl District, MOU signed with SPML; (v) Tuivawl (42MW), Near Saitual Village, Aizawl District, MOU signed with SPML.

⁵These are Mizoram Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited (MAMCO), Zoram Industrial Development Corporation Limited (ZIDCO), Zoram Electronics Development Corporation Limited (ZENICS), Mizoram Food and Allied Industries Corporation Limited (MIFCO), Mizoram Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation (ZOHANCO)

loss amounted to Rs 4.56crore and the accumulated losses being Rs 50.58crore (chart-2). Financial contribution made by these PSEs is insignificant to the State economy. Even though state enterprises are incurring losses, they continue to get investment from State Government and other financial institutions. As on 31 March 2012, total investment in the five PSEs amounted to Rs 92.57 crores.

Figure 2: Annual & Accumulated Loss by State PSEs (Rs. in crores)



Several factors contributed to the operational inefficiency of these PSEs. These include : (i) Political appointment of the members of management board without considering technical or managerial capabilities; (ii) irregular fund flow to the PSEs; (iii) Overstaff with persons not having technical or managerial expertise, causing huge salary expenditure on administrative staff; share capital hardly covered the administrative expenses ; (iv) no policy back up towards better performance; (v) non-existence of proper monitoring mechanisms at any level; (vi) general infrastructure backwardness and absence of entrepreneurship. The restructuring framework recommended by the High-Power Committee includes, among others, adoption of Chairman-cum-Managing Director (CMD) and induction of experts as board of directors, Voluntary Retirement Schemes for employees, capacity building to enhance efficiency of employees, no further disbursement of loans etc⁶

6. Fiscal Decentralization at the Local Body Level

6.1. Structure of Local Bodies in Mizoram

Traditionally, the Mizo community had a well functioning system of local government under the chieftainship which lasted till the early 1950s. Presently, there are three types of democratically local bodies functioning in the State. These are village councils, urban local body i.e., Aizawl Municipal Council (AMC) and Autonomous District Councils. Mizoram has been excluded from the operation of village panchayat as per the provision in the 73rd amendment to the Constitution of India. Village Councils are created under State legislation and Sixth Schedule provisions of the Constitution. The only urban local body, i.e., Aizawl Municipal Council, was formed under The Mizoram Municipalities Act, passed by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 2007 in line with the provision of 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India. Autonomous District Councils are created under Sixth

⁶ See Report on Restructuring of Public Sector Enterprises under Government of Mizoram, High Power Committee, GoM, 2008

Schedule provisions of the Indian Constitution. Mizoram has three Autonomous District Councils, all located in the southern part of the state. These are Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC), Mara Autonomous District Councils (MADC) and Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC).

Village councils enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in village administration including judicial of petty nature. They are responsible for law and order maintenance and socio-economic development in their respective villages. Their main functions include: (i) Allotment of house sites to the households living in the village.(ii) Mobilise community labour to do community-related works like clearing of inter-village roads, maintenance of local spring water sources etc. (iii) Demarcation of village forest safety reserves, village forest supply reserve and protected forest reserve under the Mizo District (Forest) Act, 1955. Recently, grants for local bodies from Central Finance Commission have been utilised by Village Councils. Rural development works under Central and State Sectors have also been implemented through Village Councils

The State has 22 notified towns. However, only Aizawl city has municipal council and the rests are governed by Village Councils. The Aizawl Municipal Council started functioning from July 1, 2008. The Council office is headed by a Chief Executive Officer. The AMC consists of 19 elected members representing 19 Wards of the city of Aizawl and other 12 members (11 MLAs and 1 Lok Sabha MP) appointed by the Governor of Mizoram. Roughly one-third (i.e. 6) of the total membership is reserved for women which rotates after every five years. The tenure of the Council is five years. Presently, the AMC looks after bus terminal, engages in the provision of civic services, solid waste management, regulations on advertisements and hoardings, issuing of trade licenses, buildings, street lights, street vendors etc.

Autonomous District Councils have extensive powers on wide-range of subjects that can be classified into legislative, judicial, executive and financial. Under the Constitution, the District Council has law making powers concerning: (i) Management of land and forests other than reserve forest; (ii) Use of canal or water for agriculture; (iii) Regulation of the practice of jhum; (iv) Establishment of village or town committee and matters relating to village or town administration including public health and sanitation; (v) Inheritance of property; (vi) Marriage and divorce; and (vii) Social customs etc.

6.2. Finances of Local Bodies

As on 2015, there were 757 villages having Village Councils including the villages under three Autonomous District Councils. The sources of funds for them are village's own revenue, state grants for various development schemes and FC grants. The Village Council's own revenue consists of animal tax, fees for the Village Crier, contribution against absence and fines from community works (Hnatlang), fees for issuing documents etc. State grants are plan grants under rural development schemes and MGNREGS. The Thirteenth FC grants for local bodies are assigned to the Village Councils on selected items of development works. The pattern of aggregate revenue receipts of the village councils is given in Table-8.

Table 8: Aggregate Revenue Receipts of Village Councils

Sl.No	Items	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
I	Aggregate Own Revenue Receipts (Rs. In lakh)	19.69	22.16	27.85
	Per capita own revenue receipts (Rs)	2.45	2.75	3.46
	Share in total (%)	3.61	1.12	1.20
II	Aggregate State Grants ((Rs. In lakh)	193.28	193.28	193.28
	Per Capita State Grants (Rs)	24.05	24.05	24.05
	Share in total (%)	35.45	9.75	8.31
III	Aggregate FC grants (Rs. In lakh)	332.25	1,767.81	2,103.80
	Per Capita FC grants (Rs)	41.34	219.93	261.74
	Share in total (%)	60.94	89.14	90.49
IV	Grand Total (I+II+III) (Rs. In lakh)	545.22	1983.25	2324.93

Source: Report of the First State Finance Commission Mizoram (2015-20), February 2015

The Aizawl Municipal Council has a limited revenue bases. Till 2014-15, the AMC does not levy and realise any tax revenue. The State Government empowered AMC to collect property tax with effect from 1st April 2015. The Council's revenue sources are own non-tax revenue receipts and revenue transfers from the State Government. Own non-tax revenue receipts mainly consist of parking fees, building permission, licensing regulation, bank interests etc. Revenue transfers from the State government are mainly in the form of recurring grants for salary and wages, FC grants, plan grants etc., which constituted 96 per cent of the revenue receipts. The Council's own revenue receipts-property tax and non-tax revenue-are expected to touch Rs 11crore in 2019-20. Meanwhile, revenue expenditure of the Council is estimated to reach Rs 48.98crore in 2019-20 as against Rs 42crore in 2015-16. The major items of expenditure under the Council are salary for employees, remuneration of Local Council members, facilities and allowances of Councillors, public lighting, solid waste management, civic amenities etc. As on 2014-15, the total expenditure amounted to Rs 38.07crore.

The autonomous district councils depend heavily on revenue transfers from the State governments and other grants from central plan schemes. The main revenue sources are own-tax and own non-tax revenue receipts, non-plan grants from State Government, FC grants, plan grants from the State plan schemes and CSS. The Sixth Schedules provides list of tax revenue sources for ADCs. This includes: (i) taxes on professions, trades, callings and employment; (ii) taxes on animals, vehicles and boats; (iii) taxes on entry of goods into market for sale therein, and tolls on passengers and goods carried in ferries; and (vi) taxes for the maintenance of schools, dispensaries or roads. The Sixth Schedules also provides for levying of certain local taxes and fees by the Village Councils and Town Committee. There are animal taxes, licence fees from hotels, restaurants etc. As on 2013-14, own revenue receipts accounted for between 2.03 per cent of total revenue receipts and 1.3 per cent in the three autonomous councils. Salary expenditure accounted for more than 90 per cent in all the autonomous districts.

6.3. Fiscal Devolutions Recommended by the First State Finance Commission (2015-2020)

The first State Finance Commission, constituted on 30th September, 2011 recommended principles governing the distribution of net proceeds of taxes, duties, tolls and fees levied by the State between and the Village Councils, Aizawl Municipal Council and Autonomous District Councils and the grants-in-aid to be given from the Consolidated Fund of the State to the local bodies, and also

determine criteria and weights to determine the inter-se allocation amongst the three local bodies. The following recommendations relating to revenue transfers to the local bodies have been accepted by the State government:

- I. The State Government accepted that 15% share of State's Own Tax Revenue, inclusive of the State Excise duty should be devolved to the local bodies. The inter se distribution formulae are also accepted;
- II. The Commission has projected Non-Plan Deficit for each of the local bodies for the period 2015-20 after assessing the own non-plan revenue receipts, share of State's taxes and Non-Plan expenditure. The Commission's recommendation of non-plan deficit grant for each of the ADCs, for all VCs in each District and AMC have been accepted by the State government;
- III. The State Government shall release the share of State's Own Tax Revenues and Non-Plan Deficit Grant due to the Local Bodies in monthly instalments;
- IV. Devolution of share of State's Own Tax and Non-Plan Deficit Grant will be for a period of 5 (five) years starting from 2015-16 to 2019-20. For actual devolution for the year 2015-16 shall be treated to have lapsed and no claim either in the form of arrear or yearly instalment could be made to the State Government;
- V. All revenue expenditure including pay revision, pension and increase in DA/DR shall be met from the Non-Plan Deficit Grant and the State's Own Tax Revenue devolved to the Local Bodies as recommended by the Commission. However, expenditure for conduct of elections to the local bodies including ADCs shall be borne by the State Government

7. Concluding Remarks

The fiscal position of Mizoram improved significantly during the last fifteen years compared to the situation during the nineties which required drastic fiscal reform measures. The fiscal overview during 2004-05 to 2014-15 showed that the State government achieved fiscal improvement consistently as reflected by revenue surpluses, lower fiscal deficits and substantial reduction of State's debt and outstanding liabilities relative to GSDP. However, State is yet to achieve all the fiscal targets set out in its FRBM Act, revised and updated as per latest Finance Commission recommendations. The overall improvement in the fiscal position of the State has been largely contributed by increase in gross transfers, especially tax devolution, from central government, improved collection of own taxes, and expenditure control and rationalization by state government. The State needs to move further in consolidating and restructuring of its fiscal position. The fiscal deficits, as percentages of GSDP, continue to be very high due to various reasons. To meet this challenge, fiscal reform strategy needs to be formulated that would strengthen the growth process as well as ensure fiscal stability of the state

The State's fiscal consolidation and restructuring process started with the implementation of Medium Term Fiscal Reforms Programme (2000-05), and further consolidated by the enactment of fiscal responsibility rules in 2006 stressed augmentation of revenue receipts by restructuring and widening of tax bases and improvement in non-tax revenue receipts along with rationalization of non-plan revenue expenditure. Mizoram, being a small one with no industrial base, have limited scope for generating its own revenue internally. Revenue transfers from the Centre are the major revenue sources for the State. Revenue transfers play a significant role in ensuring fiscal improvement of the state. Revenue surpluses which have been achieved since the middle of 2000s were mainly driven by

increase in revenue transfers and rescheduling of State's high cost debt following the recommendations of FC-XII and FC-XIII respectively. Since the State has limited base for internal resource mobilisation, expenditure management strategy might well be a better option for implementing fiscal reform processes in the State. The fiscal reform strategy should focus on revenue expenditure rationalization programme without undermining expenditure on creation of capital assets.

Pay and pension revision in 2010 and increased outgo of interest payment following huge borrowing requirement to finance fiscal deficit caused serious stress in the State fiscal management. Further, the dismantling of Planning Commission further resulted to a significant loss of plan grants to the State. Moreover, rationalization of centrally sponsored schemes and central plan programmes has also reduced the number of plan schemes available to the State. Given these circumstances, the State government has no choice but to embark, in a more rigorous manner, on fiscal consolidation, restructuring and reform programme to generate revenue surpluses and reduce fiscal deficits. The increased tax devolution under FC-XIV may be channelized to create infrastructural assets to generate long term growth of the state economy.

As the developmental role of the erstwhile Planning Commission having been effectively transferred to the individual State, it is the State now which bears the crucial responsibility in determining development priorities. The state government is increasingly responsible for its own development. The transition to a new fiscal regime should be regarded as an opportunity to reorient its policy towards achieving stronger economic growth in the years to come. The recommendations of the First State Finance Commission, as accepted by the state government, should be a stepping stone in devolving administrative and financial powers to the local bodies. These would help in achieving a more inclusive growth and sustainable development of the State, ultimately enhancing the revenue base of the State.

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MGNREGS IN NORTH EASTERN STATES OF INDIA: AN EFFICIENCY ANALYSIS USING DATA ENVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

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Abstract

MGNREGS is the world's largest employment generation scheme functional in India since 2005-06. The North Eastern Region (NER) of India, comprised of eight states, characterised by economic backwardness has adopted the scheme in marginally greater extent than the national average. The present paper observes that the implementation efficiency, measured through the Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) framework, varies across the states in a statistically significant manner for both 2012-13 & 2013-14 under Overall Technical Efficiency (OTE) as well as Pure Technical Efficiency (PTE) considering the districts as the Decision Making Units (DMUs). The average efficiency of implementation shows a marginal improvement in the later year but there are clear indications that the districts of the region operate with scale inefficiency. Tripura emerges as the most efficient state in terms of implementation followed by Mizoram, while Arunachal Pradesh is at the bottom. Further, efficiency is found to be positively attributed by literacy rates and higher share of marginalised population.

1. Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has been the largest employment generation programme in the world initiated by the Government of India in 2005 with the objective of enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by providing a guarantee of 100 days wage employment to all applicant rural households in a financial year irrespective of any conditionality save the willingness of the adult members to perform unskilled manual work. The enormity of the programme is evident in the fact that Rs 300000 crores (more than US \$ 50 billion) has been spent by the Central government since its inception. A substantial empirical literature has looked at the different aspects of the scheme on a wide range of outcomes varying from poverty reduction to empowerment of women, children's education and health. The scheme is revolutionary in providing a right based framework for wage employment for the first time thereby making the government legally bound to those who demand it (Shah, 2012). The scheme has been lauded owing to its potential for acting as a 'big push' to the distressed regions and facilitate the full employment strategy for India (Bhatia and Dreze, 2006; Ambasta et. al. 2008, Hirway, 2008). The improved economic condition following the large scale employment generation has been a fact across the

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country (Dreze and Oldiges, 2007; Sharma, 2009; Ghosh, 2009), even amidst questions about the quality and quantity of work undertaken through the scheme (Shrivastava, 2006; CSE, 2008; World Bank, 2011); moreover, the scheme has also been criticised for being inflationary (Sethi, 2011) and breeding corruption (Mandavalli, 2010). The implementation of the scheme has actually varied across regions and states over the years with most of the states doing bad including those which are economically backward and poor (Jha & Gaiha, 2013; Sen, 2016); whereas, states with success in administering and delivering Public Distribution System (e.g.- Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan) were also very successful in implementing the scheme (Ravallion, 2016).

The 8 (eight) North Eastern (NE) states of India, accounts for 8% and 4% of the country's area and population respectively but contributes less than 2% of the country's GDP; which is in itself an indicator of its economic backwardness. Geographical isolation following the sole linkage to the mainland through the Siliguri corridor has characterised these predominantly agrarian states with negligible industrialisation, poor infrastructure and minimal gainful employment opportunities. The people, 34 % belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes communities, have higher poverty levels than the national average (GoI, 2008). Added to it are the several extra-economic hurdles in the form of ethnic disturbances, insurgency and marginalization. As a result, the economic mainstay of these states has been the Central assistance and grants often decided in the parlance of the region's geo-strategic positioning. Thus, development initiative like MGNREGS becomes extremely important as a source of fund flow as well as building of asset for facilitating future economic endeavours. In other words, the opportunity of 100 days of guaranteed employment per household per year acts as a safety net for people living in the rural parts of this region. The rationale and goal of the scheme has been without doubt but the implementation has often been the issue and the source of concern and criticism for many.

Efficiency analysis of MGNREGS has itself been limited and use of DEA is even less. Datta and Singh (2012) used the DEA approach in commenting that socio-economic factors like- education, caste, religion, alternative income, health-related achievements and fund availability influences women's participation and share in employment. In West Bengal, relatively higher average efficiency scores indicated the efficacy of the local administration in obtaining quick fund from higher authorities through better administrative skills. Saha and Debnath (2015) observed that Indian states with low literacy rates and high poverty ratios have lower efficiency scores while Natesan and Marathe (2015) develops a mechanism to categorise the states in terms of their scores and also suggest areas which should be addressed for further efficiency of implementation.

It is in this background that the present paper stems with the objective to undertake an efficiency analysis of implementation of MGNREGS using the Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) approach for the North Eastern regional (NER) states, particularly because studies on MGNREGS considering all the NER states has also been scarce. The specific objectives of the present paper are-

1. To estimate the overall technical efficiency (OTE), pure technical efficiency (PTE) and scale efficiency (SE) scores of the districts of North Eastern states regarding the implementation of MGNREGS
2. To examine the differences in the levels of efficiency in implementation of MGNREGS among the NER states, if any; and
3. To identify the factors effecting the efficiency score

The present study is structured into five sections starting with the present Introduction. The second section provides a methodological note on DEA and provides the analytical framework of the present study. Extent of MGNREGS in the North Eastern states is the crux of the third section, while the fourth section provides the analysis and discussion on efficiency of implementation. The last section provides the summary and concluding remarks.

2. Methodology and Analytical Framework

DEA (Data Envelopment Analysis) is a linear (mathematical) programming based method introduced by Charnes, Cooper & Rhodes (1978) as a generalisation of the Farrell's (1957) single-output/ single-input radial measure of technical efficiency to multiple- output/ multiple-input case by constructing a relative efficiency score as the ratio of a single virtual output to a single virtual input. This tool of operational research to measure technical efficiency under constant returns to scale (CCR model) was extended by Banker, Charnes and Cooper (1984) to include variable returns to scale (BCC model). The proponents of DEA considered it to be a mathematical programming model for observational data in order to obtain newer ways of analysing and estimating empirical relations of fundamentals of modern economics like- production functions and/or efficient production possibility surfaces. In other words, Data Envelopment Analysis is a decision making tool based on linear programming for measuring the relative efficiencies of a set of comparable units, termed as Decision making units (DMUs) in the DEA parlance.

Since DEA is directed to frontiers and not towards central tendencies, the attempt is to 'float' a piecewise linear surface to rest on top of the observations instead of trying to fit a regression plane through the centre of the data as in statistical regression. It should be noted that the extended Pareto-Koopmans definition states that full (100 percent) efficiency is attained by any DMU if and only if none of its inputs or outputs can be improved without worsening some of its other inputs or outputs. However, with theoretically possible levels of efficiency not being known always, particularly in management and social sciences, the concept of Relative Efficiency is used which proposes that- a DMU is to be rated as fully (100 percent) efficient on the basis of available evidence if and only if the performances of the other DMUs does not show that some of its inputs or outputs can be improved without worsening some of its other inputs or outputs.

Mathematically, relative efficiency is written as-

$$\frac{\sum u_r y_{ro}}{\sum v_i x_{io}}$$

Where,

y_{ro} = rth output of a particular DMU, O

x_{io} = ith input of that particular DMU, O

u_r is the weight associated with each kind of output &

v_i is the weight associated with each kind of input

The problem is to find these weights such that $z = \frac{\sum u_r y_{ro}}{\sum v_i x_{io}}$, i.e. the ratio of the virtual output to the virtual input of each DMU is maximised. However, without additional constraints this ratio would be unbounded. Thus, to deal with this a set of normalising constraints are introduced:

$$\sum r_j y_{ij} / \sum v_i x_{ij} \leq 1 \text{ for } j = 1, 2 \dots n \text{ \& } \\ u_r \& v_i \geq 0 \text{ for all } i \text{ \&}$$

Which reflects the condition that the virtual output to virtual input ratio of every DMU must be less than or equal to unity for non-negative weights.

The DEA method is applicable to identify a host of efficiency parameters. The technical efficiency score θ CRS is called the overall technical efficiency (OTE) and is calculated on the assumptions of constant returns to scale and is popularly known as CCR model. However, if the DMUs are not operating at an optimal scale, it can be decomposed into pure technical efficiency (PTE) and scale efficiency (SE). Pure technical efficiency is calculated on the assumptions of variable returns to scale where an additional convexity constraint: $\sum \lambda = 1$, is added to the existing model of overall technical efficiency. Symbolically, $PTE = \theta$ VRS. Further the mathematical programming ensures that pure technical efficiency scores are either greater or equal to the overall technical efficiency scores (Banker et al, 1984). Scale Efficiency for the i^{th} DMU, on the other hand, is obtained as

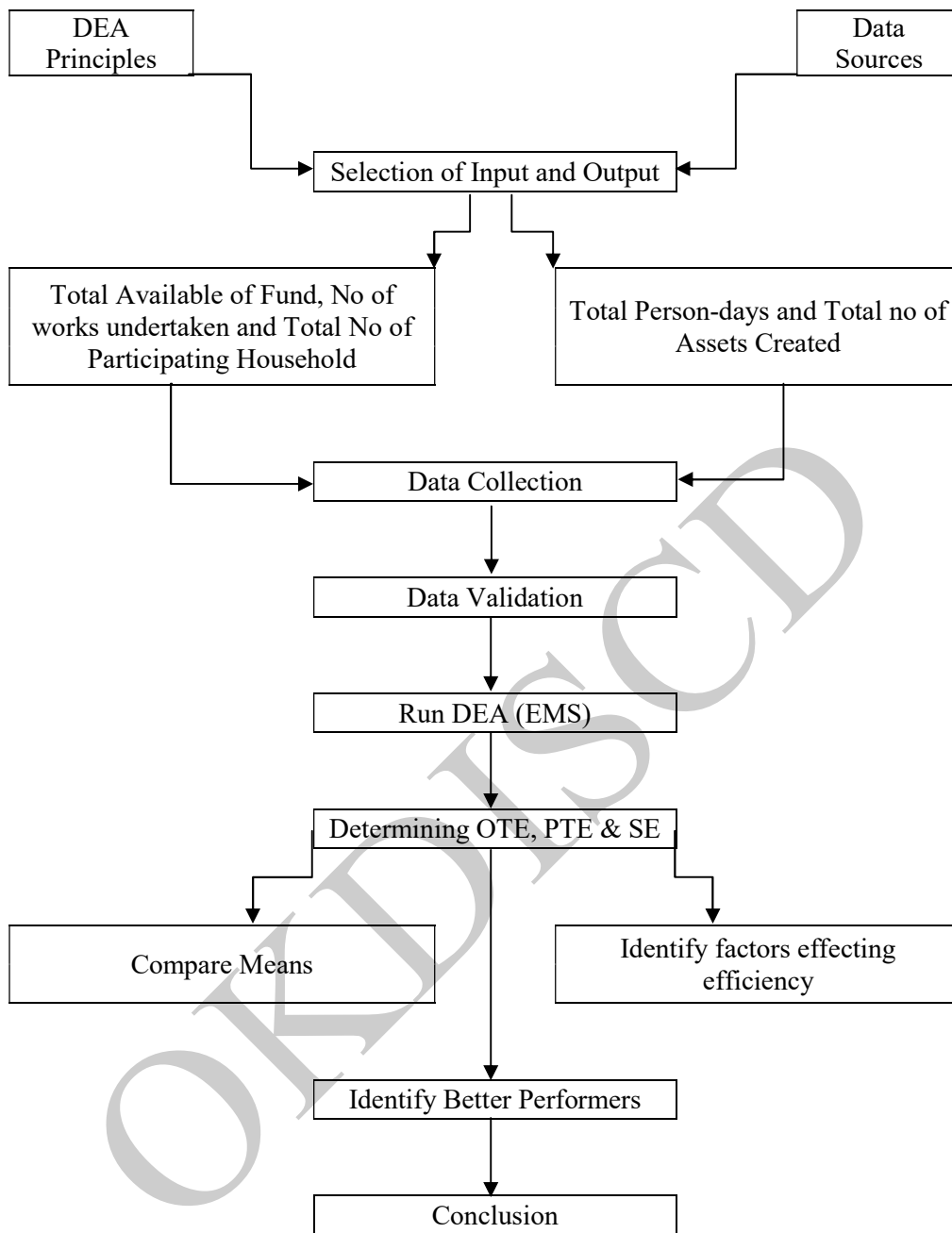
$$SE_i = \theta_i^{\text{CRS}} / \theta_i^{\text{VRS}}$$

Where, $SE = 1$ indicates scale efficiency or constant returns to scale and $SE < 1$ indicates scale inefficiency.

