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## Conserving Human-Nature Nexuses: Biodiversity, Eco-Ethics and Sacred Forests of Assam

Kedilezo Kikhi<sup>1</sup> & Prithibi Pratibha Gogoi<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

*The Dimasas, an ethnic group of Northeast India ritualize sacred patches of land, also referred to as Daikhos, which are considered to be the abodes of various local or clan deities. Scholars have identified these sacred grounds as sacred groves due to their forest cover and rich biodiversity. Sacred forests or groves provide an interesting case of intimate human and nature relations. This essay is an attempt to understand man-environment interaction through an in-depth and extensive study of the Daikho institution, which has, incidentally, escaped scholarly attention in South Asian research traditions till now. Assam (in north-east India) has seen an increasing rate of depleting forest in recent times (almost over 5 percent of the forest cover has been cleared in the last two decades), yet, the community-driven conservation practices entangled with the Dimasa's socio-religious life can be seen as safeguarding the forests and provides one among many ways to help maintain and restore forest ecosystems in the region. This essay is an attempt to decipher the local understanding of conserving biodiversity through the worldview of the ethnic group.*

### Introduction

The association of worshipping nature is found in several communities where the river, trees, and animals are sacralised and are believed to be the abode of one or many deities or spirits. Nature worship can likewise be regarded as a component of ancient or earliest religion nonetheless, such worship does not primarily translate to the preservation of nature (Nag, 2014; Anthwal, Gupta, Sharma, Anthwal, & Kim, 2010). However, in recent times the degradation of nature has increased manifold and there is a shift of focus towards the communities who still practice their ancient eco-ethics which in many cases translate to mean sacred forests or groves (Nag, 2014; Anthwal, Gupta,

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<sup>1</sup> Professor & Chair Professor, Dr. Ambedkar Chair, Tezpur University, Assam. Email: [kedithejakikhi@yahoo.co.in](mailto:kedithejakikhi@yahoo.co.in)

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Royal Global University, Assam. Email id: [prithibigogoi@gmail.com](mailto:prithibigogoi@gmail.com)

Sharma, Anthwal, & Kim 2010; Kent, 2013). While other scholars have noted that indigenous religion has always been a part of indigenous culture which is supposed to be the product of interaction between man and the environment (Boedhihartono 1998; Sanga & Haulle, 2022). One such interaction gets reflected in the sacred forest and sacred groves which provide a niche for numerous plants and animal varieties and thus present a cultural conservationist outlook of such religiously important space (Gadgil & Chandran 1992; Malhotra, Gokhale, Chatterjee & Srivastava, 2001; Vasan & Kumar, 2006; Kent, 2013; Singh, Youssouf, Malim & Bussmann, 2017; Dutta, 2019; Devi, Baidya & Thakur, 2020; Sanga & Haulle, 2022).

Sacred groves are regarded as one of the oldest forms of conservation and the finest instances that connect faith with nature (ibid.). The presence of such groves in India was first reported by Dietrich Brandis, a German Forester and the first General Inspector of Forests under the colonial regime (Gadgil & Chandran 1992; Saikia 2011; Kent, 2013). He is credited to identify the phenomenon of forest conservation closely knitted with religious motivation in India with the term, sacred groves (Gadgil & Chandran, 1992; Kent, 2013). There is huge scholarship on sacred groves in India, (Gadgil & Chandran, 1992; Malhotra, Gokhale, Chatterjee & Srivastava, 2001; Khan, Khumbongmayum & Tripathi, 2008; Borthakur, 2013; Kent, 2013); and the works in the Northeast (Chatterjee, 2008; Medhi & Borthakur, 2013; Langthasa, Sharma & Barman, 2018; Upadhyay, Japang, Singh & Tripathi, 2019; Devi, Baidya & Thakur, 2020). Kent pointed out that 'sacred groves' are small forests or stands of trees whose produce is set aside for the exclusive use of a deity, which is a Pan-India phenomenon. The local terminology of such forests or trees associated with one or more deities or spirits are different across cultures and different dialects. Kent's work which was based in south India highlighted that the Tamil terms, whose literal translation of such community-based conserve patches of trees are termed as 'temple-forest' or the 'temple that is in the forest' (Kent, 2013). Many Indians claim sacred groves of India as an ancient indigenous ecological tradition. Madhav Gadgil, a prominent environmental historian was one of them who regarded the sacred groves as in situ seed bank conserves managed by various communities across the country (Gadgil & Chandran, 1992; Kent, 2013).

Northeast India, which is known for mosaic topography and varied indigenous communities, protects patches of forests based on their spiritual beliefs (Chatterjee, 2008; Khan, Khumbongmayum & Tripathi, 2008; Devi, Baidya & Thakur, 2020). Various scholars have reported the presence of sacred forests in all the north-eastern states of Meghalaya (Malhotra, Gokhale, Chatterjee & Srivastava, 2001; Nag, 2014), Manipur (Khumbongmayum, Khan & Triparthi, 2004), Assam (Maedhi & Borthakur, 2013; Devi, Baidya & Thakur, 2020), Nagaland (Souza, 2001); Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim have sacred forests (Khan, Khumbongmayum & Tripathi, 2008).

The sacred groves are comprised of forest patches with religious or spiritual values requiring local people to protect trees, forests, and often other elements of biodiversity

within. They are conserved and protected by local communities because they hold cultural and traditional significance, thereby, forming an important aspect of their cultural identity and their spiritual-ecological values surviving through multiple generations (Gadgil & Chandran, 1992; Malhotra, Gokhale, Chatterjee & Srivastava, 2001; Borthakur, 2013; Sanga & Haulle, 2022). Medhi & Borthakur (2013) equated *Daikho* (spelled *Dikho* in their research work) as sacred groves of the Dimasas and mentions the presence of twelve (12) *Daikhos* which are strategically located in the newly formed district of Dima Hasao and they serve as an ecological niche for several varieties of plant species.

Assam has around 40 sacred groves in the district of Karbi Anglong (Malhotra, Gokhale, Chatterjee & Srivastava, 2001; Khan, Khumbongmayum & Tripathi, 2008; Borthakur, 2013). The term *madaico* (ma *Daikho* denotes space for God) was used by most of the previous researchers (ibid.). If we consider the factual data provided by scholars (Malhotra, Gokhale, Chatterjee & Srivastava, 2001), as the concrete number of sacred groves in Assam, then, the institution of *Daikho* among the Dimasas in the district of Dima Hasao are not included as sacred groves (Gogoi, 2020; 2022). While another group of researchers stated that *Daikhos* are the relic forest segments preserved in the name of culture and religion (Medhi & Borthakur, 2013; Thaosen 2018; Langthasa, Sharma & Barman, 2018; Gogoi, 2022).

This essay attempts to explore the institution of *Daikho*, a traditional institution of the Dimasas which invariably escaped the scholarly attention of South Asian research. There is a close-knit association of the community with its surrounding environment. Such associations are reflected in their worldview where around 34 plant varieties were identified as sacred in Dimasa social life, and among them, 13 species are related to worshipping while the remaining 21 species are involved in naming areas/villages or naming their clans (Medhi & Borthakur, 2013). The name of a female clan, *hamlai gibing* is named after the plant, *hamlaifang* or *hamlraithaifang* (Medhi & Borthakur, 2013). So, this essay is an attempt to highlight the close intertwined relationship of Dimasa society with their surrounding environment which is strengthened by oral tradition in the form of folklores and folktales. Further, this essay also discusses the ecological services of sacred forests to the community and its associated beliefs with it.

### **Enroute to the field: Methods employed**

The fieldwork for this essay is carried out in multiple phases from 2018 to 2020 at different sites from Haflong, a small hill station of Assam to Doyapur, a Dimasa village situated near the Assam- Nagaland border. The researcher has engaged in participant observation for data collection and an ethnographic approach has been employed to understand the field. The researcher stayed for an extended period of eighteen months with the local people engaging in their everyday life and social affairs. At the beginning of the research work, there was trouble conducting interviews as the researcher was not well-versed in the native tongue of the community i.e. Dimasa

language. However, this limitation was overcome by learning basic conversation skills to conduct short interviews to know the local terminology of plants and their local significance (Table 1), in addition to taking the help of field assistants at the field sites. The universe of the study was the institution of *Daikho*, which in the local language is translated, 'to the place of the omnipresent'. These forested areas are deemed sacred spaces which are located away from human habitation. These spaces are sacralised through rituals that are conducted annually or biennially making it a male-centric space where entry of women is prohibited (Gogoi, 2020; Gogoi, 2022). Such restrictions have been negotiated by employing local field assistants, who helped in the data collection process.

### The ecological services from the *Daikho*

In the forested area of the *Daikho*, the most commonly found plant species are bamboo (the north-eastern region is home to a variety of bamboo species)<sup>3</sup>, jackfruit, areca plant (ibid.), *thailuphang* (banana tree)<sup>4</sup>, Indian gooseberries (*hamlaiphang*), mango<sup>5</sup> tree (*thaijuphang*) and many others. Even Medhi & Borthakur (2013) reported a variety of bamboo such as *wathi*, *waphu*, *wagajao*, and in addition, they reported that a variety of bamboo names and other plant names are used in the naming of several Dimasa villages in the district of Dima Hasao. One of the informants pointed to the name of the village, *manderdisa*, which is named after the plant *mander*. This key informant asserted that most of the Dimasa villages are named after plants that are found in their surrounding areas. In the same village, the Chief Minister of Assam laid the foundation stone for Bamboo Industrial Park (*The Sentinel*, 2021).<sup>6</sup> If one has a closer look at the names of the *jaddi/jullu* name, almost all of them have a local derivation of some plants, mostly *mairong* meaning rice (Medhi & Borthakur, 2013). The usage of the names of rice varieties is significant among them.

India is home to almost 45 percent of the world's bamboo forests and two-thirds of the growing stock of bamboo in the country is available in the northeastern states (*The Assam Bamboo Cane Policy*, 2019; Tewari, Negi & Kaushal, 2019). The bamboo forests were identified by the Forest Department under British Government in the late nineteenth century in this part of the country (Saikia, 2011; Tewari, Negi & Kaushal, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Source: (Assam State Biodiversity Board Official website, <http://asbb.gov.in/biodiversity.html>), (India State of Forest Report 2019, <https://fsi.nic.in/isfr19/vol11/chapter8.pdf>).

<sup>4</sup> Assam has around 13 varieties of bananas with unique tastes (Source: Booklet published by Assam State Biodiversity Board titled, Assam: Land of Red River & Blue Hills).