It should be further noted that in DEA, technical efficiency can be viewed from two perspectives-

- a) input oriented, where θ input = Minimum possible input/ Actual input &
- b) output oriented, where θ output = Actual Output/ Maximum Possible Output.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study



Source: Prepared by the Authors

The first objective of the study is addressed by estimating the efficiency scores. For the second objective, we undertake a one-way ANOVA to compare the average efficiency scores of each state. A post-hoc test (Tukey) is done to ascertain the level of difference among the individual states. In order to fulfil the third objective, an OLS regression considering the efficiency scores as the dependent variable is undertaken. The dependent variable for the regression is the average Pure Technical Efficiency (PTE) scores as it has been seen that most of the DMUs (districts) suffer from scale inefficiency. Social and economic indicators for the districts which are independent of the MGNREGS intervention have been considered as decision variables. The PTE scores have been

considered for addressing the second and the third objectives as it provides opportunity for greater flexibility including decision making (Natesan and Marathe, 2015).

As stated earlier, the present paper considers the districts as the decision making unit and uses secondary data obtained from www.nrega.net for analysis. Total person-days and total number of assets created are considered as the output; whereas, total available of fund, the number of works undertaken and the total number of participating households are considered as inputs. In this context, it may be noted that availability of fund is synonymous with total allocation of funds (or total funds available) and is determined on the basis of the total demand for employment by the households possessing job cards. Important to note here that, total population of an area (in this case, districts) is not the major factor for determining the fund size as a large populated district may not necessarily have large funds rather can have lower number of job card holders and lesser demand for work. We have used an output oriented model since better efficiency means higher man-days generation per household, greater coverage of households with 100 days of work and a higher completion rate. The study refers to 2012-13 and 2013-14 because a number of administrative fragmentations in later period have been undertaken but the corresponding data for decision variables are not available. Moreover, 3 districts from Arunachal Pradesh has been left out from the present focus for inconsistent input variables, thus the present study is done considering 83 districts of north east region. The efficiency analysis has been done using the EMS Software while the OLS regression has been undertaken in MS Excel Software. The data for decision variables are obtained from www.censusindia.gov.in and relate to Census 2011 undertaken by the government of India.

3. Extent of MGNREGS in North Eastern Region of India

The importance and relevance of MGNREGS in the north eastern region is manifested in Table 1. The region catering to less than 4% of the country's population accounts for 5% of the job cards issued in the country. More than 66 lakh household had job-cards in 2013-14. The share of the region in terms of demand for employment under the scheme is even higher with more than 35 lakh households demanding work, which is in the vicinity of 7% of the national pie. The total number of person-days generated has come down from slightly in 2013-14 but is still above 7% of the country's share.

Table 1: MGNREGS in North East India (2012-13 & 2013-14)

Indicators	2012-13	2013-14
HHs with Job Cards	6477577(4.96)	6620181(5.17)
HHs demanding Employment	3410976(7.48)	3549288(6.85)
Total Person-days Generated (Lakhs)	1770.65(7.68)	1547.22(7.02)
Avg. Person days/ HH	44.30(44.99)	43.90(45.86)
HH with 100 days of work	8.86(7.80)	10.28(10.37)
Women Person days (% of total)	35.49(41.84)	39.32(50.11)
Work Completion Rate (%)	28.47(35.87)	31.60(14.69)
Utilisation of funds (%)	82.94(86.25)	88.29(86.25)

Source: Computed from www.nrega.in

However, the average person-days per household in the region has been marginally lower than the national average. Similarly, the share of women in job participation is also lower than the national average and the difference is substantial in 2013-14, indicating that more males from the households participate in the MGNREGS works in the NE region. In terms of other indicators like HHs with 100 days of work, work completion rate (WCR) and utilisation of funds, the region has a mixed performance with the national average being higher than the region's average in one of the two years of reference. However, the difference has not been much except for WCR.

In terms of the performance indicators, Table 2 shows that there are wide differences among the states. Tripura's performance has been credited since the initial years particularly for creating higher average person-days per household than the national average (Dreze & Oldiges, 2007; Usami & Rawal, 2012 and The Shillong Times, 2012). In terms of households with 100 days of job provision also Tripura is way ahead of others for both the years while for the work completion rate, the situation in 2013-14 appears to be much lower than some other states. Further, the equity aspect of the scheme appears to be addressed for the better in the context of participation of women and socially excluded groups in Tripura (Talukdar, 2008; Bhowmik, 2013). Mizoram has the best work completion rate in the region and the second best average person-days generation per household which is aptly reflected in the reduction of unemployment, increased agricultural wage rate, higher expenditures on food and improved standard of life (Lalthanmawai, 2015). Sikkim and Meghalaya comes in the 3rd and 4th position in terms of average person-days per household in the NE region. A strong social safety net for the vulnerable sections of the society in these two states have been created with greater integration of the BPL families as well as women workers which has led to 'Knowledge Empowerment' in the tribal societies as they have learnt to share information among themselves (Panda et al, 2009).

Table 2: Output Indicators of North East Indian States (2012-13 & 2013-14)

States	Avg. Person days		HH with 100 days		WCR	
	2012-13	2013-14	2012-13	2013-14	2012-13	2013-14
Arunachal Pradesh	25.38	25.25	0.09	0.00	7.45	6.01
Assam	25.44	23.68	0.21	0.35	79.50	59.39
Manipur	37.13	24.82	0.01	0.01	63.89	34.37
Meghalaya	44.77	56.76	0.63	1.03	68.41	43.73
Mizoram	73.24	70.55	0.08	0.00	98.21	94.22
Nagaland	35.10	42.92	0.00	0.02	80.16	56.68
Sikkim	60.79	68.91	0.19	0.30	89.15	59.78
Tripura	86.78	87.69	37.93	47.23	96.09	49.82

Source: Computed from www.nrega.in

As is visible, the indicators are not very impressive for Manipur and Nagaland, where most of the participating households are from the backward communities. The average employment generation per household ranges between 35 to 45 days per annum and the proportion of household attaining 100 days of work is almost nil. The work completion rate is also not satisfactory (Stina et al, 2015). Assam, the largest state of the region also does not depict satisfactory performance in terms of the indicators even though funds have increased over the years (Goswami & Dutta, 2014); however, the presence of women in Gram Sabha meetings have increased (Das, 2013) and participation in

MGNREGS is determined by the levels of income, housing condition, levels of literacy and social status (Baruah & Radhkar, 2017). Nonetheless, the performance of the scheme in terms of all indicators appear to be low for Arunachal Pradesh as a whole and one of the major causes for it is the accumulation of unspent funds (Koyu, 2015).

One thing here can be noted that performance of states like Tripura, Mizoram is pretty good while performance of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Manipur is very poor and as a result the aggregate average for the region stands lower than the national average for most of the performance indicators. It therefore proposes a scenario of wide variation within the region in terms of implementation of MGNREGS. However, as it is cumbersome to make an overall assessment in the presence of numerous indicators, we apply the DEA method to compute a comprehensive efficiency indicator taking account of the various objectives of the scheme.

4. Efficiency Analysis

Table 3: Frequency Distribution & Descriptive OTE, PTE and SE of Districts of North East India (2012-13 & 2013-14)

Efficiency Scores	2012-13			2013-14		
	OTE	PTE	SE	OTE	PTE	SE
E < 0.5	38 (45.78)	33 (39.76)	1 (1.20)	35 (42.17)	30 (36.14)	1 (1.20)
0.5 ≤ E < 0.6	11 (13.25)	7 (8.43)	1(1.20)	13 (15.66)	13 (15.66)	2(2.41)
0.6 ≤ E < 0.7	7 (8.43)	10 (12.05)	7 (8.43)	8(9.64)	8(9.64)	1 (1.20)
0.7 ≤ E < 0.8	8 (9.64)	9 (10.84)	4 (4.82)	4 (4.82)	7 (8.43)	4 (4.82)
0.8 ≤ E < 0.9	8 (9.64)	9 (10.84)	5 (6.02)	6 (7.23)	5 (6.02)	8(9.64)
0.9 ≤ E < 1.0	2(2.41)	4 (4.82)	55(66.27)	8(9.64)	7 (8.43)	58(69.88)
E = 1.0	9 (10.84)	11 (13.25)	10(12.05)	9 (10.84)	13(15.66)	9 (10.84)
Descriptive Statistics			Descriptive Statistics			
DMUs	83	83	83	83	83	83
Mean	0.5712	0.6173	0.9132	0.6092	0.6492	0.9299
Median	0.5579	0.604	0.9591	0.5648	0.5837	0.9694
Standard Deviation	0.2520	0.2470	0.1280	0.2407	0.2307	0.115
Minimum	0.088	0.1438	0.3342	0.0875	0.173	0.3178
Maximum	1	1	1	1	1	1

Source: Computed

Notes: **OTE**- Overall Technical Efficiency, **PTE**- Pure Technical Efficiency & **SE**- Scale Efficiency

Table 3 shows that more than 45 % of the DMUs (Districts) functioned with less than 50 % OTE levels in 2012-13, which marginally improved in 2013-14. The average OTE score for the districts also improved from 0.5712 to 0.6092 over the year. However, only 9 DMUs (10.84 %) are found to be efficient according to CCR specifications in both the years though the numbers of DMU with OTE above 0.9 has increased sizeably from 2 to 8 in 2013-14. The number of efficient DMUs under BCC specifications, has obviously been higher- 11 and 13 for the two successive years. The average PTE scores have also increased from 0.6173 to 0.6492 in the second year. However, in terms of scale

efficiency, there is a decline in the number of DMUs scoring a perfect 100%, though the average has increased marginally from 0.9132 to 0.9299 in the second year.

Table 4 exhibits the average OTE and average PTE scores of the North Eastern States for the two years of reference. Tripura has been the overwhelming leader in terms of the efficiency scores in both the models for both the years with the average district achieving more than 90 % efficiency. Mizoram holds the second rank with more than 80% score, whereas Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh are ranked at the bottom of the string for the two years respectively. Interestingly, the average efficiency in Arunachal Pradesh had declined in 2013-14 while Nagaland indicates marked improvement in the efficiency of implementation in the later year. It is to be further noted that the average OTE and PTE had declined for the two best performing states, Tripura and Mizoram, in 2013-14 as compared to 2012-13. Manipur also experienced a decline in average efficiency scores. On the other hand, Meghalaya also had substantial improvement in efficiency scores in the second year alike Nagaland whereas Sikkim and Assam also indicate increased average efficiency.

Table 4: OTE & PTE of the States

States	Av.OTE (12-13)	Av. PTE (12-13)	Av. OTE (13-14)	Av. PTE (13-14)
Arunachal Pradesh (13)	0.4062	0.5229	0.3382	0.4887
Assam (27)	0.5612	0.5866	0.5615	0.5901
Manipur (9)	0.5279	0.6220	0.5049	0.5178
Meghalaya (7)	0.5890	0.6225	0.7573	0.7783
Mizoram (8)	0.8804	0.8895	0.8334	0.8458
Nagaland (11)	0.4030	0.4222	0.6944	0.7085
Sikkim (4)	0.6823	0.7482	0.7820	0.7906
Tripura (4)	0.9749	0.9749	0.9318	0.9418
'F' Stat	7.55***	5.68***	9.93***	5.45***

Source: Computed

*Notes: *** at significant at 1% levels*

From Table 4, it is seen that the average OTE scores and average PTE scores among the North eastern states are significantly different, as revealed by the F Stat values, for both the years. From Table 5, it is further seen that the extent of difference in the mean efficiency is not uniform across the states. The differences are more pronounced under the OTE framework as compared to the PTE format as is seen in the values of F Stat and also in terms of the incidence of significant differences. In all there are 19 incidences of significant differences in mean efficiency under OTE, while for PRE, the number of such incidences is 13. In terms of OTE, Tripura had significantly higher efficiency scores than Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Nagaland in 2012-13, while Mizoram also exhibited higher efficiency in implementation than Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur for both the years. On the other hand, the OTE scores of Arunachal Pradesh have been significantly lower than all the other states except Manipur in 2013-14. It is further observed that the lower range of difference in the average PTE values results in lesser number of significant differences of mean among the states. However, the differences which exist are mainly because of the higher scores of Tripura and Mizoram.

Table 5: Post Hoc Analysis of OTE and PTE between the NER States

	AR	AS	MN	ML	MZ	NL	SK	TR
AR	xxx			PTE14**	PTE13*** PTE14***			PTE13*** PTE14***
AS	OTE14**	xxx			PTE13** PTE14**			PTE13** PTE14**
MN			xxx		PTE14**			PTE14**
ML	OTE14***			xxx				
MZ	OTE13*** OTE14***	OTE13*** OTE14***	OTE13** OTE14***		xxx	PTE13***		
NL	OTE14***				OTE13***	xxx		PTE13***
SK	OTE14***						xxx	
TR	OTE13*** OTE14***	OTE13*** OTE14***	OTE13** OTE14***	OTE13*		OTE13***		xxx

Source: Computed

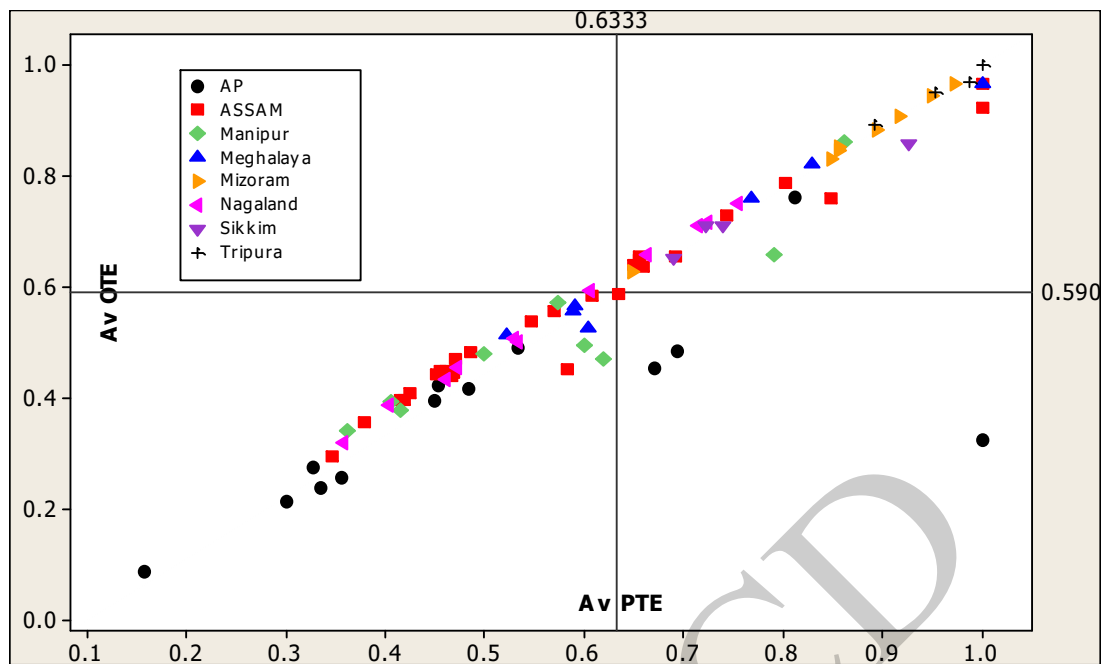
*Notes: *** at significant at 1% levels; **at significant at 5% levels; *at significant at 10% levels;*

The upper panel shows the significant differences in PTE and the lower panel shows significant differences in OTE among the states

AR: Arunachal Pradesh, AS: Assam, MN: Manipur, ML: Meghalaya, MZ: Mizoram, NL: Nagaland, SK: Sikkim & TR: Tripura

Considering the average OTE and average PTE scores of the DMUs (districts) for the two years, it is seen that OTE scores for all the districts of Arunachal Pradesh are lesser than the average mean scores for the region. Surprisingly, one of her district, Upper Dibang valley, scores a perfect 100 % under PTE measure. The South Tripura district emerges as the best performing unit for having a perfect score under both the measure for the both the years, while two more district from Assam- Golaghat and Sonitpur and one from Meghalaya, East Garo Hills also strikes the perfect score under PTE measure for both the year. The high average efficiency of Tripura and Mizoram is an outcome of better performance of the component districts as we see none of the districts from these two states having any DMUs lying below the average efficiency of the region. Among the poor performers under this indicator are East Kameng, East Siang and Tawang districts of Arunachal Pradesh. Hailakandi of Assam and Longleng of Nagaland also feature among the poor performers on both accounts. In this context, the improved PTE scores for the three districts of Arunachal Pradesh may be attributed to existence of scale inefficiency.

Figure 2: Average OTE and Average PTE of Districts



Source: Computed

Notes- Average OTE- 0.5902; Average PTE- 0.6333

In order to explore further into the determinants of implementation efficiency we undertake a regression analysis with average PTE scores of the districts for two years (of consideration, here) as the dependent variable. The explanatory factors are the levels of empowerment and the nature of population in the districts. Literacy rates can be considered as a proxy for the level of empowerment. Thus it can be reported that literacy rates will be having a positive coefficient. Even though the scheme is universal in terms of community specification/targeting, it is expected to facilitate greater integration of deprived sections of the society. Thus the scheme and its implementation is likely to benefit the backward sections of the society more as they are often excluded from the regular development interventions. In this background, the proportion of SC & ST population is considered as an explanatory variable and is expected to have a positive impact on the efficiency scores. Thus the proposed regression function is-

Efficiency Score = f (Literacy Rate, SC share in population & ST share in population). Further, the expected signs of the independent variables of the OLS regression are given in Table 6-

Table 6: Expected Signs of Independent Variables of OLS Regression

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Expected Signs</i>
Literacy Rate	+ ve
SC Proportion	+ ve
ST proportion	+ ve

Table 7: Results of OLS Regression

F. Stat	7.652***			
Multiple R	0.475			
R Square	0.225			
Adjusted R Square	0.196			
Standard Error	0.185			
Observations	83			
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t -Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	0.027	0.136	0.200	0.842
Literacy Rate	0.007	0.002	3.570	0.001*
SC Proportion	0.012	0.006	1.901	0.061***
ST proportion	0.001	0.001	1.922	0.058***

Source: Computed

*Note: *, **, *** significant at 1%, 5% & 10% respectively*

Table 7 shows that the efficiency of implementation of MGNREGS is significantly determined by the literacy rates. The model suggests that higher the literacy rates in the district, better is the efficiency of implementation. Higher literacy rates are considered as a proxy for better empowerment of the people as empowered people have expressive and effective skills for ensuring better functioning of the scheme.

It is also observed that the proportion of Scheduled tribes and scheduled castes, both, have a significantly positive impact on the efficiency of implementation as revealed in Table 7, where the coefficient of ST proportion and SC proportion in population is significant at 10% levels. Such a result is indicative of better implementation in districts habituated by the marginalized sections of the society. Interestingly, the coefficients of the independent variables indicate that the efficiency score increases by 0.012 for 1% increase in the share of SC population while the increase in efficiency is a bit lower if the share of ST population increases by similar ratio. The scheme, although, is universal in nature, yet one of the latent objectives is to improve the economic condition of the vulnerable sections of the society as component of inclusive development.

5. Summary and Concluding Remarks

Implementation of MGNREGS is certainly an issue of governance. Better governed states are often synonymous with political stability which ensures uninterrupted flow of the development initiatives. The states of Tripura and Mizoram are dissimilar to other NER states particularly in the form of government. The Left Front had been in power in Tripura since 1993 while the Congress government in Mizoram has also been in power since 2008. These two states have been the national leaders in terms of average person-days generation which certainly contributed to better efficiency scores. Further, to be noted is the better literacy scenario in these states also. The higher literacy rates have contributed to empowered population which had an indirect impact on cajoling better implementation from the MGNREGS officials. The fact that districts with higher proportion of marginalised population indicating better implementation efficiency is certainly a welcome measure, but such a scenario is not uniform across the region as many ST dominated districts rank at the bottom tier of

efficiency. The statistical significance of better efficiency in districts with higher proportions of tribal population also induces to ponder about the availability of alternative work in those areas. The lack of alternative in such districts may have been a contributing factor to increased awareness and implementation of MGNREGS. However, lack of employment and economic opportunities in the rural areas of the Northeast India is a reality and centrally sponsored schemes are often a major source of livelihood in these states. The present study is however unable to determine whether the better efficiency in districts with more tribal population is an outcome of the demand side mechanism of empowered population or a supply side mechanism of better governance. Nonetheless, another important contributor to implementation efficiency has been the political will of the government. The Left Front, ideologically, has been a vociferous supporter of social security measures in general and MGNREGS in particular. Thus, it is nothing unlikely that the scheme will be utilised for achieving the political goal of the government. Moreover, the grassroots democratic institutions of Tripura (the three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions) has also utilised the MGNREGS to penetrate further into the life and livelihood of the rural people. Thus, one can infer that MGNREGS has been a major contributor to Left Front's stay in power for long in Tripura. In Mizoram, the church plays a significant role in the development process and civil society organisations also work in tandem with the church and have been effective in ensuring better implementation. On the other hand, the law and order situation, poor governance, fragmentation in the rank and file of the villages have been a deterrent to implementation of MGNREGS in many parts. Also, to be noted is the fact that Arunachal Pradesh had experienced lot of political turmoil in the last few years, which is certainly a factor behind its poor performance but the most serious component for lower efficiency is certainly the poor work completion rate. Works completed under MGNREGS have not been completed as a result the investment in manpower and labour turns out to be ineffective in the long run. However, the most encouraging take-away from the present study is the better efficiency of implementation in districts with comparatively higher proportion of scheduled population which is a satisfactory outcome from the perspective of welfare paradigm.