<sup>5</sup> The mango tree is of immense importance in the Hindu religion as it impersonates certain Hindu gods. The tree leaves are used in various rituals while the wood in some cases is used during funerals (Rana, Sharma & Paliwal, 2016 cited in Chauhan & Chauhan, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Source: <https://www.sentinelassam.com/north-east-india-news/assam-news/assam-cm-lays-foundation-stone-of-bamboo-industrial-park-at-manderdisa-in-dima-hasao-548215>

Dimasas recognises a variety of bamboo (the common local name for bamboo is *wa*), and there was no definite number. But others mention more than 20 varieties of locally known bamboo, but very few recall all the names. Though many claimed that there are over 20 varieties of locally recognised *wa*, it was observed that the elderly members can recall over 10, while other younger informants managed to name around 4-5 varieties. It is observed that the local nomenclature of the plants is not used during conversations. In one of the interviews, the informant stated that three things are very crucial to Dimasa's social life such as a river, banana, and bamboo. The banana and bamboo are used in all the Dimasa rituals, and villages are named after bamboo such as *Boro Washiling*, and *Choto Washiling*. One cannot find any Dimasa settlement away from the river, since, Dimasas like to reside beside the river.<sup>7</sup> In this regard, Semkhor in Dima Hasao District is the only Dimasa village that is not situated beside or near a river or stream.

The local names of bamboo varieties are usually based on their specific usage such as *waphu* (the leaves and culms used in worshipping); *wathi* (this particular bamboo is lean and usually used to serve rice beer, *judima* in a social gathering and some purification rituals) (Medhi & Borthakur, 2013), *wayung* (the big bamboo which is considered strong, are generally used for constructing houses); *wajinsa*, *wayung*, *walongdi*, *wathi*, *washim*, *washi* (the leaves and culms used in worshipping), *walao*, *wadring*, *walaingsa*, *wabam*, *wadukha*, *walindrea*.<sup>8</sup> The three bamboo varieties *wathi*, *washi*, and *waphu* are considered sacred (Medhi & Borthakur, 2013). Bamboo groves are a common sight in all the *Daikhos*. In *Damadi Daikho*, almost a major percentage of the vegetation are bamboos (bamboo grows outside the site as well). In addition to it, Assam State Biodiversity Board reports the presence of 38 naturally occurring species of bamboo in Assam. It has also been noticed that exclusive bamboo forests are found in the two districts of North Cachar Hills (Dima Hasao) and Karbi Anglong, and few species of bamboo are specific to these areas.<sup>9</sup> The Dima Hasao District Census Handbook reported on rich bamboo resources in these districts, providing raw materials to Bengal Essay Mill and Hindustan Essay and Pulp Mill at Jagiroad.<sup>10</sup> A variety of bamboo species are also found in the neighbouring district of Karbi Anglong (Baidya, Thakur, Malunguja & Devi, 2020).

Along with bamboo, there are banana plantations farmed by the villagers beside the *Daikho* sites, which is a new phenomenon. One such farming is seen at the site of *Damadi Daikho*. Again, the *Longmailum Daikho*, which is just a few kilometers away has similar vegetation. But unlike the *Damadi*, *Longmailum* lies on the other side of the small stream. There is no concrete boundary, but the former site had less vegetation compared to the latter.

<sup>7</sup> Interview taken in Karbi Anglong, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Field Notes, Dimapur, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Assam State Biodiversity Board Official website, <http://asbb.gov.in/biodiversity.html>

<sup>10</sup> Source: [https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/DCHB\\_A/18/1816\\_PART\\_A\\_DCHB\\_DIMA%20HASAO.pdf](https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/DCHB_A/18/1816_PART_A_DCHB_DIMA%20HASAO.pdf)

**Table 1: Showing a few locally recognised plants and their usage by the Dimasas**

Sl. No.	Common Name of the Plant	Scientific Name	Local Name	Significance
1	Bamboo	Bambusoideae	wajinsa, wayung, walongdi, wathi, washim, washi, walao, wadring, walaingsa, wabam, wadukha, walindrea	(a) The culms of some are used for offering judima, rice beer, during any rituals and so are considered sacred. (b) While some are specifically used for making houses, fences, to name a few. (c) The bamboo shoots are a local delicacy and a prominent aspect of Dimasa cuisine. (d) Villages are named after bamboo.
2	Indian gooseberries	Emblica Officinalis	Hamlaiphang	(a) This particular tree is worshiped when a child is sick. (b) One matri-clan (hamlaigimindzi) is named after the tree.
3	Toothbrush tree	Streblus asper	Khandephang	Offer prayers to the spirit residing in the tree for the quick recovery of the sick child.
4	NA*	NA*	Muliphang	(a) Offer prayers to the spirit residing in the tree for the quick recovery of the sick child. (b) The spirit residing in this tree is considered less potent compared to the other spirits in Khandephang and Hamlaiphang.
5	Holy Basil	Ocimumsanctum/ tenuiflorum	Tulsi (no local terminology)	Used to make dther, the holy water.
6	Bottle gourd	Lagenariasiceraria	Laothai	(a) This dried bottle gourd is considered sacred. (b) Serve as a utensil to store judima and require in various rituals to offer to deities. (c) At the event of semju (the day when the wedding date is fixed), the bride-groom party and the groom party exchange rice beer in laothai.
7	Mango	Mangniferaindica	Thaijuphang	The leaves of this plant are used in various marriages and religious rituals.
8	Banana	Musaceae	Thailuphang	(a) The whole plant has immense utility in day-to-day life. (b) The leaves and even the trunk serves as utensils to offer prayers to various deities. (c) The trunk of the plant is a local delicacy.
9	Indian Bael plant	Aegle marmelos	Bilthaiphang	(a) Leaves of this plant are used to sprinkle dther before or after any ritual. (b) The ripe fruit is used in traditional medicine to cure diarrhoea (Rout, Sajem&Nath, 2012).
10	Betelnut	Areca catechu	Kuwai/ Guwai	(a) The betel nut along with betel leaf is offered during various rituals. (b) A matri-clan is named after it, e.g. Guwaibar Jilik.
11	Betel leaf	Piper betel	Mithi	Along with areca nut, it is offered during rituals.
12	Rice	Orza sativa	Mairong	(a) A variety of rice is recognised and all of them are considered sacred. (b) Few of the matri-clans are named after rice. (c) Rice powder is used to cook meals to offer to gods/goddesses which is locally known as hon. This particular dish is a local delicacy.

*\*Not Available. Source: Fieldnotes*

There is a prohibition on cutting down certain trees and tree-bearing fruits. Such prohibitions are strictly followed and cannot be breached. These taboos and restrictions in any sacralised forested areas help in preserving the surrounding ecosystem (Sanga & Haulle, 2022). People believe that not following the prohibitions might bring bad omens and invoke the malicious spirits of the forests. Other plants are considered ritualistically sacred and among them, the prominent ones are *khande* (the local term for a tree whose flowers are eaten by birds like bulbul) and *hamlai phang* (the Indian gooseberry or commonly referred to as *amla*), and these particular plants are forbidden to cut by individuals who has performed *khandehuma* or *hamlaihuma* when they were young. In one of the marriage preparations attended by the researcher in Dimapur, one individual was given the task to cut the *khandai* tree to clear the ground for the event. But the person contended that he has done *khandehuma*, so he would be unable to cut the tree. In Maibang, a similar story was narrated by an aged man who stated that he used to be very sick when he was young. After consulting with a Dimasa fortune teller, who subsequently asked his parents to appease the spirit and perform the ritual of *khandehuma*. His parents followed the instructions and offered prayers for the faster recovery of their son. After performing the ritual, he was healthy again but then onwards he was barred to cut the same tree, as that particular tree became a guardian of his health.<sup>11</sup> Another aged villager echoed in similar lines, “*Hamlai huyakhade, hamlai jithoudu*” (if you have not done that ritual, then you can eat *hamlai thai*, Indian gooseberry<sup>12</sup>).

One can only cut the tree if the individual has not done *khandai huma*, and this ritual is usually done when the child is young. It is a ritual based on the fortune teller, *smanaiba*, who directs the parents to perform one of the rituals so that the child does not fall sick. In this ritual, parents seek the protection of the spirits of a particular tree.

There is a folklore that is associated with plants that are considered sacred. On encounter with the paternal grandfather of the field assistant; the researcher was told that his grandfather who is also the oldest member of the Jigdung family used to take an active part in many rituals before however due to his old age, he is unable to participate and mostly stays at home. He is over 90 years old and has attended rituals such as *hamlai thuma*, *khandehuma* and *mulilangrai huma*. He said, “*hamlai la bubu, khande la bhandao ode mulilangraikhasidotho iyababhandao*” (*hamlai* is the eldest sister, *khande* is the younger sister and *mulilangrai* is the youngest of all).

The three above-mentioned plants which are considered sisters are worshipped and given sacrificial animals according to the direction of the local fortune teller. For *Hamlai huma*, one female goat and 5 chickens need to be sacrificed in the name of a

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<sup>11</sup> Field Notes, Dimapur, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> The Indian gooseberry plant is regarded as sacred (Anthwal, Gupta, Sharma, Anthwal, & Kim, 2010) as it is believed to be an abode of Lord Vishnu. The plant is believed to have medicinal properties (Chauhan & Chauhan, 2019).

female deity. While for *Khandehuma*, 5 chickens are required to offer as sacrificial animals, and for the youngest deity among the three, the ritual is *Mulilangraihuma*, where no sacrificial animals are required. In all three rituals, either the child or the things belonging to the child is placed on the ground below the respective tree and the rituals are performed by an assigned *jonthai*. The cooked meat has refrained to be taken outside the forest, where the rituals are done, and need to be consumed by the attendees of the rituals. After the ritual is done, there are a few restrictions laid down for the child.

During the fieldwork, a young informant of Doyapur village, who was assisting the researcher in taking interviews told,

*“Ansahaangkhedekhandehumyanangya” (I did not do any khandehuma when I was young). As the ritual was not done, he does not have any restrictions regarding cutting the tree. On being asked whether the same ritual was done on his sisters. He replied, “I don’t specifically remember but this ritual is done for boys only. As you know, only boys go to forests”. In addition to it, this ritual is mandatory for the ones whose day of birth is seen as not auspicious.*<sup>13</sup>