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TRIBAL POLITICS IN ASSAM: FROM LINE SYSTEM TO LANGUAGE PROBLEM

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Abstract

Colonial geography of Northeast India reveals the fragmentation of the hills and plains and how it shaped the tribal politics in the region. Assam is a unique space to study the struggle of tribals against the mainstream political confront as it is the last frontier of the subcontinent with a distinctiveness of ethnic mosaic. The tribal politics in the state became organised through the self determination of tribal middle class in terms of indignity. The question on indignity is based on land and language which are the strong determinants in the political climate of Assam. This paper tries to argue on the significance of the line system and how it was initially used to create the space for organised tribal politics in terms of land rights. From line system to landlessness the tribal politics is going through different phases of challenges and possibilities by including the demands for autonomy and idea of homeland. This paper also tries to interpret the majority-minority questions in an ethnically diverse community by referring Bodo movement which is to some extent was an outgrowth of Assam movement. The postcolonial ideas of homeland have fragmented character and not able to raise cultural-territorial identity are originally the result of colonialism. The Ethnic identity is indeed directly linked with the region's unique linguistic nature that becomes fragile in terms of identity questions.

Keywords: tribal politics, land, language

The discourse of 'tribal politics' was first used by the colonial rulers in Assam which carries various socio-political backgrounds in the history of Northeast as general and Assam as particular. It became a question of identity in the late colonial Assam originated from the meaning of 'tribe' to the representation of 'indigenous people'. The tribal politics begins to challenge the hegemony of caste Hindus in the beginning and then transformed to tribal autonomy in the post-colonial period. Beteille(1998) argued Hinduism is indigenous to India and the transformation of tribes to Hindu shaped the tribal politics.

Bhimbor Deuri first raised the questions on tribal issues regarding their primary rights and attracted the national political parties to the tribal questions in undivided Assam. The concern about ethnic identities created the sphere of tribal politics and prioritised the political and social sense of power. Local organisations including the Kachari Sanmillan, the Koch Rajbongshi Sanmillan grew out and finally formed the 'Tribal League' in 1933. Bhimbor Deuri was the founder General Secretary of

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Assam Plain Tribal League. As an organised tribal politics, the Tribal League brings all the Mongloid tribes in a common platform to fight against the mainstream political confront. Politics of rights, representation as well as emancipation were the issues raised with a nascent consciousness by an educated middle class in the early twentieth century. Kalicharan Brahma, Sitanath Brahma Choudhury among the Kacharis and Samsong Ingti among the Mikirs were the pioneers during the entire uplift of the sensitisation of tribal identity.

At first, the Kachari (Bodo) community submitted the memorandum to the Simon Commission by observing the backwardness of their community. The meaning of backwardness is related to the definition of Hindu. They declared, 'Socially they (the Bodo) are regarded as untouchables. To call them Hindus will be a misname in as much as the Hindus do not receive them into their society, do not dine with them and are mostly unsympathetic to their ideas and aspirations. They are, therefore, an isolated backward community'¹. They also blamed that the upper caste Hindus are enjoying the political power by keeping them in a backward space.

The Tenth Convention of the Assam Bodo Chattra Sanmilian in 1929, under the supervision of Rupanath Brahma brought the message that there is a necessity of education for the development of the tribal areas². They urged to set up schools by themselves rather than depending on the government. Following the similar steps, Benudhar Rajkhowa while delivering the presidential address of Assam Kachari Jubak Sanmilian in 1929 raised the issue of establishing schools by people's initiatives. The memorandum submitted by Assam Kachari Jubok Sanmilian acknowledged that the Kacharis were never a part of caste-divided Hindu society.³ The cultural interpretation of tribals repeatedly raised the question of 'tribal identity' which eventually contested in terms of "indignity".

The discourse of 'Plain tribe' as a geographical term covers the tribes of the Brahmaputra valley, and they are distinct from the tribes who live in the hills. The Tribal League indeed leads the argument of self-representation, self-determination and local control. The other of the representation was that the section of educated, tribal elite tried to define the tribal identity only from their perspective. Sanjib Barua (2005) described the dilemma between the hills and plains as non-state space and state space respectively. The hills became a non-state space and referred to 'illegible space' despite the existence of significant local political formations.

Line System and the Issue of Land

Tribal politics negotiated with the question of land and line system. Line system introduced in 1920 was a clear demarcation between two areas where the immigrants are not allowed either for occupation or cultivation. Under the Line System, "a line was drawn in the districts under pressure [from immigrants] in order to settle immigrants in segregated areas, specified for their exclusive settlements" (A.Guha 2006:167). Nowgong district was the first follower of the line system, and by

¹ Memorandum by the Bodo Community of Goalpara district (by Mr Ghyassudin Ahmad, B L Dhubri). Assam Kachari Jubok Sammilian (by Jadav Chandra Khakhlari, Secretary) on behalf of the entire Kachari community; Proceedings of the Conference held by the representatives of the Kachari community from different parts of Assam held at Titabar, Jorhat, August 1928; Memorial of the Bodos, Garos and Rabhas of the Goalpara Sub-division, Boro Jubok Sammilian.

² Proceedings of the 10th Convention of the Assam Bodo Chattra Sammilon, 1929, p. 11-12.

³ Presidential Address to the Assam Kachari Jubok Sammilani by Benudhar Rajkhowa in 1929, p. 11.

³ Speech by Hockenhall, ALAP, 24 February 1938.

1930 the system was spread in the entire upper Assam. Tribal League termed it as a colonial intervention for the protection of tribal lands⁴.

“A conference of distinct officers held at Shillong in 1928 decided that the number of lines should be reduced, simplified and straightened... with the objective of allocating, considerable blocks of land community-wise” (A.Guha 2006:168). It indicates the greater administrative control over the process which is also a racial segregation between the aboriginal inhabitants and the immigrants. Guha also implied that it is responsible for the divisive nature of “greater Assamese identity” followed by the question ‘*Axomiya Kun?*’ (Who are the Assamese?).

“Who are the Assamese?” is a question that gained its rationale from the perception of danger to culture and community, felt against the influx of a people who seemed to be reaping all the benefits available under the colonial government” (N. Dutta 2012:174). However, this is a primary question leading by different tribal organisations in the contemporary political climate of the state.

Amalendu Guha writes of the “decline of the indigenous population of the Valley by about 7.7 per cent, and the corresponding increase in the non-indigenous population. He also adds that, besides immigration, there was also an inter-district migration (A. Guha 2006:31). As a result of... these population movements...and epidemic havoc...two major demographic changes took place during the years 1874-1905: i) a shift in the ethnic composition of the population and ii) a change in its spatial distribution over the districts (Ibid. 31-31).

Barua (2005) argues that even the nation-state “imagines and represent itself as a land, a territory, a place that functions as the site of homogeneity, equilibrium, integration,” this only reflects, in Kachig Tololyan’s words, the vision of hegemony-seeking national elites. By using Tololyan’s view Barua also analysed the domestic tranquillity in a territory from the perspective of national elites based on the differences being “assimilated, destroyed, or assigned to ghettos”.⁵ I am using here Barua’s argument to present the Assamese case, in the imagination of hegemony-seeking pan-Indian elites which is also an example of an internal challenge to the self-representation of the Assamese sub-nationalism.

The problems of immigration and their occupancy in the agricultural areas reflect that the line system at the local level never strictly implemented. The alienation of land from the tribes to the immigrants indeed misleads the concept of the line system. On the one hand, the Muslim League strongly opposes the line system in 1973. On the other hand, Rabi Chandra Kachari and Rupnath Brahma were in favour of the system. Rupnath Brahma raised the example of Goalpara where many tribal people have to shift from their native land and settled elsewhere⁶. They implied,

‘There should be a Line system to protect the weak and backward people. Without a Line of demarcation, it is not possible to look into the interests of the poor people who require special protection’⁷.

⁴ 18th Report of the Line System Enquiry Committee Vols 1 and 2 (Hockenull Committee), Shillong 1938

⁵ Toloyan, Kachig.1996.

⁶ Speech by Rupnath Brahma, ALAP, 5 August 1937.

⁷ Speech by Rabi Chandra Kachari, ALAP, 5 August 1937.

Historically the problem of immigrants and issue of land related to the line system. Colonial administrator Hockenhill claimed that the *chars* or riverine land is not favoured by the indigenous population and it is a common fact till date⁸. Congressman Purna Chandra Rabha pointed out that the lands of Nowgong district originally belonged to Lalungs and Kachari community. The reverse scenario was reflected by the report of the Deputy Commissioner that the tribals sold off their lands to the immigrants and settled in upper and central Assam⁹.

To figure out the causes and problems of line system a committee was formed from 1937 to 1947. The report submitted by the committee focused on the significance of the aid of immigrants and also demand the protection of the tribal lands. The Congress government under Bordoloi Ministry declared 'protected tribal blocs' and adopted a land settlement policy on November 4, 1939. The significant points of this policy included are as follows (Guha, 2006):

- a) The immediate eviction of encroachers in forest reserves either by immigrants or by non-immigrants.
- b) Dominated tribal areas ordered to be made prohibited areas.
- c) There are some provisions for the natural expansion of indigenous people.
- d) Proposing for the planned settlement of the tribals.

There were some specific conditions behind the support of Tribal League to Bordoloi Ministry (Das, 1983) which includes the demand for a separate electorate for the tribal people. Their demands also include reserved seats for the tribals in the Legislative Assembly as well as Legislative Councils. All tribals irrespective of creed, culture, and religion should be enlisted as a tribal which was the last demand of the Tribal League later become a source of several debates.

In the later phases, the Tribal League protested against the Bordoloi Ministry for not including a tribal in his ministry though they gave the assurance before the election. During the conference of the All Tribal Party Leaders held at Shillong on 6, 7, 8 July in 1946 they forwarded the following demands:

1. To send a tribal representative to the Constituent Assembly.
2. To induct one minister and a Parliamentary Secretary in the Central Ministry.
3. Making reservations for posts in Government service for the tribals.

Because of these demands, Gopinath Bordoloi inducted Bhimbor Deuri and Abdul Rashid into his cabinet during 1946. In the meantime, Sri Jogendra Nath Hazarika, the president of All Assam Hills and Plains Tribal Student's Union was inducted in the Nehru Ministry as the Parliamentary Secretary for foreign affairs.

The resignation of the Bordoloi ministry left the above steps unimplemented whereas the Saddulla ministry yet again demanded the abolition of the Line system. In 1940 the tribal representatives demanded legislative changes to fulfil the conditions of the line system and evict the illegal migrants. The recent problems of indigenous people regarding land and the illegal migrants thus started from the Line system. Eventually, Congress demanded the measurement and reservation of the wastelands

⁸ Speech by Hockenhill, ALAP, 24 February 1938.

⁹ Speech by Lakeshwar Barooah, ALAP, 6 December 1941.

for the indigenous people¹⁰. The view of Jawaharlal Nehru was quite controversial here because of his support to immigration which he termed as an economic necessity. He was also in favour of the relaxation of the Line system which became ambiguous for the local tribals.¹¹

The Idea of Separateness

The 1941 classification and its effort to find out the community identity help the Tribal League to be unified as a group. The Tribal League defined 'tribal' as a broad-based categorise where religion was a secondary aspect of identity. Moreover, the Tribal League focused on the characteristics of 'separateness' and 'differentness' between the tribal people and the caste Hindu Assamese. The contestation starts with the hegemony of being 'Hinduised' or following 'Christianity'. However, in this case, Hinduisation was not a sole concern but conversion to Christianity termed as a threat to the mainstream Assamese. The Tribal League played a significant role in the political ups and down during that time. They protested against the grouping of Assam with West Bengal while after the independence they merged with the Congress Party.

The formation of Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA) in 1967 carried the demand for a separate state named 'Udayachal' for the plain tribals of Assam. It was after the formation of Nagaland, but Meghalaya and Mizoram were still part of Assam during that period. Borbora (1989) noted that the sentiments based on their political rights and identity contributed to the formation of the PTCA. An agreement was signed by the seats between the Janata Party and the PTCA before the general elections of Assam in 1978. In the general elections of the State Legislature of Assam in 1978, the Janata Party begged fifty-four seats while the PTCA gained only four seats. However, after getting power, the PTCA withdraw its demand for a state of Udayachal.

The first non-congress Government in Assam after independence included twelve Cabinet ministers along with four ministers of State which include three Cabinet Ministers from Tribal representatives and PTCA. During that time a huge conference was held on tribal issues at Dispur where Prime Minister Murarji Desai assured the development of the tribal people of Assam. The meeting helps to understand the necessity of reservation of services and posts by which the Assam Schedule Caste and the Scheduled Tribes Act, 1978 was passed in Assam Legislative Assembly. Borbora (1989) has mentioned that during the short tenure, the Janata Government helped the tribals to satisfy on the privilege of sharing power because of which the Plains Tribals Council did not demand a separate state.

All Bodo Student Union Under the leadership of the late Upen Brahma coined the slogan "Divide Assam fifty-fifty".¹² The slogan concentrated on separating Assam in two parts by criticising the state government's cultural and employment policies intently familiarise to ethnic Assamese and the quest for equality. The tribal politics in Assam took a new turn after the fragmentation of PTCA to Progressive PTCA and the formation of the Assam Accord in 1985. However, the commitments of the accord to protect the 'identity and heritage of the Assamese people' is still criticised based on the difference between the people who live in Assam and 'the Assamese people'.¹³ Barua(2001) also

¹⁰ Speech by Rabi Chandra Kachari, ALAP, 14 March 1944.

¹¹ Resolution disapproving the Land Settlement Policy of the Saaduaalla Government, ALAP, 6 December 1941.

¹² ABSU (All Bodo Student Union) 1987.

¹³ I borrow the statement from Sanjib Barua's India Against Itself, pp.116.

identified one of the legacies of the Assam Movement which he termed as a sustained crisis of governmental legitimacy that continues till date. The Plains Tribal Council of Assam argued that tribal blocks are scattered all over the state and indeed they did not support the demand 'divide Assam fifty-fifty'. However, the ABSU did not support the alliance of PTCA with Janata Party in 1978 which indicates that there was an internal clash between the organisations based on their demands from the beginning. To weaken the strength of the PTCA, Congress gave support to All Assam Bodo Student Union (ABSU). The PTCA believed that a 'Bodoland' is not the aim of all tribal groups and it is the first step of fragmentation of the tribal power within the state. The eight-member committee constituted after the fourth round of tripartite talks did not include members from other tribal representatives including the Mishings, Rabhas, Lalungs, Deoris as well as Sonowal Kacharis.

The Assamese mainstream is blamed for the non-recognition of the tribals in the wider socio-political scenario of the state. In the later phase of their demands, the introduction of Autonomous Districts under Sixth Schedule became a paradigm shift of tribal politics. ABSU (1982) mentioned,

*'One of the most responsible factors as to why the tribals have become alienated from the mainstream of Assam is the attitude of the Assamese people. The Assamese people have never accepted the tribals as a part and parcel of Assamese community and society in a real sense, though they give a motivated slogan of Greater Assamese Nationality. As for instance, a Goswami Brahmin family will never allow or agree to give its daughter for a social marriage with a tribal youth. They hate the Bodos calling (them) as Kacharis.'*¹⁴

The historical process of ethnic change in Assam is the dominant discourse to understand the majority-minority questions in an ethnically diverse community. After the Assam Accord, it was clear that the demands for autonomy by Bodos became violently contested in between the definitions of nations, nationalities and homeland. The Bodos were not in favour of the Clause 6 of the accord which had promised safeguards to protect the cultural identity of "the Assamese people". The meaning of the term "Assamese people" turned into controversial rather than covering the composite significance of the "indigenous" population. The Bodo leaders had worried about the legitimacy to the nuisance of Assamese language and culture on Bodos by following the clause. Secondly, the leaders object another clause of the Assam Accord that promised evictions from the protected public lands. Though the leaders of the Assam movement indicated to the "foreigners" settled to those lands, but in reality, during the first AGP government, the attempt to evict the illegal settlers from protected forests led to the eviction of some Bodos. This was a major turn of the raising voices for the Bodo homeland which to some extent was an outcome of Assam movement.

However, the non-recognition of the tribals is not only a reason but it also assists to extend the gap between the dominant Assamese and the marginalised tribals. The non-recognition is one of the primary reasons for raising the demand for autonomy aftermath the Assam Movement by several tribal groups.

"a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion if the people or the society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible

¹⁴ ABSU 1987, pp. 35

picture of themselves. Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm; can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.”

(Taylor 1994:25).

There are many similarities between the Assam movement and the Bodo movement in terms of the practice of political mobilisation. Barua(2001) argues that Bodo movement followed the same framework of the campaign like the Assam movement by mobilising a large number of people behind a political demand.

“The Assam movement’s major theme of “indigenous peoples” protesting the presence of “foreigners” also touched the chords among the Bodos, though not quite in the way the leaders of the Assam movement may have intended”(Barua,2001:188).

Taylor’s interpretation of non-recognition is a characteristic of the history of the Bodo movement that follows the similar techniques borrowed from the Assam Movement as Barua has explained. In an essay titled “Obstacles in the Relationship of Tribals and Non Tribals” Baliram Senapati(2000), an intellectual of the Tiwa/Lalung tribe of Assam defines the “indifferent attitude” of the non-tribals towards tribals. Drawing the narrative of “dominant community-minority community”, he refers to political attempts to divide and rule to break up tribals from one another.

The demand for autonomy and its different narratives about homeland constantly criticised Assamese identity. “The movements of various communities to assert and protect theirs, what is commonly called, ‘ethnic’ identity, are the most significant aspects of the contemporary socio-political reality of India’s North East” (A. Baruah 2005:17). The memorandums submitted by different tribal groups during 1980s carried the grievances about the chauvinism of the Assamese community.

“The present agitation in Assam in the name of foreign nationals has threatened the linguistic minority communities including the tribal people of these to hill districts (Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar Hills),” and “made no secret of their intention and determination to destroy the language, culture and tradition of the minorities as well as the tribals in Assam” (Memorandum demanding an autonomous state comprising Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar Hills in Assam, under the provision of Article 244[A] of the Constitution of India)¹⁵.

The identity problem, as Dutta(2012) indicates, as in many postcolonial nations where the structure and the imaginative model of the nation-state have been the result of colonialism, lies in the effort to integrate many ethnicities into the homogeneities of the nation-state. The identity as a matter of crisis is thus originally linked with the colonial geography of the region.

“In Assam, because British policies involved the insertion into the region of the communities belonging to other regions and, more importantly, to other linguistic and culturally distinct grouping, the question of migration has always been part of the imagination of an ‘identity always in crisis.’ That is, the formulation or articulation of

¹⁵ Datta 1993.

identity has always been in resistance, beleaguered, under threat either from the universalist and homogenising design of the nation-state or from influx from Bengal/East Pakistan/Bangladesh.” (N.Dutta 2012:143)

Language as a Part of Identity

Assamese nationalism like most of the Indian sub-nationalisms has been based on a language. The same characteristic is also inscribed in case of Bodo sub-nationalism. The Bodo middle class geared up the ethnic consciousness of Bodo language identity. Axom Xahitya Xabha and the Bodo Xahitya Xabha are the two dominant organisations that have not only promoted the cultural and literary sentiment of Assamese and Bodo respectively but also strongly influenced the politics of the state. One of the most visible characters of the desire to differentiate Bodo as a part of the dominant cultural politics is the language. The Bodo Xahitya Xobha launched the agitation demanding the adaptation of the Roman script for the Bodo language in 1974-75.¹⁶ Bodo was not a written language in the past, and it had been written using the Assamese script. The demand for the Roman script by the Bodo Xahitya Xabha was not supported by the Central government and eventually, the script selected was Devanagari which is almost a pan-Indian script. Though Assamese was easier than the Devanagari, the Bodos could not swallow their pride as their movement was primarily against the Assamese script.¹⁷

The language spoken by “indigenous communities” and the objectives of safeguarding the languages either by Axom Xahitya Xabha or Bodo Xahitya Xabha are failed as the number of Assamese and Bodo speakers are declining in an alarming rate. Census 2011 Language Data reveals that the percentage of Assamese and Bodo speakers to the total population in Assam has declined while the percentages of Bengali and Hindi speakers in the state have increased over the decade 2001-2011. The percentage of Assamese speakers in the state further declined to 48.38 in 2011 from 48.80 in 2001. On the contrary, the percentage of Bengali speakers increased to 28.91 in 2011 from 27.54 in 2001. The number of Bodo speakers declined to 4.53 per cent in 2011 as compared to 5.89 in 2001. However, in 1991, the percentage of Assamese speakers in the state was 57.81 per cent and that of Bengali was 21.67 per cent. Among the speakers of 22 Scheduled languages of the country, Hindi speakers top the list with the highest percentage of 43.46 followed by Bengali with 8.30 per cent in the second position while Assamese speakers are placed at the 12th rank with 1.31 per cent.¹⁸

These data reveal that the Assamese sub-nationalism is in a risk zone which apparently becomes a challenge to other tribes including the Bodo. Eventually, the number of candidates in Assamese medium in High School Leaving Certificate examination declined to 27,000 while in case of Bodo medium to 3000 in the year 2018 comparing to the previous year.¹⁹ The Ethnic identity which is directly linked with the region’s unique linguistic nature thus becomes fragile in terms of identity questions. It also dilutes the idea of “ethnic Assamese” and the demands for the separate homeland within the complex structure of Indian federalism. The idea of “ethnic Assamese” cluster around the “cultural hegemony” as Gramsci (1999) has pointed towards the relation between culture and power under capitalism. Gramsci also stated that “every language contains the elements of a conception of

¹⁶ Barua. 2001.

¹⁷ Chanda 1988.

¹⁸ http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/C-16_25062018_NEW.pdf

¹⁹ Arup Kalita, Niyamiya Barta, 23rd March, 2018.

the world". The available vocabulary helps to mark the boundaries of permissible discourse, discourages the clarification of social alternatives, and makes it difficult for the disposed to locate the source of their unease, let alone remedy it".²⁰ The concept of cultural hegemony helps to raise the question of "who has power?". The "who" includes "experts" of all sorts including the popular musicians, entertainment promoters as well as celebrities who are involved in shaping the values and attitudes of the society. The "power" includes cultural, economic and political power which helps to define the boundaries of "reality". The reality of declining the Assamese and Bodo language speakers, on the one hand, indicates the declining of the power of indigenous. On the other hand, it strongly pointed towards the ignoring views outside the boundaries that include the questions of immigration as well as the dominance of the centre to the frontiers. Indeed, the hegemonic culture, as Gramsci described, depends not on brainwashing of "the masses" but on the tendency of public discourse to make some forms of experience readily available to consciousness while ignoring or suppressing²¹.

Conclusion

The colonial geography of the region shows how British policy turns Assam into a capitalist plantation economy and later the wastelands were freed for the settlement of the cultivators migrated from East Bengal. When large-scale alienation by tribals was threatened, colonial officials initiated the policies such as "Line system" that supposedly protected the tribal land from the immigrants. But in reality, the line system was not maintained and over years more and more areas were occupied by the immigrants. Moreover, those protected policies were granted for the groups which are in the later phases termed as "plains tribals" were not balanced to the "hill tribes" of the "excluded areas" that constitute of the "tribal" majority states. Though the "tribal" blocks remain a part of the Assam's land system, the record of the illegal transfer of land from the "tribals" to "nontribals" is abysmal.²² The process of "detrribalised" continues in large tribal areas for various public purposes. For instance, Assam's capital city of Dispur which was a part of "tribal" block is now rarely visualising a tribal flavour in the real sense. Another example is the tribal villages such as Kangkan Nagar, Doni Polo, Yusuf Nagar, Kailash Nagar in and around Amchang in Guwahati since the 1980-1990s were being evicted in the name of crossing the Eco Sensitive Zone²³.