One of the local youths of Doyapur village laments, before, when the vegetation was thick, these big trees were a common sight, but with deforestation, there are very few of these big trees in recent times. These trees were home to many birds and he remembers when he was young, he used to go hunting with his friends for birds using a locally made catapult.<sup>14</sup> On inquiry, one Mr. Hasnu told that it is difficult to see these plants in recent times.<sup>15</sup> While another informant stated that we would have to go deep into the jungles or forest to get these trees. Though trees are protected and conserved through religious taboos imposed on them (Pandey, 2003 cited in Anthwal, Gupta, Sharma, Anthwal, & Kim, 2010), recent deforestation is consuming them. Likewise, scholars across the globe have reported the decline of large old trees, mainly for various anthropogenic factors, which include rapid urbanization, land use intensification, human-population densification, habitat fragmentation, and various forms of human disturbance (Lindenmayer, Laurance & Franklin, 2012; Milberg, Bergman, Sancak & Jansson, 2016 cited in Huang, Tian, Zhou, Jin, Qian, Jim, Lin, Zhao, Minor, Coggins & Yang, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> These rituals are not gender specific but can be performed on both boys and girls when they are young. Mostly, the bereaved parents of the sick child offer prayers to the concerned trees which are believed to be an abode of deities for the quick recovery and protection of the young child (Field Notes, 2017-2020).

<sup>14</sup> Only a few of the young informants (below 25 years of age) can identify or name the plant. While individuals who are staying outside their hometowns find it hard to recall any of the names of the sacred plant.

<sup>15</sup> Field Notes, Dimapur 2020.

While one of the newly appointed *Goanburha* of the Doyapur village<sup>16</sup> told in more recent times, very few people do *mulihuma*. It is a rare event in the village. The most common rituals which are done regularly are *hamlaihuma* and *khandehuma*. Danda (1978) sighted the ritualistic significance of the trees as she presented a case study of the worship of *khandisa*, which is associated with *the khandetree*, where an elaborate ritual was performed ‘to cure a baby’ in the forest by a priest.<sup>17</sup> While due to its rare occurrence, *muliphang* is rarely reported. Medhi & Borthakur (2013) made a similar observation that the *khande* and *hamlaiphang* are considered sacred plants which are worshipped, and these plants are reported from various *Daikho* sites in Dima Hasao as well. According to Medhi & Borthakur (2013), *hamlaiphang* is worshipped by the father of a sick child for a speedy recovery and the concerned parent had to take an oath to never cut the plant in his life. While for *khande*, it is considered an abode of evil spirits and this particular plant is worshipped for the same reason as the former plant, and similar restrictions are laid down. They do not mention the *mulilangrai*, which is a sacred plant for the Dimasas. In the *Daikhos* of the *Dizuwa* area, the *khande*, *hamlaiphang*, cotton tree (*bombaxceiba*)<sup>18</sup> are observed during the field visits. The tree-worshipping culture is quite common across cultures (Huang, Tian, Zhou, Jin, Qian, Jim, Lin, Zhao, Minor, Coggins & Yang, 2020).<sup>19</sup> The banyan tree belonging to the genus *Ficus* which is worshipped and protected is a pan-Indian phenomenon dating back to Indus Valley culture (Gadgil & Chandran, 1992). However, there is no local sacred association of this tree among the Dimasas.

Apart from this, there are various herbs and scrubs which are sacred and medicinally significant among the general people. Dimasas believe that some of the diseases and ailments are caused by supernatural beings and such ailments are cured by bringing in a religious specialist who performs rituals and give sacrifices to cure common ailments. But in some cases, they rely on herbal medicines (Medhi & Borthakur, 2013; Bodo & Bodo, 2015). A study conducted by Bodo & Bodo (2015) in the Diyunbra Block of the northern part of the Dima Hasao district showed that a significant (24 percent of people under study) still rely on the traditional use of ethnomedicinal plants. There are a few medicine specialists who have indigenous knowledge regarding ethnobotanical important plants. The demand for this is gradually decreasing and a few are involved with making traditional medicines. Mrs. Haflongbar, an aged widow in her early seventies, gives out traditional medicines to the ones who come

<sup>16</sup> There are 3 assigned Gaonburha in the Doyapur village. One is regarded as the head Gaonburha, while the others are assigned as second and third, according to their relative position in the village (Field Notes, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> The priest associated with the ritual was the village headman. The parents of an eight-month-old baby suffering from swelling limbs offered their prayers to *khande* for the quick recovery of their daughter (Danda, 1978).

<sup>18</sup> This tree is considered sacred in other parts of the country and various myths are related to it being a hellish tree due to the presence of thorns (Chauhan & Chauhan, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Here, the researchers examined the large old trees of Wuchuan in Guizhou Province of southwest China for their biodiversity importance and uptake of policies and steps to safeguard and conserve them.

for mild diseases such as cold and cough, pain during menstruation, and stomach pain, to name a few, and do not charge anything for her service. She learned the skill to make traditional medicine from her mother. The trend to pass on the skills from generation to generation is declining, as (in this case too) none of her daughters practices the preparation of traditional medicines. When asked which plants she use to make medicines, she was unable to recall the names and insisted that she can show the plants and leaves which were being used in preparing the medicines. She added that nowadays, most of the plants are rarely sighted in her neighbourhood. The local knowledge of medicinal plants is losing its significance as the local terms for those plants are also becoming obsolete in day-to-day vocabulary (*The Swaddle*, 2021)<sup>20</sup>.

The Dimasas are not the only ethnic group in northeast India to protect the forest areas. The neighbouring Karbi group also has associated religious beliefs and taboos with the trees and has the tradition of protecting sacred groves/forests (Devi, Baidya & Thakur, 2020; Baidya, Thakur, Malunguja & Devi, 2020). Devi, Baidya & Thakur (2020) in their study highlighted the significance of various medicinal plants (some sacred plants) used by the Karbis which are found in the two sacred groves in the district of West Karbi Anglong. These groves are under-reported and losing their biodiversity at an alarming rate due to encroachment. The groves are mainly maintained by the Karbi community, by imposing taboos and restrictions to protect the groves from intruders (Devi, Baidya & Thakur, 2020). While another research was undertaken in the two sacred forests, *Bichikri* and *Harlong*, situated in the same district, including the distribution of varied plant species (116 plant species). The scholar reported low biodiversity in these sites, due to the exploitation of various forest resources (Baidya, Thakur, Malunguja & Devi, 2020). The geographical area of the district has almost 70 percent forest cover, including 7 sacred groves (*Karbi Anglong Booklet*) and many undocumented SGs (Saikia, 2006; Devi, Baidya & Thakur, 2020). Many scholars reported 40 sacred groves in Karbi Anglong (Khan, 2007; Borthakur, 2013). According to the Assam State Biodiversity Board website, the *Daikhos* in Karbi Anglong are not considered sacred groves.

### **The significance of forests and their associated rituals**

Dimasas believe that their surroundings like *hagra*, forest, hills, and streams are an abode of both malicious and benevolent spirits (Roy, 1998, 2002; Thaosen, 2015). So before any hunting expedition, a ritual has to be done which involves giving sacrificial animals to seek permission from the spirits of the forest to enter. In addition to it, this is a way to seek blessings and protection. Among the neighbouring tribe, Karbis too offer prayers to their local deities and seek permission for collecting parts of the medicinal plants from the groves by offering betel leaf (*Piper betel*) and areca nut (*Areca catechu*) (Devi, Baidya & Thakur, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> Source: [https://theswaddle.com/as-indigenous-languages-die-india-loses-vital-means-of-preserving-biodiversity/?fbclid=IwAR35MOlpaE58EU5eYPyoMGUuo\\_G127Z9HEvTHU6a9wgewEIIKr0iD5GGFkWo](https://theswaddle.com/as-indigenous-languages-die-india-loses-vital-means-of-preserving-biodiversity/?fbclid=IwAR35MOlpaE58EU5eYPyoMGUuo_G127Z9HEvTHU6a9wgewEIIKr0iD5GGFkWo)

In most of the forest-related rituals, a small fowl need to be sacrificed to appease the *deo*, spirits of the forest. The *deo*, forest spirits inhabit the forest, jhum, (*khernai*) lakes (Roy, 1998, 2002). Dimasas believe that different kinds of spirit reside in the forest. One may mislead your way by calling out your name. While some may create a false illusion of the prey. During the fieldwork, the researcher was told of an incident where a person was killed in a hunting expedition in the forest. Later, it was disclosed that the members of the hunting expedition mistook their member of the group for a *misai*, a deer, and shot him. The person was killed on the spot. Some of the people in the village pointed to the fact that as they did not perform any ritual before their expedition, this made the forest spirits angry because of which, they met the illusion of a deer. After the incident, the remaining members had to perform a ritual seeking their forgiveness and to appease the forest spirits for their misconduct. Though the hunting practice is not so common these days as there are restrictions on hunting. But usually, people still go hunting in privately owned forests (teak plantations) or in some cases, in the wild forest however, the practice associated with forest worship is still prevalent.

One of the owners of a small sawmill who is a regular visitor to the forest said that there is a belief of a forest or any water body (*khernai* meaning pond or lake) is an abode of various spirits. So to go or enter such places, prior permission is sought through sacrifices of small fowls or animals.<sup>21</sup>

Apart from *Daikho*, there is *gerkho* which is a ritualised geography situated within the village area. Every village has its *gerkho*. This particular place is of immense importance as people are barred to cut down trees. Similar restrictions of *Daikho* are laid on the site of the *gerkho*.<sup>22</sup> The ritual *germa* is conducted in this community-owned place. On the auspicious day of the *germa*, villagers refrain from any work even household work is kept at a minimum, no clothes are dried outside. On the day of the ritual, the movement of the people is regulated and restricted. Villagers do not venture out of their houses on this day. The village youths are assigned the task of putting white flags in every Dimasa household in the colony which is symbolic to ward off evil spirits from the village.

*Aju*<sup>23</sup> said, “*madai* and *deo* should not be disturbed, and we should stay in harmony with them. Any disturbances will harm the harmony resulting in bad things happening to the individuals or the village involved”.

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<sup>21</sup> The individual along with his fellow workers frequently goes to forest or teak plantation areas to procure wood for his sawmills (Fieldwork, 2018-2020).

<sup>22</sup> One local youth of Doyapur village narrated an incident of a woman who happen to defile the sacred site of *gerkho* by urinating at the site. This act of hers had severe consequences as she falls severely sick and eventually died (Fieldwork 2018-2020, Dimapur).

<sup>23</sup> *Aju* means grandfather in Dimasa. This is a classificatory kinship terminology to designate either paternal or maternal grandfathers.

Similarly, the *khandaihuma*, and *hamlaihuma* rituals discussed in the previous section, are done in forest areas. The worship of the *thaibar* deity is done in the forest to cure any ailing baby (Danda, 1978). The rituals associated to cure any ailing baby or a small child are done in the forest.