Thus, the historical process of ethnic change in Assam crossed over different geographical as well as socio-political layers. These changes are not following the pan-Indian nation building but in a way those can be termed as cultural-territorial identity. These identities are contested between the geographical and sociological self-determination of different tribal groups. Indeed, the post-colonial ethnic changes cannot be ignored in the state which is the last land frontier of the Indian sub-continent bearing huge immigration. The famous narrative of '*Jati, Mati, Bheti*' (identity, land and homestead) of the current government become more powerful by the anxiety surrounding the presence of immigrants. Simultaneously, the narrative tries to interpret the compulsion of the specific location of the state and engage people with the definition of '*khilanjia*' (indigenous) in terms land and land rights.

²⁰ Gramsci, as quoted in Joseph V. Femia, Gramsci's Political Thought (Oxford,1981).

²¹ Lears Jackson T.J.1985.

²² Bordoloi, B.N 1991.

²³ Most of the families of these villages are migrated from flood-affected regions in Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Majuli after losing their lands. The Gauhati High Court had ordered a stay on the eviction drive in Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary, but 408 houses have already been demolished by the state.

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A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY FOR THE NORTH EASTERN STATES OF INDIA USING HOUSEHOLD LEVEL DATA

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Abstract

Deprivations in non-monetary achievements such as health, education and standard of living are more serious than that of income deprivations as the former contribute to a situation of greater vulnerability in the long run. Taking into consideration such non-monetary deprivations, the present study attempts to estimate the relative positions of the states in the North-Eastern Region of India in terms of multidimensional deprivations of well-being using the methodology as proposed by Alkire and Foster (2011). The study tries to cover a wide range of variables related to health, education, standard of living and nature of employment at the household levels for each of the states and districts of North-Eastern Region of India. It deals with inter-state as well as intra-state (rural-urban in particular) disparity in the NER in terms of multidimensional poverty using household level information from DLHS-4. Health appeared to be a crucial dimension of deprivations for NER states with malnutrition as the major contributor to poverty.

1. Introduction

India has a relatively sustained economic growth nearly at five percent per annum on an average since 1980s. However, there has been increasing trend for inter-state or intra-state economic and social disparities in India in spite of various public measures for backward areas development (Mathur, 1983; Kurian, 2000; Kannan & Raveendran, 2011; Bhattacharya & Sakthivel, 2004). Over the past two decades, India's per capita Net Domestic Product at constant prices (Base Year, 2011-12) has grown at a rate of 5.29 per cent per annum. Among the Indian states, the state of Kerala has persistently outperformed in all social indicators such as literacy, life expectancy, infant mortality, under-nourishment and fertility (Goldin, 2016, pp. 2). So far as the North Eastern Region (NER) of India is concerned, the region is considered to be more vulnerable i.e. in need of special care and support considering their economic backwardness in both the monetary and non-monetary deprivations for a long period of time since independence. In general, the performance of NER states with respect to poverty reduction and key social indicators is not satisfactory in comparison to the state of Kerala and to the national average (see Table A1 given in the Appendix. Though Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura have registered a higher annual growth rate of per capita Net State Domestic Product (at 2011-12 constant prices) than Kerala and the national average since 1993 but it is important to note that only increase in per capita income is not sufficient for human development.

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More important factors for human development both from individual as well as social points of view are non-monetary achievements in the areas of health, education, living standard and so on. However, majority of the north eastern states are lagging behind with respect to literacy, child survival rate, nutrition, basic amenities etc. which are important factors for enhancement of human capability (Table A1 in the Appendix).

Keeping in mind the diversified developmental experiences of the North Eastern states, the present study aims to estimate the relative positions of the NER states in terms of multidimensional deprivations of well-being using Alkire and Foster (2011) method. Further the study tries to explore the inter-state as well as intra-state disparity in the NER states in terms of multidimensional poverty index using household level information from DLHS-4. For the purpose, the present study decomposes the values of indices into region (rural-urban), and also finds the dimensional as well as indicator wise contributions to the overall poverty for facilitating the target specific policy interventions.

2. Conceptual Framework of Poverty Measurements

2.1. Rationale for Multidimensional Poverty Measurements

There has been conceptual changes in the literature on poverty in the last few decades embracing more comprehensive multidimensional framework including economic well-being, capability and social inclusion. The changes go beyond the notion of economic well-being embedded in the traditional (income) approach. The attempt by the UNDP (1997, 2010) marks an important progress in this regard, where ‘human poverty indices’ are computed as the weighted average of longevity, knowledge, decent standard of living, and the social inclusion (only in case of OECD countries) where in ‘multidimensional poverty indices’ captured ten indicators from health, education and standard of living dimensions in the line of ‘human development index’. Human capability is a more important component to ‘functions’ in the society and lead to the life one values and has a reason to value (Alkire, 2002; Sen, 1993, 2000). From the perspective of capability, various multidimensional approaches have essentially broadened the concept of poverty, i.e. manifestation of inadequate human well-being and not only shortfall of income (Alkire, 2002; Jayasuriya, 2000). Therefore, both ‘capability’ and ‘functioning’ could have been instrumental and constructive values with a set of basic capability, including education, health, gender equality, and self-respect, to function in the society, made them most fundamental aspect of well-being (Alkire, 2002; Sen, 1993,1997). The issue of multidimensional poverty arises because individuals, social observers or policy makers want to define a poverty limit on each individual attribute such as health, education, income and so on (Bourguignon and Chakravarty, 2003; Fusco, 2003). Thus, multidimensional non-monetary poverty measurements have a clear departure from the concept of income poverty measurements and has strengthened literature on dimensions of poverty.

2.2. The Evolution of Poverty Measurements

Historically, poverty measurements have been guided by the notion of economic well-being taking into consideration the level of income and consumption as proxy to wellbeing. However, the conventional one-dimensional approach to poverty measures through income (e.g. Per Capita Income

at the aggregate level) and consumption (e.g. minimum calories requirement at the individual level) are unable to capture the multiple dimensions of deprivations and poverty. It is a fact that income poverty often fails to capture the value of the necessities such as access to safe water, sanitation, education, health which have enormous contribution to household welfare and are so costly that they need to be provided by the government. Poverty refers to deprivations in basic capabilities of the individual or family (Sen, 1993). The deprivation of basic capabilities is multidimensional in nature, which includes early death, observable malnutrition, persistent disease, lack of education and lower standard of living etc. All these are intrinsically and instrumentally important for enhancing basic capabilities of the people through education and health care as they help in enhancing productivity and income. Moreover, there is no linear relationship between income deprivations and non-monetary deprivations. Franco, Harriss-White, Saith & Stewart (2002) found that 53 per cent of malnourished Indian children do not live in income-poor households and 53 per cent of the children living in income-poor households are not malnourished. Bourguignon, Bénassy-Queéré, Dercon, et al. (2010) did not find any empirical evidence that a reduction of monetary poverty be associated with a reduction of non-monetary deprivations. The capability approach of poverty measurements clearly assumes that poverty results from the lack of human capabilities to '*function*' in the society or to '*achieve*' well-being, where well-being is defined as the "*ends*" and capability as the "*means*" to achieve it (UNDP, 2000).

The ILO's World Employment Conference of 1976 at Geneva can be considered as the starting point of the multidimensional approach where focus has been given to the "Basic Needs" consisting of food and other essential requirements. However, the approach got a clear shape with the "Physical Quality Life Index" proposed by Morris D. Morris (1979) to measure the quality of life or well-being of a country with the indicators of basic literacy rate, infant mortality, and life expectancy at age one. Multidimensional measurement of human wellbeing got enriched with the sequential development of Human Development Index (Haq and Sen: UNDP, 1990), Gender Development Index (UNDP, 1995) and so on. A significant departure was noticed with the development of Human Poverty Index by Sudhir Anand and Amartya Sen (UNDP, 1997) where the focus changed from human achievements to human deprivations in the same dimensions of health, education and income. The history of poverty measurements is characterised by two major turning points viz. from economic development to human development and from human achievements to human deprivations.

The UNDP (1997, 2010) approach further strengthened the method where in 'human poverty indices' are computed as the weighted average of longevity, knowledge, decent standard of living, and the social inclusion (only in case of OECD countries) and 'multidimensional poverty indices' capture ten indicators from health, education and standard of living dimensions in the line of 'human development index'. The Human Development Report (1997) and World Development Report (2000) have been intensely introducing poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon. The Millennium Development Goals (2000), also provided multiple dimensions of poverty. The issue of multidimensional poverty arises because individuals, social observers or policy makers want to define poverty on each individual attribute such as health, education, income and so on (Bourguignon and Chakravarty, 2003; Fusco, 2003). The multidimensional poverty measurements based on capability approach with a normative framework for evaluating alternative policies can be broadly clustered into axiomatic approaches (Tsui, 2002, Bourguignon and Chakravarty, 2003; Chakravarty and Silber,

2008; Bossert, Chakravarty and D'Ambrosio, 2009; and Alkire and Foster, 2011), information theory approaches (Maasoumi and Lugo, 2008), fuzzy set theories (Lemmi and Betti, 2006 and Chiappero-Martinetti and Roche, 2009), and latent variable methods (Kakwani and Silber, 2008 and Asselin, 2009). Atkinson (2003) provides an excellent analysis of social welfare approaches vis-a-vis counting approaches. However, majority of the multidimensional measurements are aggregate in nature focusing on the development or deprivations of the society or country as a whole.

Among the various multidimensional poverty measures, Alkire-Foster method has some basic policy advantages owing to its methodology that satisfies the poverty focus axiom following the identification function, which includes the union and intersection approaches to identify the poor in the space of capability. The characteristics of joint distribution of A-F measures assist to derive partial indices that capture both the incidence as well as the intensity of poverty. The Alkire-Foster class of poverty measure combines the desirable axioms of the well-known Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) measures (Foster, Greer & Thorbecke, 1984) of unidimensional poverty measurement with the counting approach (Atkinson, 2003). Further, the axiom of *decomposability* allows decomposing into its geographical, social or dimensional components.

In the Indian context, the Planning Commission has been defining the poverty line as sufficient level of per capita consumption expenditure, which meets the average per capita daily calories requirement of 2,400 kcal in rural areas and 2100 kcal in urban areas since 1977. However, the country has moved from an income approach to a multidimensional approach to identify the poor families targeting a better government service provisions since the year 2002. Construction of a new 'index of multiple deprivations' in India started in 2008. There has been a wide range of empirical studies on multidimensional poverty measures in India. Abraham and Kavi Kumar (2008) has applied the fuzzy set approach in a set of core dimensions such as consumption, education, sanitation, access to water, source of energy for cooking and dwelling to capture multidimensional poverty and the vulnerability of entities. UNDP's axiomatic approach of human poverty index (1997) has been applied by Roy and Haldar (2008) to find regional disparity in terms of multidimensional poverty among the major states of India. Their study finds an increasing regional disparity over time (1981–2001) for the major states of India. Again, the incidence of non-income poverty is much more alarming than that of income poverty in the different states of India which has been found from NFHS-3 of 2005-06, and DLHS-3 of 2002–04 by using the Principal Component Analysis on the indicators such as malnutrition, reproductive and child health, and basic amenities (Radhakrishna, 2014). There has been robust evidence of declining multidimensional deprivations in India though the decline was uneven both between the reforms (1993/1994–1999/2000) and the post reforms (1999/2000–2004/2005) periods, and between the rural and urban areas considering a wide range of welfare indicators including mother and child health based on the information from National Sample Surveys and National Family Health Surveys (Mishra and Ray, 2013; Jayaraj and Subramanian, 2010). Recently Bagli S. (2017) computed a multidimensional poverty index (MPI) for each of the states and for each of the district in northeast India, covering three dimensions namely *Knowledge, Health and Living condition*. Illiteracy rate and financial illiteracy rate have taken as deprivation indicators under knowledge dimension; use of unsafe drinking water and no access to improved sanitation under health dimension and the dimension of living condition includes four indicators such as households having dilapidated residence, no census assets, no access to electricity or solar energy for lighting and no access to

improved fuel for cooking. The MPI has been calculated testing the normalised inverse ‘Euclidian distance’ of the observed vector of the indicators of deprivation from the vector indicating worst state of multidimensional poverty. The disparities among the states and among the districts in terms of the indicators under consideration have also been revealed. Study did not find any straightforward relation between MPI of the states and percentage of population living below the poverty line income.

Traditionally, poverty measurement in India revolves around the ability to spend on goods and services rather than the capability to being and functioning in society (Sen, 1985). Though there has been methodological revisions and debates on multifaceted nature of poverty and need for inclusive growth (GoI, 1993, 2009, 2014; Sen and Himanshu, 2004; Deaton and Dre`ze, 2002, 2009; Subramanian, 2011, Ahluwalia, 2011), many of the empirical studies have shown that a significant percentage of multidimensionally poor are not income poor and vice-versa (Laderchi, Saith and Stewart, 2003; Wang, Feng, Xia and Alkire, 2016).

Though a wide range of literature pertaining to poverty measurements are available for India and the major Indian states, there is but dearth of literature related to poverty measurements for NER states, either in terms of monetary or non-monetary approaches. Most of the available studies are descriptive in nature mainly focusing on the state as a unit of analysis (Nayyar, 2005; Kurian, 2000; Reddy, Galababd Rao, 2003). Alkire and Seth’s (2013) study tried to examine the changes in multidimensional poverty for states in North East India for the period from 1998-99 to 2004-05.

2.3. NER Perspectives

The north-east is diverse with numerous ethnic groups, varied languages and diverse religions, varied forms of governance, varied topography, natural climate, and uneven economic development. The region is characterised by low educational attainment levels, lack of adequate health service facilities, insufficient road connectivity between and within states and lack of basic amenities. Hence a, unidimensional measure of poverty is unable to capture all the dimensions of deprivations as well as the actual causes of backwardness of the region. A multidimensional measurement of poverty based on capability approach is expected to reveal the deprivations persisting in the states of North East. This would also help in identifying the policy gaps and required thrust within the much debated provision of Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) earmarked for North East for its development expenditure. Despite many development initiatives including the provision of Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) ,there have been enormous variations among the states in the region in terms of poverty reduction, curbing inequality, growth rate of per capita NSDP etc. (Shah and Debnath, 2015; Debnath & Shah, 2015; Dehury and Mohanty, 2015; Radhakrishna, 2014, 2015; Alkire and Seth, 2013).

Given the diverse social, geographical and economic features of the states in the region, a multidimensional measurement of poverty would help in appreciating the inter and intra state variation across social groups and religion. The incidence of non-income deprivations is much more alarming than that of income poverty in the different states of the region as revealed from the indicators on malnutrition, reproductive and child health, and basic amenities etc. (see Table A1 in Appendix). Moreover, it has been mentioned before that there has been dearth of research studies in this area covering the NER. Alkire and Seth (2013) attempt of measuring the reduction of poverty in

the Indian states including the NER is based on NFHS – II & III and no such recent works on the NER at the household level has been found in this area to portray the developmental changes that took place after 2004-05. The present study is an attempt to capture the current situation of deprivations in the states of NER as well as the changes therein over 2004-05. For the purpose, the present study also follows the same dimension or indicators and same cut-offs

2.4. Objectives of the Study

The study primarily focuses aims to:

- I. Find out the relative positions of the NER states in terms of multidimensional poverty index (MPI)
- II. Explore the inter-state as well as intra-state (rural-urban) disparity for the NER states in terms of multidimensional poverty index (MPI).
- III. Estimate the relative contribution of the indicators to the overall MPI for each of the states.

3. Data and Methodologies

3.1. Description of Data

The study uses household level information from the fourth round of District Level Household and Facility Survey (DLHS-4), 2013-14. The survey contains information related to maternal and child health (MCH) indicators and prevalence of morbidity for a wide range of common, communicable, non-communicable and lifestyle diseases, demographic and socio-economic characteristics of households, ownership of assets, access to public services etc. The study focuses on the north-eastern states of India, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura and also on the districts of each of these states. The study excludes Assam as it was not covered in the DLHS-4 for household survey. All these seven states together cover about 15 percent of the surveyed households and 16 percent of the population covered in DLHS-4¹.

For the present study households have been taken as the unit of identification. So, the households with a missing value of any of the indicators of multidimensional poverty have been dropped from the sample. However, the present study sets a rule of assigning value to a household when at least two-third of the individual's information are available for whom the indicator is applicable. For example, if at least one of the adult members of household has complete primary or higher level of education, although other members have missing values, the household has been considered as non-deprived. If any household have information on at least two-thirds of the household members, each having less than primary education, then the household has been considered as deprived; otherwise it was dropped

¹ DLHS-4 covered a total of 3,91,774 households comprising of 17,34,213 individuals across the country. DLHS-4 utilises a multi-stage stratified sample design with rural and urban areas of the districts as usual strata following NSSO in the line of Urban Frame Survey (UFS) blocks as Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) and the households as Second Stage Sampling Units (SSUs) for the urban and the census villages as PSUs and the households as SSUs for the rural. For the NER states, a total of 60,227 households were surveyed from 2,237 PSU of which rural areas cover 45,868 households from 1696 PSUs and urban areas cover 13, 560 households from 541 PSUs. The study uses health, educational information of each individual and information regarding household amenities, housing type, sources of water, lighting and cooking fuel to measure multidimensional poverty.

from the sample. In the present study only 96 households (0.15 per cent of total sample) have been dropped from the sample.

3.2. Construction of Multidimensional Poverty Index

The estimation of Adjusted Head Count Ratio (AHCR) in the study was based on the counting approach developed by Alkire and Foster owing to its advantages of dual cut-off, joint distribution and decomposability (Alkire and Foster 2011; Alkire and Santos, 2013; and Seth and Alkire 2014). UNDP has been using the AHCR to calculate Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) for several countries since 2010.

3.2.1. The Alkire-Foster Method

The Alkire-Foster method identifies poor by using two stage cut-off, that is, deprivation cut-off and poverty cut-off. Before the application of these cut-offs, a set of ten indicators (I_j) were selected on the basis of their general acceptance for human wellbeing. These indicators were classified into three broad dimensions (D) with equal weightage. The weight for each of the indicators is assigned on the basis of dimension weights such that the weight attached to indicator j , with $j = (1, 2, \dots, d)$ is represented by $w_j^d = \frac{1}{D} \cdot \frac{1}{I}$.

The first stage cut-off is related to deprivation cut-off for each of the ten indicators to identify the household as deprived in particular indicator. A particular household i need to achieve the minimum level of j^{th} indicator in order to define as non-deprived. The deprivation cut-off of each of the ten indicators is given in appendix (Table -A2 in Appendix). Deprivation cut-off is represented by a vector $Z_j = (z_1, z_2, \dots, z_d)$. Thus, the household i is considered as deprived in j^{th} indicator if its achievement is less than the cut-off Z_j , and replaced by $X_{ij} = \rho_j(X_{ij}, Z_j) = 1$ if $X_{ij} < Z_j$, otherwise $X_{ij} = \rho_j(X_{ij}, Z_j) = 0$, where $X = [X_{ij}]$ is the $n \times d$ order achievement matrix.

The second stage cut-off is related to identification of the households as to define whether multidimensionally poor. The choice of poverty cut-off (k) is likely to be $1 \leq k \leq d$, so that the poverty neither defined as being deprived in only in one indicator, $k = 1$ (which is known as union approach) nor it is defined as being deprived in all indicators, $k = d$ (which is called as intersection approach). Thus, the value of k can be chosen normatively, either based on the previous studies or based on the reasons deem to be fit to the society concerned. On other hand, k can be chosen in such a way that reflects the goal of the state's or government's policy specification. The present study chooses $k = 0.33$ to identify multidimensionally poor households to make comparability with the poverty cut-offs set by Alkire and Seth (2013). Hence, a household is defined as multidimensionally poor, if they are deprived in at least one-third of the sum of weighted indicators, called deprivation score. The deprivation score of a household is the sum of the weighted number of deprivations in which the household is deprived and is represented by the vector $C_{ij} = \sum_{j=1}^d w_j^d \rho_j(X_{ij}, Z_j)$. If $C_{ij} \geq k$ then the household i is defined as multidimensionally poor and reported as $q(k) = \sum_1^d w_j^d \rho_k(X_{ij}; Z) ; C_{ij} \geq k$, where q is the number of multidimensionally poor households. Then the estimation of Multidimensional Head Count Ratio (or called as incidence of poverty) can be obtained

as $H = \left(\frac{q}{n}\right)$, where n is the total number of households. The vector $C_{ij}^*(k)$ represents the censored deprivation score of the multidimensionally poor households and average deprivation score of the poor households, which is called intensity of poverty, defined as $A = \left[\frac{\sum_i^q C_{ij}^*(k)}{q}\right]$. Finally, the estimation of the Adjusted Head Count Ratio or Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which represents the deprivation of the households with respect to health, education and standards of living, the prime components of human capability, can be obtained by the formula:

$$\begin{aligned}
M_0 &= \frac{1}{n.d} \left[\sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^d C_{ij}^*(k) \right]; \text{ Adjusted Head Count Ratio} \\
&= \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \left[\frac{1}{d} \sum_{j=1}^d C_{ij}^*(k) \right]; \text{ Individual Poverty} \\
&= \frac{1}{d} \sum_{j=1}^d \left[\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n C_{ij}^*(k) \right]; \text{ Censored Deprivation} \\
&= \left[\frac{1}{n} q(k) \right] \cdot \left[\frac{1}{q} \sum_i^q C_{ij}^*(k) \right]; \text{ Product of } H \text{ and } A
\end{aligned}$$

3.2.2. Decomposition

Adjusted Head Count Ratio is decomposable by the population subgroups because the measure is expressible as the weighted sum of individual poverty. Hence, the overall poverty can be represented as follows: $M_0 = \sum_{s=1}^l \frac{n_s}{n} M_0^s$ and contribution of the population subgroup, s to the overall poverty M_0 is $C_s = \frac{n_s}{n} \times \frac{M_0^s}{M_0}$ for $s = 1, 2, 3, \dots, l$, where $\left(\frac{n_s}{n}\right)$ and $\left(\frac{M_0^s}{M_0}\right)$ are the population share and the AHCR of subgroup s , respectively.

Similarly, the AHCR is also decomposable by its indicators, because the measure is expressible as the weighted sum of the censored deprivations by indicators. Hence, the overall poverty can be represented as follows: $M_0 = \sum_{j=1}^d \left(\frac{w_j}{d}\right) h_j(k)$ and the contribution of an indicator j to the overall poverty M_0 is $C_j = \frac{w_j}{d} \times \frac{h_j(k)}{M_0}$ for $j = 1, 2, 3, \dots, d$, where $h_j(k)$ is the censored head count ratio of indicator j .