In brewing the *judima*, the local rice beer, a particular kind of plant (local terminology of the plant, *themra*) is needed which gives the unique taste. The plant's bark gives the drink a sweet taste. The plant (scientific name, *Acacia pennata*) is found in forests, and domestication of it is difficult. One informant who is a resident of Thungri Gro village stated that sometimes this plant can be purchased from the weekly marketplaces in Diphu town. The seller gets the plant from wild forests. He has even noticed that in the Diphu area, people are planting this particular creeper at home. He added it is a tedious job to look after the plant as the whole plant is not used but rather the bark of the plant. If the bark of the plant is removed, then the plant dies off. So to avoid such incidents, only a portion of the bark is extracted and then the plant is left for regeneration. The informant narrated a story behind the discovery of this plant by Dimasas. A man on his way to work, left his rice wrapped in the leaves of the plant. Later, when he had the rice after his work was over, the rice tasted sweet and he got high. Then he got to know how to brew the rice beer with cooked rice. The same story had been quoted by others as well. Such folklores are common which highlights the close-knit association of the plants and their importance in their socio-cultural life.

## Conclusion

Various aspects of the *Daikho* need further exploration and among them, is the rich biodiversity that is depleting in recent times. With a conservationist outlook, this institution provides an alternative to depleting forest cover. This essay insightfully looks into the close interwoven dimension of man-environment interaction.

The depleting forest cover and increase of forest encroachment both by the state and anthropogenic activities have added to the changing cultural landscape and also the outlook of the *Daikho* institution. India's northeast which accounts for one-fourth of the forest cover in the country is losing its wildlife biodiversity as a result of rampant deforestation in the last two decades (Dhar, 2021; Shree&Karmakar, 2019)<sup>24</sup>. And the state of Assam witnessed the worst deforestation rates during this period, with 2388 sq. km. of tree cover loss (Shree & Karmakar, 2019; Dhar, 2021). As of 2000, 33 percent of Assam has natural forest cover and by 2019, there is a decrease of almost 7 percent (*Global Forest*).<sup>25</sup> According to the India State of Forest Report 2017, the reasons behind the decrease in the forest cover are reported to be the rotational felling in tea gardens, shifting cultivation, and developmental activities<sup>26</sup>. The State

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<sup>24</sup> Source: <https://climatetracker.org/deforestation-india-climate-rainforest/>

<sup>25</sup> Source: <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/>

<sup>26</sup> Source: <https://fsi.nic.in/isfr2017/assam-isfr-2017.pdf>

supported clearance of the unclassified forest into tea gardens and conversion of *jhum* lands to palm oil cultivation are adding to the depletion of the forest especially in northeast India (Dhar, 2021).<sup>27</sup>In recent years, the two hill districts of Assam, namely, Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao, which have the maximum percentage of forest cover are rapidly losing their forest cover as reported by Global Forest Watch<sup>28</sup>. While the Indian State of Forest Report 2019, stated that the forest cover in Assam has increased by 222 sq. km. as compared to the previous assessment report of 2017 (Samom, 2020)<sup>29</sup>. Baidya and others stated that the reason behind the increase in dense forest cover in the year 2018 is mainly due to the increase in rubber plantations. The local people are shifting their dependency to such plantations compared to traditional *jhum* cultivation as the rubber cultivations yield higher income (Baidya, Thakur, Malunguja & Devi, 2020). Apart from increasing rubber plantation, there is a surge of another cash crop production i.e. broom grass plantation and the Karbi Anglong district of Assam holds the tag of being the largest producer of it (Kakati, 2017, cited in Baidya, Thakur, Malunguja & Devi, 2020). Upholding the conservationist outlook, this institution, *Daikho* provides a sustainable and community-driven alternative to protect the depleting forest cover. Furthermore, the traditional beliefs surrounding the forest cover provide one among many ways to help maintain and restore forest ecosystems in the region (Sanga & Haulle, 2022).

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<sup>27</sup> Source: <https://climatracker.org/deforestation-india-climate-rainforest/>

<sup>28</sup> Global Forest Watch is an online repository of data on forests all over the world and this open-source web application monitors on illegal deforestation of forests in real-time (Source: <https://www.globalforestwatch.org>)

<sup>29</sup> Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/forest-cover-in-northeastern-states-decrease-says-government-report/story-KMnTVeizRFRqZD7sIgWxsN.html>

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## Historicizing the Virasaiva/Lingayat Tradition

Aniruddha Nagaraj<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*This essay focuses on the pre-modern and colonial narratives of the 12th century tradition of Virasaivism that developed around present-day Karnataka. This tradition, understood as founded by Basava, is popularly perceived to be progressive and egalitarian, in the context of its challenges to Brahmanical norms and rituals. However, one needs to engage in a careful study of the pre-modern texts around Virasaivism to develop a better sense of the complexities and contradictions involved in understanding the tradition today. This paper addresses some of the preconceived ideas about the tradition by closely reading a few pre-modern Kannada texts, and also looks at the colonial motives behind the translation of these texts to English. Ultimately the idea is to locate the historicity of Virasaivism through a study of diverse narratives and thus, understand its changing contexts through time.*