3.2.3. Robustness and Redundancy Test of Multidimensional Poverty for the NER States

A number of robustness tests are there which help to determine the sensitivity of comparisons to the level and composition of MPI to changes in parameters such as the poverty cut-off k and indicator weights. However, the present study focuses only on changes in the level of MPI, incidence and intensity of poverty with the changes in the poverty cut-off (i.e. value of k). To make comparability of the present study with the work of Alkire and Seth (2013), equal weights have been assigned to each of the dimensions.

Figures 3(a), (b), and (c) represent that the level of MPI, incidence, and intensity of multidimensional poverty for various levels of the poverty cut-offs k follow the expected pattern. They show that when $k = 5$ per cent, MPI is 0.246 for the state of Tripura; incidence is 90 per cent, indicating that a large

majority of the population is deprived in at least one of the weighted indicators; and intensity is 27 per cent, implies that 90 per cent poor, who are deprived in more than one quarter of the indicators. When k is larger than 65 per cent, poverty is practically zero, implying that almost none is deprived in more than three quarters of the weighted indicators. The figures advocate that there are no sharp discontinuities in MPI, and incidence of multidimensional poverty around the chosen k -value of 33 per cent. It is also noticeable in the intensity band diagram that a number of persons are deprived in nearly half of the MPI weighted indicators.

Figure 3(a): MPI of Poverty for different Values of Poverty Cutoff k

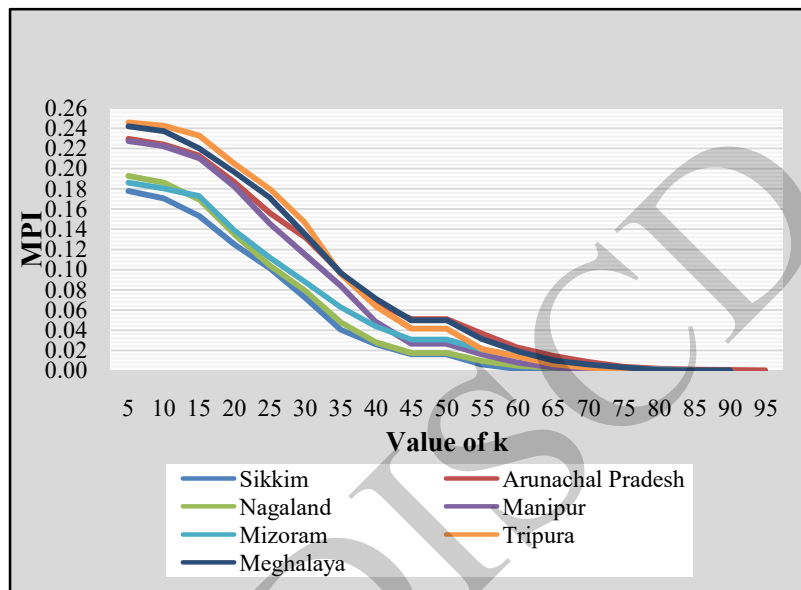


Figure 3(b): Incidence for Different Values of the Poverty Cutoff k

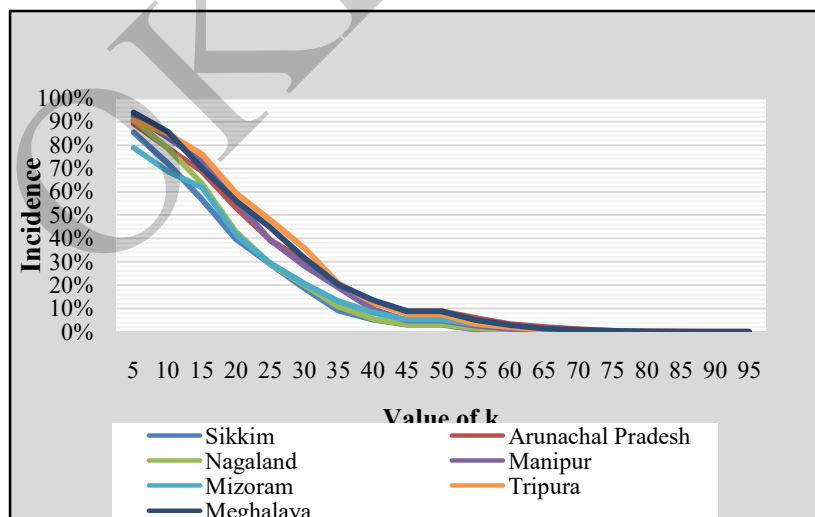
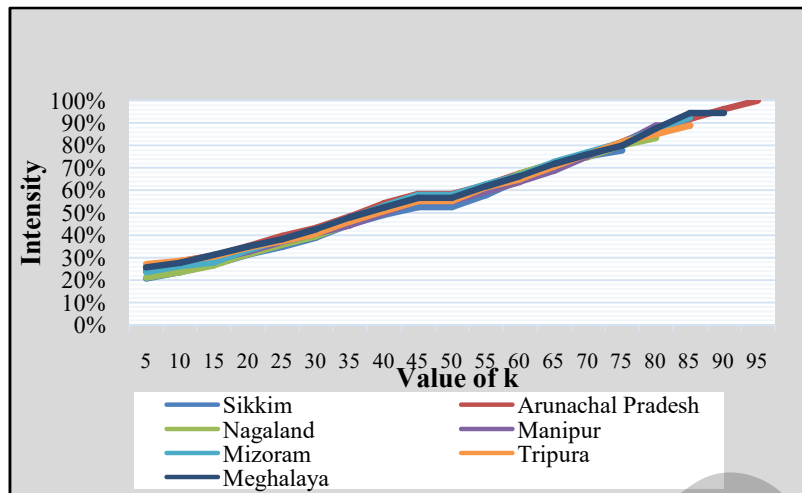


Figure 3(c): Intensity of Poverty for Different Values of Poverty Cutoff k



Redundancy measure (Alkire et. al, 2015) has been used to check redundancy among the indicators. The redundancy measure shows that the matches between deprivations as a proportion of the minimum of the marginal deprivation rates. Thus the measure of Redundancy displays the number of observations which have the same deprivation status in both variables, which reflects the joint distribution, as a proportion of the minimum of the two uncensored or censored headcount ratios. The measure of redundancy focuses on the precise and clear relationship of the components.

Table 1: Redundancy Test for Uncensored Head Count Ratio for North-Eastern States

	D₁₁	D₁₂	D₂₁	D₂₂	D₃₁	D₃₂	D₃₃	D₃₄	D₃₅	D₃₆
D₁₁	1.00									
D₁₂	0.35	1.00								
D₂₁	0.10	0.10	1.00							
D₂₂	0.41	0.33	0.35	1.00						
D₃₁	0.29	0.28	0.23	0.33	1.00					
D₃₂	0.46	0.45	0.25	0.32	0.34	1.00				
D₃₃	0.86	0.94	0.69	0.76	0.86	0.94	1.00			
D₃₄	0.68	0.73	0.49	0.54	0.63	0.77	0.90	1.00		
D₃₅	0.24	0.25	0.09	0.37	0.44	0.55	0.96	0.84	1.00	
D₃₆	0.58	0.71	0.50	0.56	0.64	0.69	0.87	0.69	0.68	1.00

Source: Authors' Estimation, 2018

Note: **D₁₁** denotes currently School Attendance; **D₁₂** denotes Highest Years of Schooling, **D₂₁** denotes Mortality, **D₂₂** denotes Malnutrition, **D₃₁** denotes Safe Drinking Water; **D₃₂** denotes Sanitation; **D₃₃** denotes Cooking Fuel; **D₃₄** denotes Housing Type; **D₃₅** denotes Electricity; **D₃₆** denotes Assets

Table 1 presents results the redundancy tests for the ten indicators using uncensored headcount ratios. The redundancy statistic shows the percentage of possible matches (in which a person is deprived in any two of the indicators) and that are realized and varies from zero to one. For most of the pair wise comparisons, the redundancy is low, indicating that the percentage of matches that could have been realized is less than 50 per cent. There are three indicators in which redundancy is higher: cooking fuel, housing type, and, to a lesser extent, asset holdings. However, this redundancy is in part mechanical probability rather than unexpected: the uncensored headcount ratios of these three

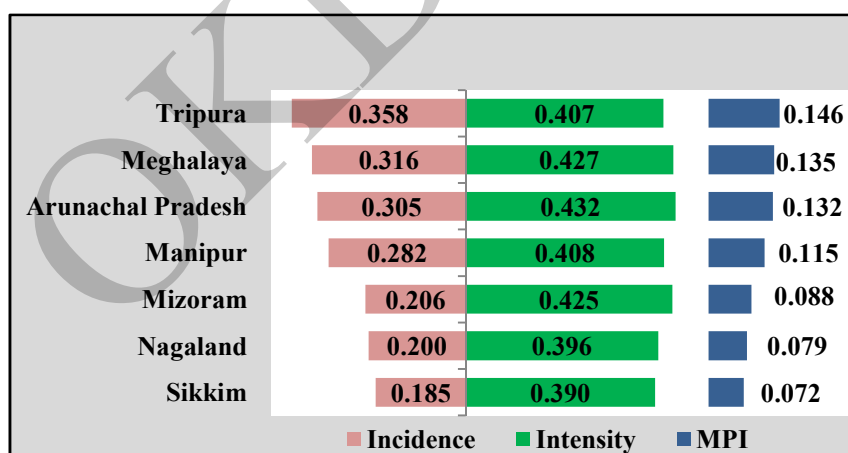
indicators are the highest across the ten component indicators. Apart from these three, there is no high redundancy across the included indicators as each appears to contribute independent information.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Multidimensional Poverty in the NER States

In respect of Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), there are observable differences among the states of North East India. MPI value for the state of Tripura is 0.146, which is two times more than that of Sikkim (i.e. 0.072). MPI is a product of *incidence* of multidimensional poverty and *intensity* of poverty as mentioned earlier where *incidence* represents the proportion of multidimensionally poor people to total population using the poverty cut-off [$C_{ij} \geq k (= 0.33)$] for comparing with Alkire and Seth (2013), and *intensity* indicates the average deprivation among the poor. For the NER, intensity of poverty is almost same for all states, but incidence of poverty varies across the states. For example, 35.8 per cent peoples are multidimensionally poor in Tripura which is almost twice that of Sikkim. The Government of India’s “Report of the Expert Group to Review the Methodology for Measurement of Poverty” (2014) provides geographic estimates of poverty for 2011-12; the income poverty headcount ratio of Manipur is highest among the NER states (i.e. 46.7 per cent), but in terms of multidimensional poverty her position is fourth (with 28.2 per cent poor) among the state of NER (Table 2). It is interesting to note that there has been interchange in relative positions between Tripura and Manipur regarding monetary and non-monetary poverty. This may be the effect of data sources, collected at different time point from different households. However, Nagaland and Sikkim are at lower strata in both the cases.

Figure 4(a): Multidimensional Poverty in NER States



As an extension of the multidimensional poverty estimates of Alkire and Seth (2013), the present study also finds that there has been reduction in multidimensional poverty for the states in North East between 2005-06 and 2013-14. Alkire and Seth study found that multidimensional poverty reduced significantly in Manipur, Meghalaya, and Mizoram by two digits between 1998-99 and 2004-05. The result of the present study (as shown in Table 2) reveal that multidimensional poverty has come down in all states of the region both in terms of incidence and intensity of poverty. Although, poverty by headcount ratios have two digits downfall but the reduction in average deprivation is not much satisfactory.

Table 2: Multidimensional Poverty in the NER States

States	2013-14			2005-06 [@]			2011-12 [#]
	Incidence	Intensity	MPI	Incidence	Intensity	MPI	Income poverty
Tripura	0.358 (1)	0.407	0.146	0.466	0.486	0.226	0.249 (4)
Meghalaya	0.316 (2)	0.427	0.135	0.552	0.539	0.297	0.244 (5)
Arunachal Pradesh	0.305 (3)	0.432	0.132	0.515	0.506	0.260	0.374 (2)
Manipur	0.282 (4)	0.408	0.115	0.324	0.457	0.148	0.467 (1)
Mizoram	0.206 (5)	0.425	0.088	0.211	0.442	0.094	0.274 (3)
Nagaland	0.200 (6)	0.396	0.079	0.444	0.491	0.218	0.140 (7)
Sikkim	0.185 (7)	0.390	0.072	0.289	0.456	0.132	0.178 (6)

Source: Authors' Estimation

Note: [@]Alkire and Seth, 2013, pp. 21

[#]Planning Commission, June 2014, Govt. of India

4.2. Poverty in the NER: Rural and Urban

The total population of each of the states of NER has been divided into two groups viz. rural and urban. The following figures represent the multidimensional poverty indices for the rural and urban areas.

Figure 4(b): Multidimensional Poverty in NER States: Rural

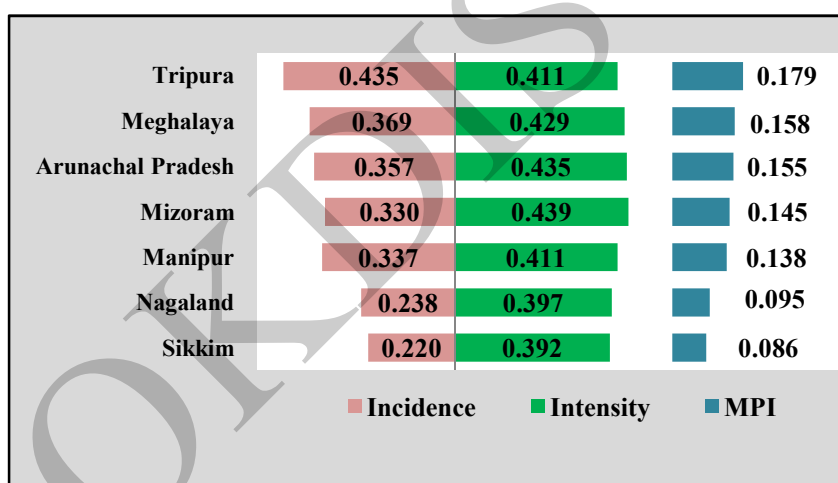
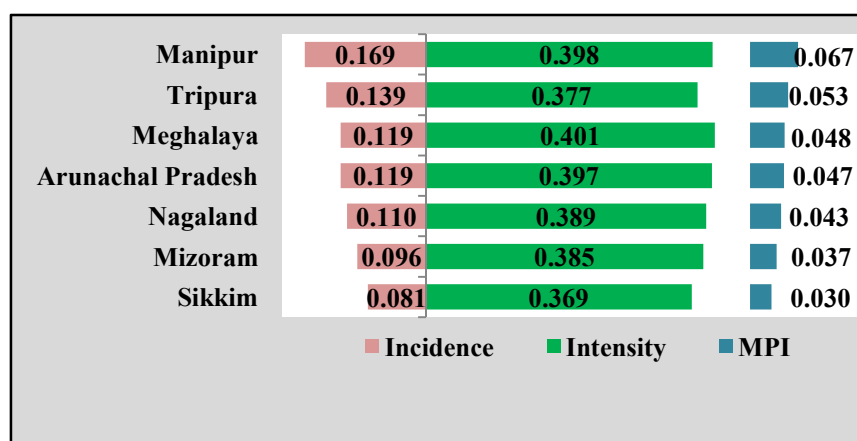


Figure 4(c): Multidimensional Poverty in NER States: Urban



The value of MPI stands at 0.179 for rural areas of the state of Tripura with 43.5 per cent as multidimensional poor with an intensity (average deprivations) of 0.411 among the poor. Thus, multidimensional poverty for Tripura is double the value of MPI for Sikkim (0.086) with nearly twice the percentage of multidimensionally poor (22.0 per cent for Sikkim). Urban poverty is found to be highest for Manipur (16.9 per cent).

Table 3: State of Multidimensional Poverty: Rural and Urban

State	Area	2013-14				2005-06 [@]			2011-12 [#]
		Population Share	Incidence	Intensity	MPI	Incidence	Intensity	MPI	Income poverty
Tripura	Rural	74.0	0.435 (1)	0.411	0.179	0.509	0.489	0.249	0.225 (5)
	Urban	26.0	0.139 (2)	0.377	0.053	0.234	0.448	0.105	0.313 (3)
Meghalaya	Rural	78.7	0.369 (2)	0.429	0.158	0.660	0.546	0.361	0.263 (4)
	Urban	21.3	0.119 (3)	0.401	0.048	0.199	0.454	0.090	0.167 (6)
Arunachal Pradesh	Rural	78.2	0.357 (3)	0.435	0.155	0.574	0.512	0.294	0.393 (1)
	Urban	21.8	0.119 (4)	0.397	0.047	0.337	0.475	0.160	0.309 (4)
Mizoram	Rural	47.0	0.330 (4)	0.439	0.145	0.353	0.452	0.159	0.337 (3)
	Urban	53.0	0.096 (1)	0.385	0.037	0.083	0.406	0.034	0.215 (5)
Manipur	Rural	67.0	0.337 (5)	0.411	0.138	0.382	0.460	0.175	0.349 (2)
	Urban	33.0	0.169 (6)	0.398	0.067	0.198	0.447	0.088	0.734 (1)
Nagaland	Rural	70.0	0.238 (6)	0.397	0.095	0.520	0.496	0.258	0.061 (7)
	Urban	30.0	0.110 (5)	0.389	0.043	0.104	0.226	0.024	0.321 (2)
Sikkim	Rural	74.4	0.220 (7)	0.392	0.086	0.340	0.457	0.156	0.200 (6)
	Urban	25.6	0.081 (7)	0.369	0.030	0.074	0.425	0.031	0.117 (7)

Source: Authors' Estimation

Note: [@]Alkire and Seth, 2013, pp. 21 [#]Planning Commission, June 2014, Govt. of India

Multidimensional poverty across rural and urban areas for each of the states in the region over time² shows that both the incidence and intensity of multidimensional poverty is relatively higher for the rural areas of each of the states than the urban areas (Table 3). It is observed that there has been reduction in multidimensional poverty both in terms of incidence and intensity for both rural and urban areas for all the states except Nagaland, where both the incidence and intensity of multidimensional poverty have increased during the 8 years period from 2005-06 to 2013-14. Moreover, incidence of poverty has marginally increased for urban areas in Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim during this 8 years period. In case of rural areas, highest reduction of MPI is observed for Meghalaya, followed by Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Tripura, Manipur, and Mizoram. In terms of incidence of multidimensional poverty for rural areas, the percentage reduction in poor people is higher for Meghalaya (29.1), Nagaland (28.2) and Arunachal Pradesh (21.7) but Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura do not reflect good performance.

4.3. Dimensional Breakdown

The multidimensional poverty index can be expressed as an average of censored head count ratios of indicators weighed by their relative weight. Censored headcount ratio of an indicator represents the

² Compared with the estimates of Alkire- Seth (2005)

proportion of the population who are multidimensional poor as well as deprived in that particular indicator. Decomposing poverty allows multidimensional poverty to give a clear picture of different composition of different dimensions and indicators and their relative contributions.

4.3.1. Uncensored vs. Censored Headcount Ratios

There is an interesting difference between the MPI censored headcounts single indicators and the conventional deprivation rates (uncensored headcounts) in the same indicator. The censored headcount ratios reflect the proportion of people who are poor, identified as MPI poor and deprived in the select indicator while uncensored headcount ratios represent the total proportion of people deprived in a select indicator, regardless of whether they are identified as MPI poor or not. The level of the discrepancy provides evidence on the share of people who are deprived but not poor.

Figure 4(d): Discrepancy between Uncensored and Censored Headcount

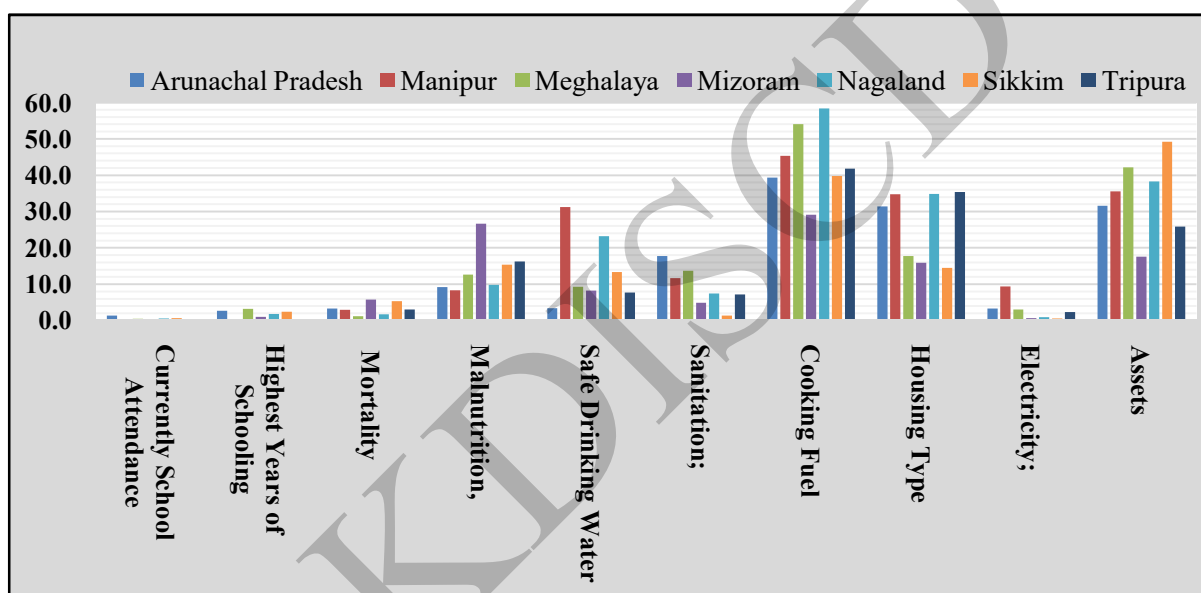


Figure 4(d) represents the percentage of discrepancies between uncensored and censored headcount ratios for the NER states. For example, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh are close in terms of MPI (0.135 and 0.132, respectively), in both the states, the difference between the raw and censored headcounts is highest for cooking fuel. Large differences have also been noticed in assets, housing type, sanitation and malnutrition. However, relative importance is given to the indicator on living standard rather than health and education for the present study. In fact, the uncensored and censored headcount ratios differ most for cooking fuel, assets and housing type, followed by safe drinking water, sanitation and electricity. However, some discrepancy has been found in malnutrition (an indicator for health dimension) for all of the states of NER. Differences were lowest for currently attending school and highest years of schooling. (see Table A3 and Table A4 in the Appendix). Similar observations were found for censored headcount ratio of cooking fuel, housing type and asset holding etc. This implies that no uniform development policy would be appropriate for the region as a whole and the states of NER and a target based policy approach would be most desirable.

4.3.2. Dimensional Contribution to the MPI

Dimensions as well as indicators specific contribution measurements are more useful for policy implications. For the present case, the dimension specific contributions overall, rural and urban are shown in Figure 4(e), (f) and (g) respectively and the indicators specific contributions to poverty are given in Table 4. The contribution of each dimension is the sum of the contribution of each of the indicators in that dimension. For example, the censored headcount ratio for the indicator years of schooling is 8.1 per cent and contributes 9.2 per cent to overall multidimensional poverty. Similarly, the child school attendance indicator contributes 2.0 per cent to overall multidimensional poverty. They together constitute the education dimension and contribute 11.2 per cent to overall multidimensional poverty for Tripura.

Figure 4(e): Dimension-wise Contribution to the MPI: Overall

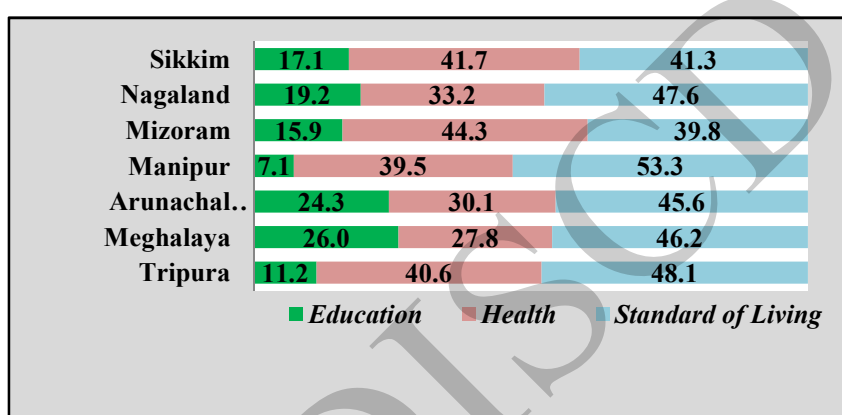


Figure 4(f): Dimension-wise Contribution to the MPI:

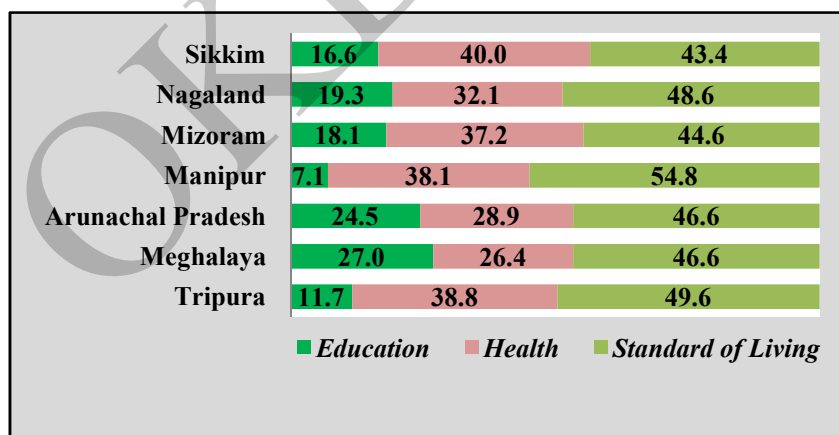
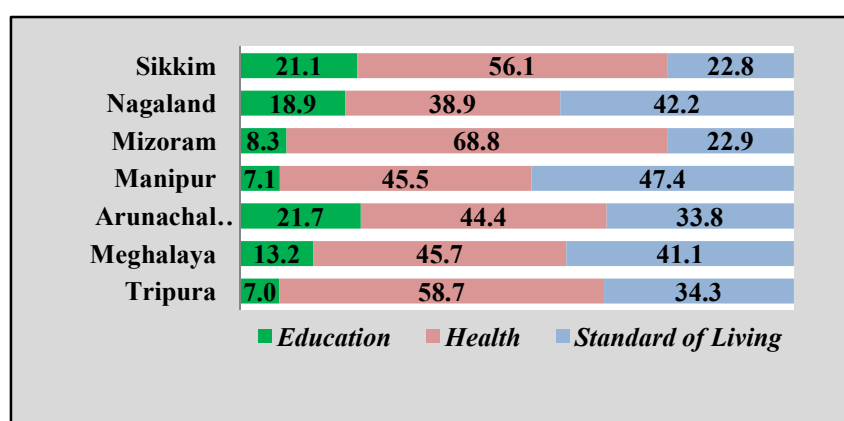


Figure 4(g): Dimension-wise Contribution to the MPI: Urban



Similarly, deprivations in standard of living dimension contribute 53.3 per cent to poverty for the state of Manipur while indicator specific contributions are diverse: Safe Drinking Water (9.3 per cent), Sanitation (4.8 per cent), Cooking Fuel (12.8 per cent), Housing Type (10.9 per cent), Electricity (4.5 per cent) and Assets (11.6 per cent) (Table 4). The deprivation in health dimension contributes 39.5 per cent to the MPI, with differences in indicator specific contributions mortality (8.8 per cent) and mal nutrition (30.7 per cent). Malnutrition is highest contributor to MPI for all states of NER among the ten indicators of multidimensional poverty. Cooking fuel, housing type and asset holding indicators for the standard of living dimension are other major contributors to MPI for the NER states.

Table 4: Indicator-wise Contribution to the MPI across Rural and Urban Areas in NER States

Rank As per MPI	Name of the States	Area	Education		Health		Standard of Living					
			D ₁₁	D ₁₂	D ₂₁	D ₂₂	D ₃₁	D ₃₂	D ₃₃	D ₃₄	D ₃₅	D ₃₆
1	Tripura	Overall	2.0	9.2	8.3	32.4	4.5	5.1	13.2	12.7	2.4	10.2
		Rural	2.1	9.6	6.9	31.8	4.9	5.4	13.4	13.0	2.6	10.3
		Urban	1.6	5.4	21.1	37.6	0.6	2.6	11.2	10.4	0.6	8.9
2	Meghalaya	Overall	6.9	19.1	3.7	24.2	4.5	6.9	12.8	8.9	2.8	10.3
		Rural	7.1	19.9	3.2	23.1	4.6	7.0	12.9	8.9	3.0	10.3
		Urban	4.4	8.8	9.7	36.1	3.5	6.0	11.9	9.4	0.4	9.8
3	Arunachal Pradesh	Overall	7.3	17.0	8.9	21.3	2.4	8.0	12.0	10.8	3.2	9.3
		Rural	7.3	17.2	8.4	20.5	2.5	8.3	12.3	10.8	3.4	9.3
		Urban	7.1	14.6	13.7	30.7	1.5	4.3	8.1	9.8	0.8	9.4
4	Manipur	Overall	1.7	5.4	8.8	30.7	9.3	4.8	12.8	10.9	4.5	11.1
		Rural	1.6	5.5	7.7	30.4	9.5	5.1	13.1	11.0	4.8	11.3
		Urban	2.0	5.1	13.5	31.9	8.1	3.5	11.7	10.4	3.2	10.6
5	Mizoram	Overall	3.7	12.2	13.3	31.0	5.1	5.1	10.9	8.5	1.6	8.6
		Rural	4.0	14.1	8.8	28.4	6.0	5.8	12.1	9.3	2.0	9.5
		Urban	2.7	5.6	28.8	40.0	2.0	2.5	6.6	5.9	0.4	5.5
6	Nagaland	Overall	3.6	15.6	6.4	26.9	6.4	3.4	13.6	11.9	0.6	11.6
		Rural	3.2	16.1	5.8	26.4	6.5	3.7	13.8	12.1	0.7	11.7
		Urban	5.9	12.9	9.3	29.6	6.3	2.0	12.3	10.8	0.0	10.9
7	Sikkim	Overall	2.0	15.1	13.1	28.6	5.9	1.5	12.6	8.6	0.8	11.9
		Rural	1.5	15.2	12.7	27.2	6.4	1.6	13.3	8.9	0.9	12.3
		Urban	7.1	14.0	16.1	40.0	0.9	0.5	6.4	5.8	0.2	9.0

Source: Authors' Estimation, 2018

Notes: D11 denotes Currently School Attendance; D12 denotes Highest Years of Schooling, D21 denotes Mortality, D22denotes Malnutrition, D31 denotes Safe Drinking Water; D32 denotes Sanitation; D33 denotes Cooking Fuel; D34 denotes Housing Type; D35denotes Electricity; D36denotes Assets

5. Conclusion

Monetary and non-monetary poverty do not seem to be linearly related as there has been an interchangeable position in terms of monetary and non-monetary poverty for some of the states in NER. The Alkire-Foster counting approach exemplifies that there has been huge diversity in their situation of multidimensional poverty both in terms of incidence and intensity of poverty. Although, there has been reduction in multidimensional poverty across rural and urban areas for the states of NER compared to 2005,, but all the states do not experience similar reduction. The intensity of poverty is almost same for all states, but incidence of poverty varies across the states. The censored headcount ratios and decomposition of multidimensional poverty indicate that some of the indicators are more crucial; e.g. malnutrition is found to be the most vital health indicator for majority of the north-eastern states with a higher contribution to the overall MPI values. Further, the study indicates that there has been enough scope of disaggregation of multidimensional poverty across indicators,, household categories, age group wise and so on. The future attempts in this regard would indeed contribute significantly towards developmental policy formulation for the development of the NER states. This shows that there is need for a target based policy approach taking into consideration the extent of multidimensional poverty across states, including dimensions and indicators.

This shows that there is need for a target based policy approach taking into consideration the extent of multidimensional poverty across states, including dimensions and indicators. A universal policy in addressing development concerns of North East often obscures the interstate and intra state differences in poverty and its dimensions. There is need for shift in policy thrust in addressing poverty, underdevelopment and growth where individual state concerns need to be prioritized and addressed taking into consideration the variations across multidimensional deprivation levels in the states.

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Table A1: Performance of NER States in Terms of Income, Poverty and Other Social Indicators

Indicators		Year	Arunachal Pradesh	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Sikkim	Tripura	Kerala	India
Income	PCNSDP	1993-94 ⁶	39054	27630	25349	25293	32995	29760	20010	14342	35564	25261
		2015-16 ⁶	100387	48465	45652	59949	91985	61363	193569	58888	119763	77803
	GWPCNSDP (%)		4.41	2.64	2.82	4.40	6.77	3.62	11.18	7.20	5.96	5.29
Income Poverty	Total (%)	2009-10 ³	31.9	42.5	54.1	28.0	27.3	18.3	23.1	20.1	16.0	38.2
		2011-12 ³	37.4	40.9	46.7	24.4	27.4	14.0	17.8	24.9	11.3	29.5
Change(%)		5.5	-1.6	-7.4	-3.6	0.1	-4.3	-5.3	4.8	-4.7	-8.7	
MPI	Overall	1998-99 ⁷	0.226	0.345	0.212	0.358	0.155	0.246	0.173	0.276	0.136	0.300
		2005-06 ⁷	0.260	0.285	0.148	0.297	0.094	0.218	0.132	0.226	0.038	0.251
	Change		0.034	-0.06	-0.064	-0.061	-0.061	-0.028	-0.041	-0.05	-0.098	-0.049
Mortality	IMR	1997 ²	47	76	30	54	19	17	51	51	12	71
		2016 ¹	36	44	11	39	27	12	16	24	10	34
	Change		-11	-32	-19	-15	8	-5	-35	-27	-2	-37
Nutrition	NIC	2004-05 ⁵	32.5	36.4	22.2	48.8	19.9	25.2	19.7	39.6	15.9	42.5
		2015-16 ⁵	19.5	29.8	13.8	29.0	11.9	16.8	14.2	24.1	15.7	35.7
	Change(%)		-13	-6.6	-8.4	-19.8	-8	-8.4	-5.5	-15.5	-0.2	-6.8
Immunisation	DPTIR	2004-05 ⁵	28.4	31.4	46.8	32.9	46.5	21.0	69.6	49.7	75.3	43.5
		2015-16 ⁵	38.2	47.1	65.8	61.5	50.5	35.7	83.0	54.5	82.1	62.0
	Change(%)		9.8	15.7	19	28.6	4	14.7	13.4	4.8	6.8	18.5
Fertility	TFR	2004-05 ⁵	3.0	2.4	2.8	3.8	2.9	3.7	2.0	2.2	1.9	2.7
		2015-16 ⁵	2.1	2.2	2.6	3.0	2.3	2.7	1.2	1.7	1.6	2.2
	Change		-0.9	-0.2	-0.2	-0.8	-0.6	-1	-0.8	-0.5	-0.3	-0.5
Education	Literacy (%)	2001 ⁴	54.3	63.3	70.5	62.6	88.8	66.6	68.8	73.2	90.9	64.8
	Literacy (%)	2011 ⁴	66.6	73.2	79.9	75.5	91.6	80.1	81.4	87.2	93.9	74.0
	Change(%)		12.3	9.9	9.3	12.9	2.8	13.5	12.6	14.0	3.1	9.2
Access of Facility	ISNF (%)	2004-05 ⁵	39.6	30.7	30.2	37.6	75.5	46.5	60.7	51.5	90.5	29.1
		2015-16 ⁵	61.3	47.7	49.9	60.3	83.5	75.2	88.2	61.3	98.1	48.4
	Change(%)		21.7	17	19.7	22.7	8	28.7	27.5	9.8	7.6	19.3
	IDWF (%)	2004-05 ⁵	85.0	72.5	52.1	63.1	85.0	62.8	77.6	76.1	69.1	87.6
		2015-16 ⁵	87.5	83.8	41.6	67.9	91.5	80.6	97.6	87.3	94.3	89.9
Change(%)		2.5	11.3	-10.5	4.8	6.5	17.8	20	11.2	25.2	2.3	

Sources: 1_SRS Bulletin Vol.51 (1), September, 2017, Registrar General, India.

2_ SRS Bulletin Vol.33 (1), April, 1999, Registrar General, India. (For the state of Nagaland data are taken for year 2004.)

3_ Report of the Expert Group to Review the Methodology for Measurement of Poverty, Planning Commission, June 2014, Govt. of India

4_ Data-Book Compiled for use of Planning Commission , Planning Commission, December 2014, Govt. of India, <http://planningcommission.gov.in>

5_ NFHS-4 (2015-16) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India

6_ RBI Report 2007-08 and 2016-17, Govt. of India

7_ Alkire & Seth (March 2013) – OPHI-WP60

Notes: PCNSDP means Per Capita Net State Domestic Product At Constant (2011-12) Prices{PCNSDP for Mizoram taken at 2000-01};GWPCNSDP denotes Annual Average Growth rate of Per Capita Net State Domestic Product [At Constant (2011-12) Prices]; IMR denotes Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births); NIC denotes Nutritional Information of Children under 5 years who are underweight (weight-for-age); DPTIR denotes DPT Immunisation Rate; TFR denotes Total fertility rate (children per woman); ISNF denotes Improved Sanitation Facility; IDWF denotes Improved Drinking Water Facility; LR denotes Lorenz Ratio from Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) based on MRPTable A2Dimensions, Indicators, Deprivation Cut-offs and Weights for the MPI

Dimension (Weight)	Indicator (Weight)	Deprivation Cut-off
Education (1/3)	Years of Schooling (1/6)	Deprived if at least any adults member of household has not completed primary level of education
	Child Enrolment (1/6)	Deprived if any school-aged child (6-14years) in the household is not attending school in the academic years
Health (1/3)	Mortality (1/6)	Deprived if any member of the household including children has died in the family since 2008
	Nutrition (1/6)	Deprived if any adult or child for whom there is nutritional information is malnourished
Standard of Living (1/3)	Electricity (1/18)	Deprived if the household has no electricity
	Drinking water (1/18)	Deprived if the household does not have access to clean drinking water
	Sanitation (1/18)	Deprived if they do not have an improved toilet or if their toilet is shared
	Flooring (1/18)	Deprived if the household has kachha House or other
	Cooking Fuel (1/18)	Deprived if they cook with fire wood, crop-residue, kerosene or cow-dung-cake
	Assets (1/18)	Deprived if the household owns any of the following assets: television, radio, telephone or mobile, Watch/Clock, By-cycle, cart driven by animal or other cart. At the same time, does not own any of the following assets: a refrigerator, a motorbike, a car, a computer, washing machine, sewing machine, Air Conditioner, water pump, a thresher, or a tractor

Table A3: Uncensored Head Count Ratio across the States of NER

Rank As per MPI	Name of the States	Area	MPI	Education		Health		Standard of Living					
				D ₁₁	D ₁₂	D ₂₁	D ₂₂	D ₃₁	D ₃₂	D ₃₃	D ₃₄	D ₃₅	D ₃₆
1	Tripura	Overall	0.146	1.8	8.5	10.2	44.6	19.5	20.6	76.5	68.8	8.8	52.7
		Rural	0.179	2.2	10.7	9.4	46.4	26.1	26.3	91.8	82.2	11.6	59.8
		Urban	0.053	0.5	2.1	12.5	39.4	0.9	4.3	33.0	30.6	0.8	32.4
2	Meghalaya	Overall	0.135	6.1	18.6	4.2	32.1	20.3	30.5	85.2	39.5	9.8	67.0
		Rural	0.158	7.3	22.5	3.7	32.8	24.0	35.0	95.4	44.7	12.3	72.7
		Urban	0.048	1.5	4.3	6.1	29.8	6.8	13.8	47.4	20.2	0.4	46.0
3	Arunachal Pradesh	Overall	0.132	7.1	16.2	10.3	26.0	9.1	36.7	67.8	56.9	10.7	53.5
		Rural	0.155	7.9	18.9	10.6	26.5	10.7	44.2	81.2	64.4	13.5	57.9
		Urban	0.047	4.3	6.3	9.3	24.4	3.1	10.0	19.8	29.9	0.8	37.8
4	Manipur	Overall	0.115	1.2	4.0	9.1	29.5	50.3	21.6	71.8	57.2	18.7	58.5
		Rural	0.138	1.4	4.8	7.9	30.7	56.6	26.2	84.6	65.4	23.5	67.6
		Urban	0.067	0.9	2.2	11.4	26.9	37.6	12.3	45.8	40.8	8.9	39.9
5	Mizoram	Overall	0.088	2.3	7.4	12.8	42.9	16.2	12.8	46.3	29.4	3.1	31.2
		Rural	0.145	3.6	13.6	11.8	46.5	27.6	22.3	79.1	43.6	6.3	48.0
		Urban	0.037	1.0	1.9	13.7	39.8	6.0	4.4	17.2	16.8	0.4	16.2
6	Nagaland	Overall	0.079	2.2	9.2	4.7	22.6	32.4	12.3	77.7	51.8	1.8	54.8
		Rural	0.095	2.2	11.0	4.5	23.3	34.7	16.0	91.5	61.6	2.5	61.4
		Urban	0.043	2.4	5.0	4.9	21.0	26.9	3.7	45.6	28.9	0.3	39.4
7	Sikkim	Overall	0.072	1.5	8.9	11.0	27.8	21.0	3.3	56.1	25.6	1.6	64.6
		Rural	0.086	1.1	10.3	11.9	27.8	26.2	4.3	72.1	31.9	2.1	73.2
		Urban	0.030	2.8	5.0	8.4	27.6	5.8	0.4	9.4	7.3	0.3	39.8

Source: Authors' Estimation, 2018

Notes: **D₁₁** denotes currently School Attendance; **D₁₂** denotes Highest Years of Schooling, **D₂₁** denotes Mortality, **D₂₂** denotes Malnutrition, **D₃₁** denotes Safe Drinking Water; **D₃₂** denotes Sanitation; **D₃₃** denotes Cooking Fuel; **D₃₄** denotes Housing Type; **D₃₅** denotes Electricity; **D₃₆** denotes Assets

Table A4: Censored Head Count Ratio across the States of NER

Rank As per MPI	Name of the States	Area	MPI	Education		Health		Standard of Living					
				D ₁₁	D ₁₂	D ₂₁	D ₂₂	D ₃₁	D ₃₂	D ₃₃	D ₃₄	D ₃₅	D ₃₆
1	Tripura	Overall	0.146	1.8	8.1	7.2	28.4	11.8	13.4	34.7	33.4	6.4	26.8
		Rural	0.179	2.2	10.3	7.4	34.2	15.8	17.3	43.1	41.7	8.4	33.2
		Urban	0.053	0.5	1.7	6.6	11.9	0.6	2.4	10.6	9.9	0.6	8.4
2	Meghalaya	Overall	0.135	5.6	15.4	3.0	19.5	11.0	16.8	31.1	21.7	6.8	24.9
		Rural	0.158	6.8	18.9	3.0	22.0	13.2	20.0	36.7	25.3	8.5	29.3
		Urban	0.048	1.2	2.5	2.8	10.3	3.0	5.1	10.2	8.1	0.4	8.4
3	Arunachal Pradesh	Overall	0.132	5.7	13.5	7.0	16.8	5.7	19.0	28.5	25.5	7.5	21.9
		Rural	0.155	6.8	16.1	7.9	19.1	6.9	23.2	34.5	30.3	9.4	25.9
		Urban	0.047	2.0	4.1	3.9	8.7	1.3	3.6	6.9	8.3	0.7	7.9
4	Manipur	Overall	0.115	1.2	3.8	6.1	21.2	19.1	9.9	26.5	22.5	9.3	22.9
		Rural	0.138	1.3	4.6	6.4	25.2	23.7	12.7	32.6	27.4	12.0	27.8
		Urban	0.067	0.8	2.0	5.5	12.9	9.8	4.2	14.2	12.6	3.8	12.8
5	Mizoram	Overall	0.088	1.9	6.4	7.0	16.3	8.0	8.0	17.2	13.5	2.5	13.6
		Rural	0.145	3.5	12.3	7.7	24.7	15.6	15.1	31.6	24.2	5.1	24.7
		Urban	0.037	0.6	1.2	6.4	8.9	1.3	1.6	4.4	4.0	0.3	3.7
6	Nagaland	Overall	0.079	1.7	7.4	3.0	12.8	9.2	4.9	19.3	16.9	0.9	16.5
		Rural	0.095	1.8	9.1	3.3	15.0	11.0	6.3	23.6	20.6	1.3	20.0
		Urban	0.043	1.5	3.3	2.4	7.6	4.8	1.5	9.4	8.3	0.0	8.3
7	Sikkim	Overall	0.072	0.9	6.5	5.7	12.4	7.6	2.0	16.3	11.1	1.1	15.4
		Rural	0.086	0.7	7.9	6.6	14.1	10	2.6	20.7	13.9	1.4	19.1
		Urban	0.030	1.3	2.5	2.9	7.2	0.5	0.3	3.5	3.1	0.1	4.8

Source: Authors' Estimation, 2018

Notes: **D₁₁** denotes currently School Attendance; **D₁₂** denotes Highest Years of Schooling, **D₂₁** denotes Mortality, **D₂₂**denotes Malnutrition, **D₃₁** denotes Safe Drinking Water; **D₃₂** denotes Sanitation; **D₃₃** denotes Cooking Fuel; **D₃₄** denotes Housing Type; **D₃₅**denotes Electricity; **D₃₆**denotes Asset

SWACHH VIDYALAYA ABHIYAN: FINDINGS FROM AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Monjit Borthakur*
Joydeep Baruah**

Abstract

This paper attempts at providing an empirical inquiry into the outcomes of the Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan. Taking evidences from five north eastern states of India, the results of the study indicates that the programme is efficient in terms of providing the schools with functional toilets. The intervention, as evident from the findings, is also contributing effectively in improving school attendance rates. However, the programme does not seem to have any positive effect on school enrolment rates. The study highlights two observations; first, the intervention fails to have significant impact on behavioural practices, and second is that sustainability of the outcomes remains greatly doubtful, particularly in the hills. The paper argues that the interventions carried out under the programme primarily targeted at physical achievements without putting much emphasis on behavioural practices, quality and sustainability of services which has significantly limited the outcomes of the interventions. Further, it is also found that the programme hardly had any convergence with other similar and related government programmes.

Background

On 15 August, 2014, the Prime Minister of India made a pledge that within a year, “all schools in the country should have toilets with separate toilets for girls” (MHRD, 2014). Access to clean and safe drinking water and proper sanitation for both boys and girls are, in fact, two important norms of a school, inter alia, mandated by the Right to Education Act (2009). Notably, both water and sanitation are closely linked to one another and have positive and significant effect on schooling - increasing enrolment, improving retention and attendance of students, reducing drop-outs and, thereby, improving the educational outcomes of students and positively contributing to economic growth (Freeman et al., 2012; Santiago Ortiz-Correa, Resende Filho, & Dinar, 2016).

The pledge, thus, besides underscoring the emphatic commitment of the Government of India towards realising, in general, the vision of “clean India” by October 2, 2019 to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, also represents the obligation of the Government towards achieving desired educational outcome for each and every child in the country. The intervention further intends to develop healthy school environment and to support appropriate health and hygiene behaviour among the school children. Given this context, Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan was launched in response to the pledge made by the Prime Minister in August, 2014. It was estimated that around 2.63 lakh

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schools are to be covered by constructing and renovating 4.10 lakh toilets within August 2015, in order to ensure that every child has access to toilet facilities in their schools. These toilets were required in schools located mostly in hardest to reach and very difficult to access areas including areas with difficult mountainous terrains, densely crowded slums, thick forests and jungles, and areas facing problems of insurgency and extremism

The overall approach of Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan has been an integrated one driven by a comprehensive perspective on sanitation. The first level of integration is evident from the fact that the campaign attempted at combining three components viz. water, sanitation and hygiene through a set of 'facilities' created at the schools which include physical as well as human components. The second level of integration is observed in the Government's effort to pool the massive amount of resources that would be necessary to honour the pledge made by the Prime Minister. Besides the Government funding under routine and regular programmes related to clean India drive i.e. Swachh Bharat Kosh and area development fund of MPs and MLAs, all public and private sector companies were mandated to contribute to the campaign under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) obligations. Due to such enormous efforts, the target of constructing 4.10 lakh toilets could be achieved within a year.

It has been said that the 'Abhiyan' is successful in reaching the schools located in hardest to reach and very difficult to access areas of the country and also in bringing 'socially anathematised' issue like open defecation and cleanliness to the centre-stage of the State policy (Misnaming Toilet Building as 'Swachhata', 2018). The outcome of the *swachhata drive*, however, has been rather mixed. WaterAid study (Raman, Muralidharan, Srivastava, & Hueso, 2017) found that the top-down approach focusing on rapid implementation for achieving physical targets resulted in poorly constructed toilets with suboptimal quality unsuited to the local geography by not adhering to design parameters. The campaign, with its main thrust on physical infrastructure, largely ignored sanitation provisioning for the marginalised section of the society – mainly the differently able and the girl students. Although functional toilets for girl students have gone up twofold during 2016 over 2010, the ASER report (*Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2016*) published on January 18, 2017 found that 38 percent of schools still do not have functional and usable girls' toilets. Considering the over centralised system of implementation to have only numbers in count, be it ODF certificate for villages (Swachh Bharat) or toilets in schools (Swachh Vidyalaya), violation of rights to have universal water and sanitation coverage is rampant, primarily because of the beneficiaries lack awareness, ownership and maintenance of the physical infrastructure ('Misnaming Toilet Building as 'Swachhata,' 2018). These outcomes raise serious doubts over the achievements, particularly the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan.

While there is only one year left to observe the 150th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation with a "completely clean India", it is indeed pertinent to examine whether the Swachh Vidyalaya interventions have been efficient, effective and sustainable. The present study intends to answer these questions by evaluating the achievements of the 'Abhiyaan'. The sample for the study were drawn from the schools located at different states of North East India, which were intervened by two major power sector PSUs viz. NEEPCO and NHPC Ltd. Between 2014-2017, NEEPCO¹ and NHPC's

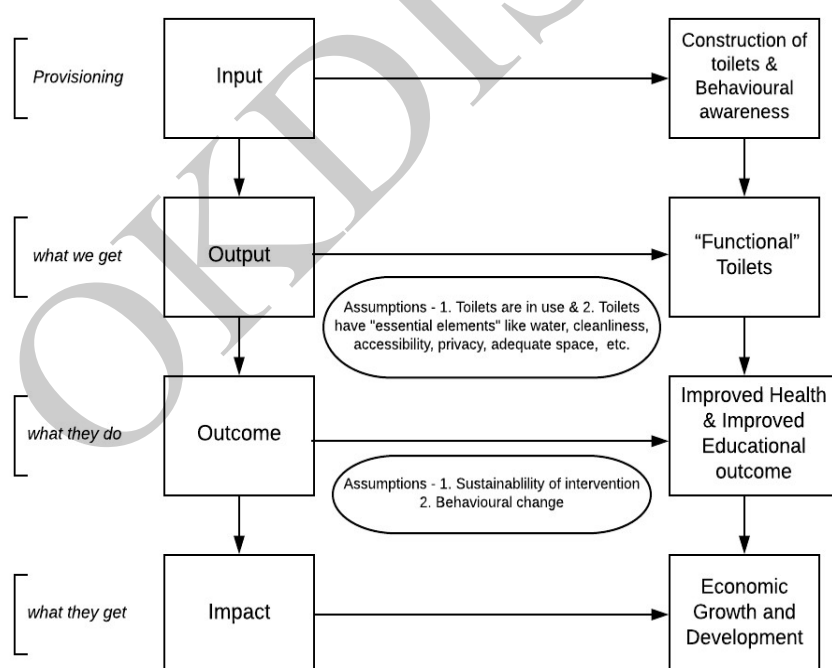
¹ <http://swachhbharat.neepco.in/index.php>, accessed on August 28, 2018

Subansiri Lower Hydro Electric Project² constructed 664 and 3128 numbers of toilets in 386 and 2702 schools respectively under the Abhiyan. Out of the total 3792 toilets, 2574 have been new boys' toilet, 1172 have been new girls' toilet, 24 have been renovated boys' toilet and 22 have been renovated girls' toilet. This constitutes a major component of the total toilets constructed by all PSUs under the Ministry of Power. It may also be noted that, all together, 141636 toilets were constructed by the PSUs under the Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan, of which the Ministry of Power alone contributed about 45 percent (MHRD³).

Towards a Theory of Change

Programmes are usually designed depending on an underlying Theory of Change (TOC) – either explicit or implicit. The TOC describes the logical path along which the desired intervention is envisaged to produce the results. This path, essentially, depicts the logical flow from programme inputs to programme outputs, then from programme outputs to programme outcomes, and finally, from programme outcomes to programme impact. The programme guideline of the Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan (MHRD, 2014, p.3) does provide an underlying TOC. It is maintained that improved sanitation and hygiene in schools results in improved health and less diseases, which, in turn, results in improved attendance of the students. This facilitates better educational outcome of the students leading to economic growth and development in the society.

Figure 1: Swachh Vidyalaya – The Theory of Change



More specifically, Swachh Vidyalaya intervention provides physical facilities i.e. construction of toilets with provisioning of water as input, which is expected to result in a 'functional' toilet as output. The use of toilets by students results in an outcome of improved health and reduced morbidity

² <http://www.nhpcindia.com/writereaddata/Images/pdf/SwachhVidyalayaReport17.pdf>, accessed on August 28, 2018

³ <http://103.7.128.243:8085/swachhvidyalaya/>, accessed on August 28, 2018

reflected in their improved attendances. The better attendance is envisaged to result in better performances attracting more students to school leading to improved enrolment. This finally, will result in economic growth and development in terms of long term impact of the programme.

Evaluation Framework - Criteria and Indicators

A robust and rigorous evaluation is premised on a carefully and scientifically designed evaluation framework. The framework draws on the essentials of the programme description for its various elements and components. The programme guideline of the Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan (MHRD, 2014) clearly aims at ensuring every school in India to have a "set of functioning and well-maintained water, sanitation and hygiene facilities". The objective of the campaign is, according to the programme guideline, to "produce a healthy environment" and to "develop and support health and hygiene behaviour". Therefore, the campaign essentially entails two components - a) availability of the physical facilities and b) behavioural change practices. The overall "functionality", thus, depends on not in any one, but on realisation of both the components.

The present evaluation is aimed to be an outcome evaluation rather than an impact evaluation. The reason for this is simple - the short time-lag involved. The Swachh Vidyalaya interventions of the two selected PSUs were carried out during 2014 - 2016. The evaluation is carried out during 2017-18, less than two years of post-intervention. Impact being a long-term phenomenon, its evaluation, therefore, is not feasible at this point of time.

The present evaluation is based on three evaluation criteria - efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. It may, however, be mentioned that since the programme is implemented as a part of the national commitment fulfilling the obligations of the Right to Education Act, the criteria of relevance is supposed to be automatically fulfilled. The criterion of efficiency is applied at the level of output. The output is efficient only when the essential elements of Swachh Vidyalaya (given in pp.17-18 in the guideline) are fulfilled. These elements include adequate sanitation, privacy and space, hand-washing facilities as well as practice, drinking water, regular operation and maintenance, capacity building and behavioural activities. The efficiency is, accordingly defined as functionality of the toilets - i.e. functional toilets are complete in respect of the essential elements - hence, more efficient in delivering the desired outcomes.

The criterion of effectiveness is applied at two levels - both at the level of output as well as outcome. Evidently, the output is effective when it is in use. On the other hand, the outcome is effective when anticipated results are obtained. There are two intended outcomes of provisioning toilets for the students in general and separate toilets for girl students in particular. First is improved health status and second is an improved educational performance. Studies have indicated that access to school WASH programme including quality of school toilets has significant and positive impact on enrolment, school attendance and education performance (Birdthistle, Dickson, Freeman, & Javidi, 2011; Dreibelbis et al., 2013). In this paper, the outcomes are captured through overall school attendance rate and overall enrolment in the schools. Overall school attendance rate is taken as the percentage of number of students present multiplied by the number of working days out of the total enrolment multiplied by number of working days, viz. proportion of student-days attended out of the total student-days. The attendance is taken as an indicator of good health reflected by reduced number

of days when children fall sick and, hence, being absent. The overall enrolment is taken as an indicator of better educational performances attracting more students to the school.

The criterion of sustainability is applied at the level of outcome. The impact is consequent on the sustainability of the outcome. The two interconnected outcomes - improved health and improved educational performances are sustainable when comprehensive perspective of sanitation is put into practice. The comprehensive perspective of sanitation includes, apart from physical facility of functional toilets, the other two components viz. drinking water and better hygiene behavioural practices. Besides, maintenance of the toilets also contributes positively towards sustainability. The above, thus, constitutes the Logical Framework (Log-Frame) of the present evaluation of the Swachh Vidyalaya campaign which is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Evaluation Log-Frame

Evaluation Criteria	Level	Indicator
Efficiency	Output	Whether the essential elements of Swachh Vidyalaya programme guideline have been fulfilled?
Effectiveness	Output	Whether toilet is in use?
	Outcome	Whether a) Attendance rate has improved? b) Enrolment has improved?
Sustainability	Outcome	Whether a) Complementary facilities available? b) Better behavioural practices exist? c) Maintenance of the facility is ensured?

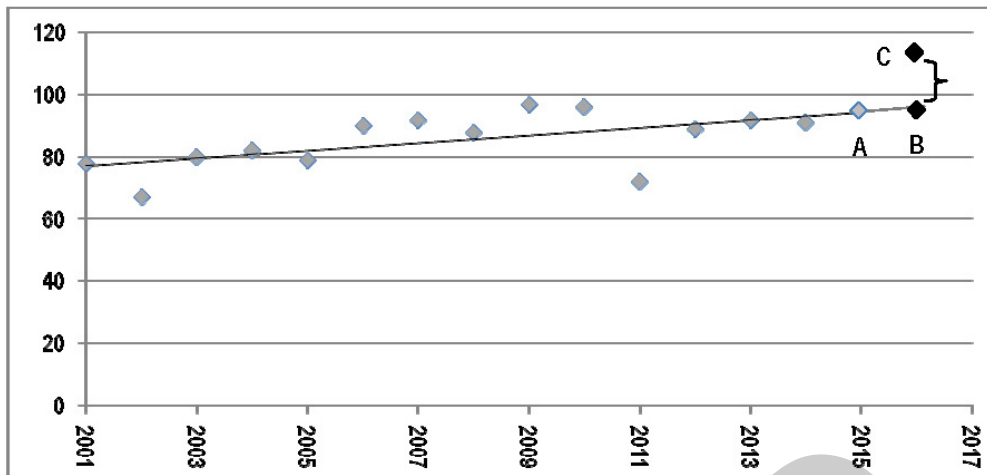
Evaluation Method

Generally speaking, any evaluation attempts at attributing results to specific interventions. From the Log-Frame presented in Table 1, it is, however, obvious that barring the effectiveness of outcome intended to be measured in terms of improvement in the attendance rate and enrolment, other criteria of evaluation don't necessarily require any attribution. Notwithstanding, given the nature and the context of the programme, specific attribution even for the attendance rate and enrolment, is met with several challenges.

The first challenge relates to the saturation nature of the programme. It is envisaged that all schools will be covered under the programme. This, therefore, entails the practical problem of obtaining an appropriate 'control group' i.e. a set of schools without intervention which are otherwise similar to those having intervention for making necessary comparisons. This eliminates the possibility of applying several standard evaluation methods - experimental as well as quasi- experimental such as propensity score matching or double difference.

The second challenge is regarding the possible counterfactuals - determining what could have been the situation without the intervention. Usually, such a comparison is arrived at by examining 'pre' and 'post' scenarios provided all intervening factors are suitably controlled. It is observed that there is no specific new intervention that directly targets school attendance. Therefore, a modified 'pre' and 'post' comparison (Figure 1) is applied in case of attendance rate to evaluate the programme effect. Since the programme period was 2014 to 2016, attendance rate of August and September 2015 is compared with that of the August and September 2017.

Figure 2: Modified Pre-Post Method



The modified pre and post method is described in the Figure 1. In this method based on the data for the period 2001-2017 a trend line is fitted. Here A is the observed value for the year 2016. The projected value of for the year 2017, based on the past trend is obtained as B, where as the actually observed value is found to be C. The Modified Pre-Post Method will consider the difference between B and C, rather than usual Pre-Post Method of considering A and C. B provides the counterfactual in absence of the intervention, controlling all other things.

This method is particularly useful in the case of enrolment, which offers some special challenges. First, there have been several competing programmes aiming at improving school facilities which implicate enrolment. To statistically control all such intervention presents myriad practical difficulties. Second, indicator like enrolment also contains a "trend element". It is, therefore, necessary to incorporate trend element in the 'pre' intervention scenario.

With a modified pre-post method (Figure 1), the present methodology utilises the enrolment data given by DISE for deriving the counterfactual scenario for enrolment. Based on the trend of last five years of enrolment, a projected enrolment for 2017 is obtained for the select schools, which are taken as the counterfactuals. The observed enrolment for 2017 is then compared with the projected enrolment to see the programme effect.

Two statistical tools are then applied to draw conclusions regarding effectiveness of the outcomes viz. attendance rate and enrolment. First, proportion of individual schools where post intervention scenario is better than the pre intervention scenario is obtained for evaluating success against the hypotheses. Second, averages of 'pre' and 'post' are compared by the paired-t test to evaluate the aggregate programme effect and success.

Sampling

Schools are considered as the primary sampling unit for the present evaluation. The present evaluation defines success of the programme as the three-fourth (i.e. 75 percent) of the schools qualifying or fulfilling the specific criteria with a margin of error 5 percent. This, in general, defines the confidence interval for population estimate to qualify the programme as a 'success'. Given this, a sample of 350

out of the total 3088 schools found to be good enough to draw conclusions with a level of confidence of 97 percent, with a fixed design effect of 1.1 to accommodate stratification by school type viz. primary, upper primary and secondary. Based on the proportion, 300 sample schools from NHPC's and 50 sample schools from NEEPCO's intervention list was considered. The sample schools were than selected at random. The sample distribution of schools covers the states of Arunachal Pradesh (25), Assam (317), Meghalaya (3), Mizoram (3) and Tripura (2).

How Efficient and Effective the Intervention Is?

As evident from the Log-Frame (Table 1), there are four main questions which the present evaluation intends to answer. The questions to which answers are attempted are:

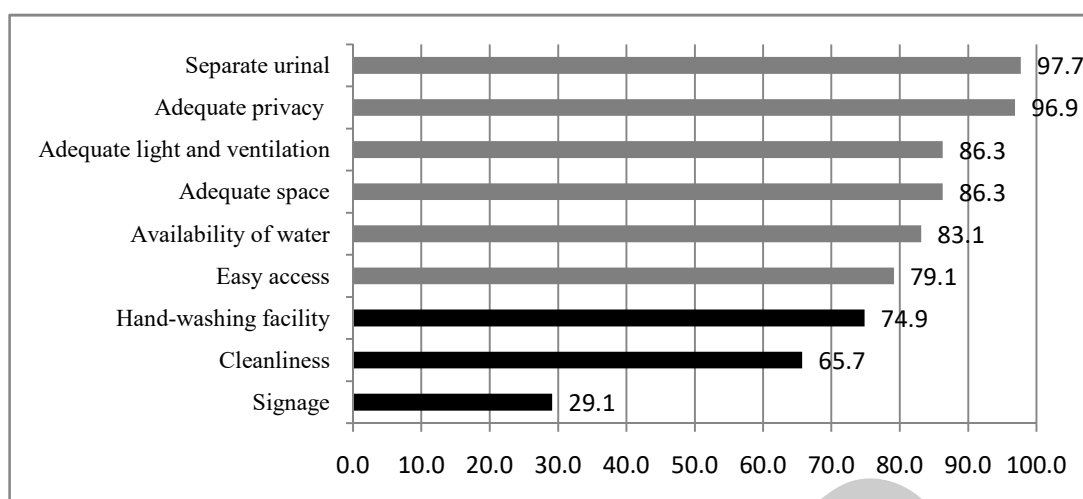
- a) Whether the interventions can be considered as efficient in terms of the output
- b) Whether the interventions can be considered as effective with respect to the output
- c) Whether the interventions can be considered as effective with regard to the outcome
- d) Whether the interventions can be considered as sustainable in terms of the outcomes

Efficiency in Terms of Output

The efficiency in terms of output is measured by taking note of the "essential elements" of the programme. Efficiency has been defined as fulfilment of the essential elements mandated by the programme guideline. From the sample of 350 schools it is found that total number of toilets constructed is 443 which includes 432 new construction (boys 290, girls 131, common 11) and 11 renovation (boys 4 and girls 7).

There are some schools (70 to be precise) where more than one toilet has been constructed. The school being the primary sampling unit, in such situation, the school has been considered to fulfil the essential elements when all the toilets built under the Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan qualify for the same. Following the programme guideline, nine "essential elements" of a "functional" toilets were considered for evaluating efficiency of the outcome which include availability of water, easy access, hand-washing facility, cleanliness, separate urinal, adequate space, adequate light and ventilation, adequate privacy and proper signage. The percentages of schools found fulfilling these essential elements are provided in Figure 2. From the Figure 2, it is obvious that the schools are lacking in four essential elements viz. accessibility, hand-washing facility, cleanliness and proper signage.

Figure 3: Schools Fulfilling Essential Efficiency Parameter of Toilet (in percent)



Source: Field work, October – December 2017

To find out the overall efficiency of output, simultaneous fulfilment of the essential elements by schools needs to be considered. Given the nine elements, a school is considered to qualify efficiency criterion in terms of the output if the school has access to round the clock water in toilet and fulfils at least two-third i.e. 6 out of 9 or more elements simultaneously. The number of criteria fulfilled simultaneously is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of Criteria Fulfilled Simultaneously by School

Number of Criteria	No. of Schools	Percent
0*	59	16.9
4	1	0.3
5	11	3.1
6	45	12.9
7	70	20.0
8	111	31.7
9	53	15.1
Total	350	100.0

* 0 is assigned to the schools which do not have round the clock water in toilets

Source: Field work, October – December 2017

From the Table 2, it is evident that all together 80 percent school (279 in number) qualify the efficiency criterion of output. Given the expected frequency of three-fourth qualifying criteria, the efficiency criterion of output goes above the expected proportion of 75 percent. It implies that the interventions are efficient in terms of output.

Effectiveness of Output

As per the Log-Frame, the effectiveness of output is defined in terms of the use of the output i.e. toilet. When toilets are used by students, only then desired outcome can be expected. It is found that

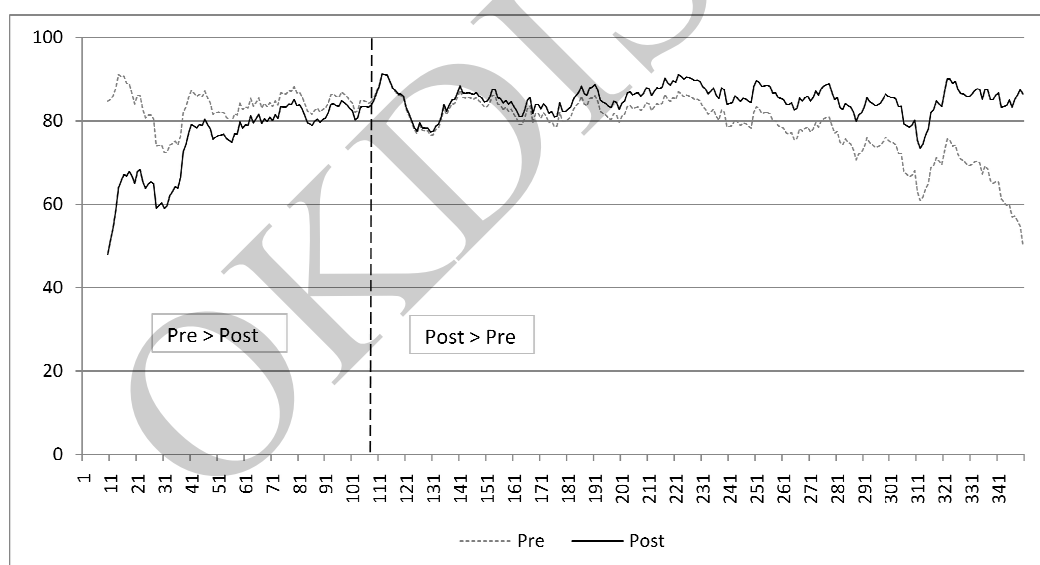
71 percent of the toilets are in use (314 out of 443) and, hence, effective. With 5 percent margin of error, this gives a confidence interval of 66 to 76 percent which contains the expected proportion of 75 percent. Thus, it may be concluded that the interventions have been effective in terms of output.

It is, also, found that efficiency and effectiveness are both inter-related. Efficient i.e. functional toilets tend to be more effective. It is observed that 75 percent of the total toilets are both efficient and effective. The inter-dependency is found to be statistically significant.

Effectiveness of Outcome

The Log-Frame defines effectiveness of the outcome in terms of two indicators - attendance rate and enrolment of students. As has been described earlier, the attendance rate is used to indicate the improved health and enrolment for improved educational performances of students. The 'pre' attendance scenario in selected schools i.e. overall attendance rate of students in the months of August and September 2015 when compared with the 'post' attendance scenario i.e. overall attendance rate of students in the months of August and September 2017, it is found that 'post' scenario is better than the 'pre' scenario in 70 percent of the schools (Figure 3). This gives the confidence interval of 65 to 75 percent that contains the expected frequency of 75 percent. Therefore, with reference to the indicator of attendance rate, the outcome of the intervention can be considered as effective.

Figure 4: Pre-Post Attendance Rates in Schools (in ascending order of difference)

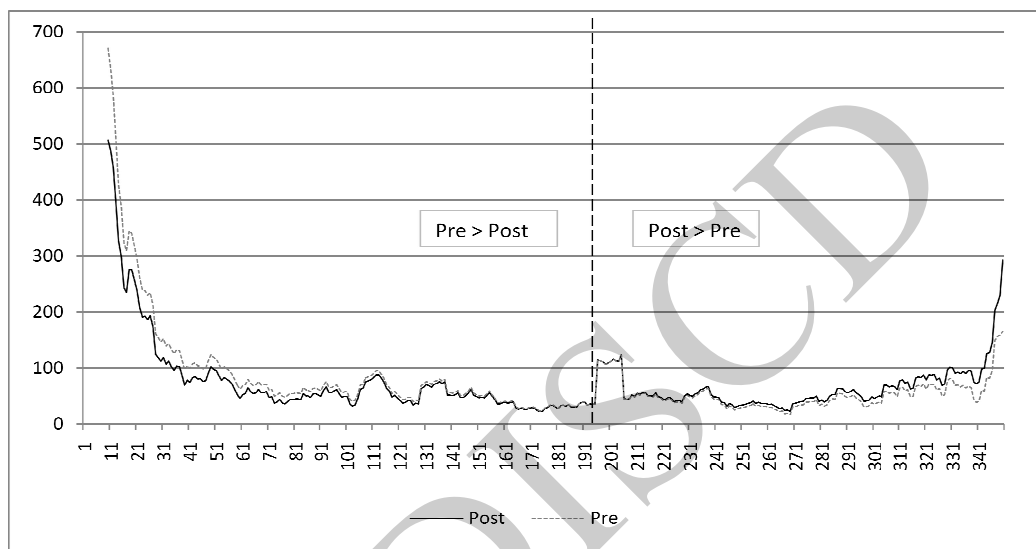


Source: Field work, October – December 2017

Further, it is observed that the average post attendance rate 81.75 percent is found to be higher than the average pre attendance rate of 79.4 percent. The difference in average attendance rate by 2.33 percent is found to be statistically significant ($t=3.64, p<0.000$). The intervention, therefore, contributes to improvement in attendance rate, which can be generalised for the population as a whole. Besides, considerable overlap is observed between effectiveness of output and effectiveness of outcome. It is found that 52 percent of the sample schools are effective both in terms of output as well as outcome.

In case of the enrolment, 'pre' and 'post' scenario comparisons are carried out by 'modified method' (see Figure 1). Data from sample reveal that 'post' enrolment scenario is better in 45 percent of the schools compared to 'pre' enrolment scenario (Figure 4). With a margin of error of 5 percent, this gives the confidence interval of 40 to 50 percent which is far less than the expected proportion of 75 percent. Therefore, in terms of enrolment, the interventions cannot be considered effective. Overall, the average enrolment in pre-intervention scenario (given by the counterfactuals) was found to be 88, which is higher than the post intervention enrolment of 83. The difference is not found to be statistically significant ($t = -3.5, p > 0.000$).

Figure 5: Pre-Post Enrolment Scenario in Schools (in ascending order of difference)



Source: Field work, October – December 2017

Notwithstanding, the increase in enrolment is to be seen in proper perspective. Given the fact that only one academic session has passed since the intervention, the time-lag is too short for assessing improvement in enrolment in school. Secondly, since all schools are being covered under the campaign, focusing on enrolment in any one particular school is met with practical limitations. Thirdly, enrolment depends on demographic distribution and factors which do not change in a short period of time. It is therefore expected that the intervention will start showing up results in improvement in enrolment by reducing over the period of longer time.

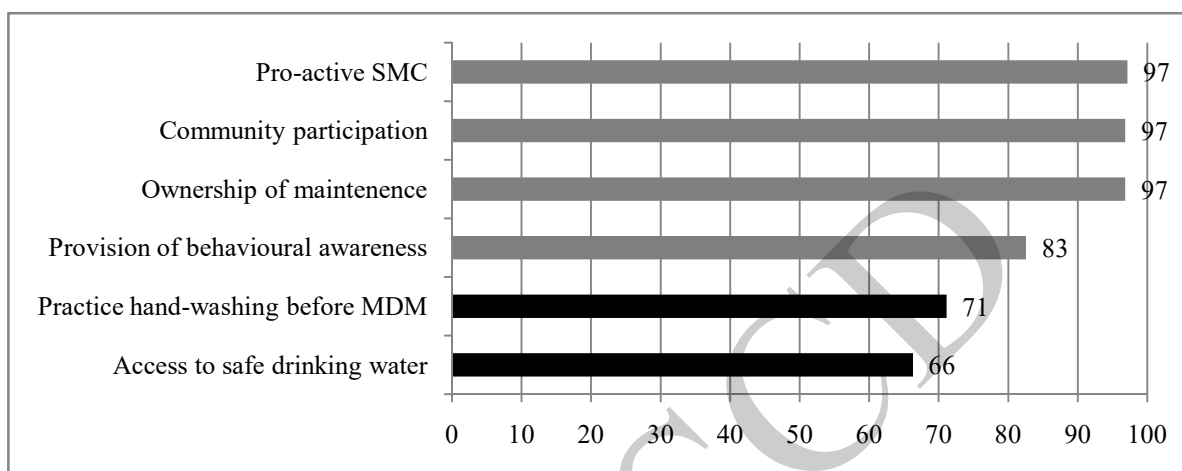
The Sustainability Issue

The sustainability of the outcome is a primary requirement to continue the effectiveness of the outcome and resulting in impact envisaged. The Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan takes thoughtful note of the comprehensive perspective of sanitation. This include, besides physical facilities of sanitation, access to drinking water and behavioural change. Moreover, ownership and maintenance of the facilities created are also vital ingredients of sustainability.

It is found that only 66 percent of the schools have access to clean and safe drinking water. About 71 percent schools have reported to practice regular hand-washing before mid day meal (MDM) and 83 percent of the schools said to have provided behavioural awareness. Likewise almost all schools (97

percent) said to have own the maintenance of the toilets while equally overwhelming number of schools reported to ensure community participation (97 percent) with a pro-active role of the school management committee (97 percent) (Figure 5). It may be noted that with a defined margin of error of 5 percent for five of these (except for access to safe and clean drinking water) produces a confidence interval that contains the desired proportion of 75 percent. It is, therefore, concluded that the interventions qualifies the sustainability criteria in terms of outcome.

Figure 6: Drinking Water, Maintenance and Behavioural Practices (in percent)



Source: Field work, October – December 2017

The Swachh Vidyalaya intervention, as evident from the above findings, contributes to improvement in attendance rate, which can be generalised for the population as a whole. Besides, considerable overlap is observed between effectiveness of output and effectiveness of outcome. It is found that 52 percent of the sample schools (183 numbers) are effective both in terms of output as well as outcome. In terms of improving enrolment, however, the interventions cannot be considered effective. This needs to be seen keeping in view the too short a time-lag involved in assessing a long-run phenomenon like enrolment. The intervention qualifies the sustainability criteria which consider, besides physical facilities of sanitation, ownership and behavioural change. However, out of the nine essential elements of school sanitation considered in the study, the schools mostly lack in four essential elements viz. accessibility, hand-washing facility, cleanliness and proper signage.

What Limits Functionality of the Toilets?

Two things are found to be primarily responsible for most of the toilets remaining unused. The first is the behavioural practices which remain outside the present intervention. Though, overwhelming number of schools reported to have provided behavioural awareness, hand washing with soap before the mid day meal still remains as a challenge. The second is the lack of cleanliness. Being a holistic approach, sanitation requires, besides physical facility, adequate water for cleaning and flushing of toilets and regular operation and maintenance. Though almost all the schools reported to have owned the maintenance of the Swachh Vidyalaya toilets, lack of dedicated fund for operation and maintenance still remains as a challenge to ensure clean usable toilets. For instance, the average annual grant for the schools of Assam during the year 2016-17 was only 5000/- to 7000/- rupees, which was found to be inadequate to divert from regular mandatory operational expenses to buy soap, toilet cleaning

liquid and also to hire man power for regular maintenance of the toilets. Though specific guideline was issued and Rs. 2500/- was earmarked separately for maintaining the Swachh Vidyalay toilets for the state of Assam during the financial year 2018-19, delay in releasing the fund again impedes the desirable outcome.

The lack of water in toilets, particularly in hills, is another limiting factor. The Swachh Vidyalaya guideline mandates provisioning of water in toilets. This important requirement is fulfilled by creating a facility for storage of water, rather than providing a source of water, in majority of the cases. To store water, one has to fetch water from a distant source. This, practically, did not solve the problem of water, rather introduced another problem of storing water for toilets. As a result, once the initial storage exhausted, the tanks remained empty. Since most of the toilets lack water, they now remain locked and unused. In this context, scientific water management system for schools located in difficult terrain becomes very important. Although, some of the schools were found to be contemplating on developing such systems, including rain water harvesting, the school and the community found lacking in sincere efforts and also inability to adopt such system. Hajadisha (B) LP School in Dima Hasao, Assam, for instance, attempts at rain-water harvesting with the gravity flow to provision water directly to the toilets. However, the attempt is not bringing results as the storage capacity again is very limited. Besides water in toilets, schools also lack in mandatory provision of access to safe and clean drinking water, which also indicates lack of convergence of the programme to complementary facilities to ensure sustainable outcome.

Both, accessibility and physical quality of the toilets are other important dimensions of functionality. In 63 numbers of schools the toilets were not functional because those were not accessible to the students. It was primarily because, due to lack of maintenance grant, the school management kept some toilets either locked or confined their use to the teachers only. It was also found that the interventions carried out under the initiative primarily aimed in providing a toilet block mere to fulfil physical achievement, particularly in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. It was observed that the initiatives have fulfilled hardly any quality construction and convergence with the complementary facilities like water, adequate space and ventilation.

Besides, recognising complementarities among the school facilities are also critical in delivering desired results. Field insights reveal that even lack of boundary wall can also impede functionality of toilets. For instance, in Haver Deswali LP School, Dima Hasao District, it was reported that facilities created by NEEPCO have been damaged by miscreants since the school lacks boundary wall and is not well-protected. Field insights also revealed that lack of enrolment can also impede functionality of toilets. For instance, the toilets constructed at 574 No. Kulabari Lower Primary School of Lakhimpur District of Assam and Government Primary School, Lora of Arunachal Pradesh remained unused due to non enrolment of students during 2016-17 academic sessions.

Conclusion

All these notwithstanding, it is clear that interventions carried out under the initiative primarily fulfilled the physical requirement of toilets for school sanitation. It has been observed that the initiatives have hardly any convergence with the complementary facilities like that of drinking water and, most importantly, behavioural change practices in schools. It has been realised that this is

primarily because of the obligatory nature of the programme implementation, which focused more on accomplishment and achieving time-bound targets rather than desired outcomes. Non-functional and unclean water, sanitation and hand-washing facilities embarrass achievement of behavioural change among the students for which the huge investments made under the 'Abhiyan' in installing these systems may go in vain. The mode of implementation, thus, has defeated the comprehensive perspective with which the programme was designed. The learning from this experience has been that both the programme design and the mode of implementation need to be consistent in perspective if the programme is to be successful in delivering the desired outcome.

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**INDRANI CHATTERJEE (2013) FORGOTTEN FRIENDS:
MONKS, MARRIAGES, AND MEMORIES OF NORTHEAST
INDIA, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, NEW DELHI, 2013,
RS. 1025, PP. 451.**

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As the title of the book suggests, *Forgotten Friends* implies an overlooked or ignored past of mutual co-operation, dependence and inter-connectedness across geographical spaces which has now been replaced by strictly bordered spaces. The book is an attempt to unearth memories of a past that ran deeper. But this is somewhat made to look almost invisible beneath layers of vehemently dense nationalist and regional ideological writings and political propaganda which desires to present the past in a particular way. The distinction of the book is marked, particularly by its break away from the large corpus of regional literature and history generated for the time period comprising the thirteenth up to the seventeenth century with particular focus of scholars being an examination of the political economy of the Ahom dynasty.¹ This book has looked at the possibility of an alternative and simultaneous form of state structure, thus paving a departure from the portrayal of a monolithic nature of the state not only in the eastern part of the sub-continent but the general idea of the state itself which is usually a representation of a centralized government guided by principles of law and politics.

A reference made by Indrani Chatterjee in her acknowledgment to Buddhist populations who were described as 'tribal' in anthropological scholarship (p. xiii) reflects an intention of dismantling the 'tribal' nomenclature that populations in the hills are often referred to. More so, as they are usually represented as a population without the experience of the state.

Chatterjee follows the trajectory of historical study set as a precedent by Willem van Schendel and James Scott who engaged in the study of transcending borders and developing a new concept of regional space through the idea of 'Zomia'. These works were an attempt to undo the concepts surrounding the 'nation state' while exploring the idea of 'statelessness' as a choice by populations residing in the Zomia landscape.² Chatterjee, however, differs from Scott and Schendel in the domain of adhering to the idea of an alternative form of state structured through the networks of a monastic militia rule and co-operation in contradiction to the idea of 'statelessness' as pursued by both Scott and Schendel. If one were to make a comparison with her earlier book *Gender, Slavery and Law in Colonial India*, the seeds of interest in North East India surrounding the themes of service, labour and

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¹Guha, Amalendu (1991), *Medieval and Early Colonial Assam: Society, Polity, Economy*, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta; Bhuyan S.K. (2009), *Studies in the History of Assam*, Bani Mandir, Guwahati.; Gogoi (Nath), Jahnabi (2002), *Agrarian System of Medieval Assam*, Concept Publishing Co., New Delhi; Gohain, U.N. (1942), *Assam Under the Ahoms*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati; Sarma, Amulya Chandra (1986), *Tai Ahom System of Government*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi and Karna, M.N. (2004), *Agrarian Structures and Land Reforms in Assam*, NEHU Publications, Shillong to name a few.

²Van Schendel, Willem (2002), "Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance : Jumping Scale in South East Asia", *Environment and Planning D : Society and Space*, Vol. 20, pp. 647-668 and Scott, James (2009), *The Art of Not Being Governed : An Anarchist History of Upland South East Asia*, Yale University Press.

slavery and the notice of a 'conceptual apartheid' that had segregated women and the family from the domains of men were already sown in the first book.³ If the previous book threw light upon how 'slavery' was camouflaged under the garb of kinship, there was a shift in the way pre-colonial cultures were looked at in the new work. Subjectivities like 'slavery' was seen as part of a communitarian need and the maintenance of a geographic monastic order. She highlighted the inability of the British to comprehend pre-colonial cultural ties perceiving them under the categories of 'slavery', 'savagery' and 'feudalism'. This was in contrast to the earlier work where Chatterjee viewed pre-colonial cultures through this very colonial paradigm. *Forgotten Friends* can be viewed as an attempt to fill in the voids that she had noticed while exploring her ideas and sources in the earlier work.

As the author acknowledges Sumit Guha, the latter's influence is clearly visible in the current study as both the scholars have attempted to explore how political economy and states impacted the formation of social identity in South Asia⁴ especially as the opening lines of the introductory chapter begins by stating, "The backbone of this book is a political and economic order centering on monastic teachers" (p. 1). Chatterjee introduces the book by highlighting the broad nexus between monastic teachers and disciples which contributed towards the construction of a wide organisation reflecting a state that brought diverse populations across different geographies under one rubric across the sub-continent. Through an examination of Bon Tantric and Buddhist lineages and their role in the political economy in the eastern part of the sub-continent, Chatterjee brings out the lacuna in Indian history writing with the tendency of scholars to follow the footsteps of colonial predecessors in the process of knowledge production. This imitation of colonial forms of producing knowledge gets reflected in the linear fashion of presenting facts and events without taking into consideration the circularity and simultaneous presence of varied forms of state structures and the mutual interaction between these forms. Such circulation and mutual interaction enabled the sustenance of life and events of the everyday in difficult geographical terrains like that of North Eastern India and regions around its vicinity such as Bhutan, Tibet, Nepal, Burma, China and Bangladesh. This reflects upon a dynamics of circulation and co-dependence of people, such as soldiers and monks and material resources like land.

Initiation into a monastic order ran much deeper than what meets the eye. It has been portrayed as a process through which the spirit of the individual was made to merge and co-opt into that of the community. Such initiation of the self into the community ordained important aspects of the political, economic and the military. It initiated the individual into a kind of subjectivity which contained a nexus of the cultivator-labour-warrior identity that helped in building a strong connection between land, state and ideology under the rubric of monasticism. The latter not only brought these entities together but the inter-connectedness between them seems to have been maintained across regions through a process of decentralization, thus, creating a pattern of localized sovereignties. Her particular focus on the power of the priest to 'control' (p.10) resonates with the present scenario of politics in the country today as priests and self-styled godmen have been invested with tremendous power and influence to mobilize populations and hold reins of political power.

³Chatterjee, Indrani (1999), *Gender, Slavery and Law in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

⁴Guha, Sumit (2013), *Beyond Caste: Identity and Power in South Asia, Past and Present*, Brill Publications, Leiden & Boston.

The shift from the first to the second chapter is marked by highlighting pre-colonial ways in which monastic regimes functioned and how the complex of monastic governments, militias and marriages became the domain of power politics by the East India Company. A unique aspect of the book lies in Chatterjee's recognition of women's agency over landed estates and grants thus, playing a significant role in keeping the network of monastic geographicity functional across regions. She portrays that in pre-colonial society, many cohabitations established as 'marriage' were treated more like a strategy by ambitious individuals and lineages to simultaneously generate and acquire prestige while not being treated as an institution solely for biological or social reproduction (p. 129) – a theme that has been explored extensively in the third chapter. It, therefore, brought forth the utility of an institution for political gains such as diplomacy, strategy and a measure of value tied to accumulation and expansion of resources, power and prestige. Chapter 4 looks at the process of transformation which monastic governments and the land resources under them had gone through under colonialism. By viewing these native forms of rule through the prism of 'feudalism', 'slavery' and 'savagery' while at the same time mimicking these monastic estates which it very much tried to uproot. From here on, she tries to explore a tussle about subject hood through the reformulation of total relationships from one under plains and Himalayan monastics to that under the British through the process of 'frontier making' in the eastern part of the sub-continent (p. 204). While the fifth chapter explores the contribution of the tea plantation industry in dissolving the monastic geographical order of the seventeenth century as it created militarized colonial fraternities around the advance of tea plantations, Chapter 6 delves into the penetration of colonial military politics of undoing monastic codes of gender transcendence, household formations and the intrusion of the public into the private that culminated into the final conquest of the colonial state over a monastic one.

The book therefore, highlights the clash of different forms and ideas of state and subjectivity which resulted in conflict and one which acted as a deciding factor of triumph of one above the other. Where one was more flexible in its relations with its subjects, the other aimed at fixity of these relations, eradication of the former and transfer of the former relations towards its own.

An interesting aspect of the book is that the author does not confine the idea of 'North East India' to the eight modern states of the region from a Delhi centric geographical directional perspective but instead, Dhaka becomes the centre from which she tried to understand the political economy of regions that lay 'north' and 'east' of it. Her attempts at a 'civilizational' treatment of the region, however, does not really do away with the peripheral treatment of the 'North East'. Hence, the idea of peripherality remains intact while there is a shift in the centre of reference from Delhi to Dhaka.

Chatterjee's is an attempt to write a history through an endeavour to do away with the vagaries of nationalism and nationalist history writing by focusing upon the fluidity of populations and cultures in order to entrench an idea of borderlessness across geographical spaces. The point of contradiction however, lies in the fact that although the author intended to dismantle the conventional idea of a state structure, but the running theme of the book focusing on an alternative structure of the state based on monasticism defies the very purpose that she intends to fulfil. The book, therefore, pertains to establish the structure of a different kind of a state itself. Though one cannot possibly deny the colonial politics in reducing pre-colonial state structures to the term 'feudal' but works such as this book, pushes one into the pitfall to romanticize a past glorifying native forms of hierarchy based upon religious adherence and devotion. It only provides leverage and momentum to a scenario of Indian

politics in which attempts are made to go back or recreate a past based on a certain sense of subjectivity in the name of religiosity, thereby, making claims to a need for a cultured past.

Although there is an attempt to do away with the category 'tribal' attached to Buddhist populations, yet while giving detailed attention to Tripura and Sylhet she speaks of the 'hills in between' (p. 100). The lines between over-simplification and complication gets blurred while trying to incorporate a subaltern like Zakapa within the rubric of 'Bengali speaking intelligentsia' leaving the reader confused instead of leaving one with clarity (p. 300).

Though there is an effort to establish the power of women's agency in monastic lineages but to what extent could they be considered as agents? After all, such arrangements were meant to cater to the masculine pursuits of land acquisition, prestige and power over a vast expanse of territory well beyond one's own. It is highly questionable whether even decisions related to marriage were taken by the women themselves. Consent itself is a matter of dispute as the death of the husband did not end the relationship between two households but extended it as the girl would then be married to any male member in the family.

A wide array of sources have been used including some interesting ones such as maps of trade routes, thus, truly living up to the theme of her book on 'geographicity' cutting across territorial spaces from London, Pennsylvania, Wales, New Brunswick, New Delhi, Kolkata, Guwahati as well as Aizawl. The sources have been primarily based upon colonial documents written in English with a dearth of original documents written in the local languages. One can therefore, assume a sense of bias in the utility of original documentation for the subject matter of the book. Also the citation of the source while making claims such as "connection with other monastic centres up and down the rivers of Assam and Bengal" (p. 68); the usage of terms like 'Bengali Cosseahs' (p. 97); an 'EndooBhutia' as a holder of a landed estate (p. 105), mentioning marital and military-diplomatic bonds seem to have been missing. The sources are not enough to establish her claims about women's authority over raising alternative militias through land grants (pp. 98-101).

Indrani Chatterjee's *Forgotten Friends* provides an innovative and fresh insight into the history of North East India and compels one to break away from the categories through which traditional history writing has viewed the history of the region for decades. Her admission in the acknowledgment section that the book would not be free of failures and shortcomings is itself a reflection of the deep insight, introspection, engaging spirit of constant review beyond one's own confines speaks volumes about the book. Chatterjee's observations about an alternative history of the state cannot be ignored, thus, opening up a wide corpus of possibilities for scholars of history to pursue further research in unexplored terrains related to North East India.