### Introduction

Virasaivas are the members of the radical saiva sect of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. As the name 'Virasaiva' suggests, they are the 'heroes of shiva' which implies their impassioned sentiment towards the God. In the present Karnataka, Virasaivas comprises somewhere between 10 to 15 million people. The community has a significant political voice in the state. Their beliefs and rituals are distinct from that of the brahmanical beliefs like they worship *linga*, and bury the dead instead of cremating them. However, the focus of the essay is on pre-modern and colonial narratives of Virasaivism in order to understand how they have arrived at this point. I intend to reflect on the complexities involved in understanding the various narratives on Virasaivism. In today's context, Basava has been looked at as a founder of Virasaivism, and this 12<sup>th</sup> Century tradition is understood as progressive and egalitarian. However, one needs to carefully study the pre-modern texts to get a sense of some of the contradictions involved in using the modern terms to define the tradition. The sectarian conflicts projected in these texts need to be examined. This paper questions some of the pre-concieved ideas about the tradition by closely reading pre-modern texts on Virasaiva tradition, and also looks at

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<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Ambedkar University, Delhi Email: aniruddh.viewpoint@gmail.com

certain colonial motives behind the translation of these texts on Virasaivism. My aim is to historicize the Virasaiva tradition and understand its changing contexts.

The enormous popularity of Basava, the 12<sup>th</sup> Century saint, among the people of present Karnataka, calls for an in-depth study for the strident anti-caste stance taken in the *vachanas* written by Basava and other saints in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. These *vachanas* condemn brahminical rituals and signify egalitarianism by the fusing of the voices of people coming from different caste groups. The connection between Basava and a radical Saiva sect called *Virasaivism*, nevertheless, has to be examined in order to better understand the sequence of events in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. A further verification is needed to find out whether *Virasaivism* was unique in coming out with strikingly different religious thought. As mentioned in the pre-modern texts like *Basavapuramam*, it is a fact that there was a constant tension between the *Jainas* and the *Virasaivas* during the twelfth century, which continued throughout the 12<sup>th</sup> Century period. The main contention of the *Virasaivas* in their opposition to *Jainas* was regarding the *Jaina* monastic life and the building of the splendid temples by the *Jaina* followers. Besides, *Virasaivas* were also opposed to *Vaishnava* rituals and customs, which were dominant during the twelfth century.

To begin with, there has to be an examination of the origin of *Virasaivism*. There is a popular belief that Basava was the founder of *Virasaivism*. However, the historical evidence shows that *Virasaivism* predated Basava. S.C. Nandimath argues that *Kalamukhas*, a shaiva sect was dominant during pre-twelfth century period and *Virasaivas* were a part of the *kalamukhas* (Nandimath, 1979). Lorenzen agrees in principle that there were many similarities between *Kalamukhas* and *Virasaivas* like worship of *linga*, which practice was common among *Kalamukhas* and *Virasaivas*. Lorenzen opines that “*Virasaivism* was a reformist schism from the *Kalamukha* church with Basava cast in the role of Luther”. (Lorenzen, 1972:19) However K. Ishwaran believes that *Kalamukhas* were merely the upholders of Brahminism and they had nothing to do with *Virasaivism* (Ishwaran, 1983).

### **The narrative of Ekanta Ramayya and the rise of *Virasaivism***

Not much ethnographic details are available to study the evolution of *Virasaivism* during the middle ages, and neither is their much information available to follow the developments prior to the rise of *Virasaivism*. Therefore, it is difficult to establish the direct relationship between *Kalamukhas* and *Virasaivas*. However, there is prominent inscriptional evidence in a city called Abbaluru, which is situated- in today's North Karnataka region that talks about the origin of early *Virasaivism*. The inscription gives us a hint about a heroic figure named Ekanta Ramayya, who seemed to have established *Shaivism* in the geographical area which was predominantly ruled by the *Jainas*. It is believed that Ekanta Ramayya was a *Kalamukha* priest who was also an acquaintance of Basava. There are versions which claim that there was no contact between Ekanta Ramayya and Basava as they belonged to different territories. However, the role

of Ekanta Ramayya in the establishment of *Virasaivism* is quite evident. The same narrative of Ekanta Ramayya finds mention in two other popular historical works of the pre-modern era apart from the *Abbaluru*-inscription namely; *Ekantaramitandeya Ragale*, a Kannada epic written by Harihara and *Basavapurānam*, an epic written by Palkhuriki Somanatha. These two narratives give vivid portrayal of Ekanta Ramayya in a slightly different way.

The narrative of Basava and Kalyana revolution has consistently caught the imagination of the people in later periods of time. On the other hand, the greater importance accorded to Basava led to the narrative of Ekanta Ramayya not gaining popularity during colonial and post-colonial period. It is to be noted that Basava does not get mentioned in *Ekantaramitandeya Ragale* as well as *Abbaluru* inscription. However, Ekanta Ramayya and Basava are mentioned in *Basavapurānam*. This shows that importance was given to all the *Saiva* saints and Basava was not a central figure in the pre-modern works. One needs to look at the narrative of all the three works – *Abbaluru* inscription, *Ekantaramitandeya Ragale* and *Basavapurānam* - in order to notice interpretations regarding the decline of *Jaina* tradition and the rise of *Shaiva* tradition in the parts of North Karnataka.

### **Ramayya's Self-beheading as depicted in Abbaluru Inscription**

The narrative in *Abbaluru* inscription begins with god's appearance in Ramayya's dream who instructs him to go to a village called *Abbaluru* to pick a quarrel with Jainas and wager his head during the argument with them. So, Ramayya goes to *Abbaluru*, and start praying to lord *Shiva*. Then, the Jainas interrupt his prayer shouting "*Jina* is the true divinity". This act of *Jainas* provokes Ramayya and in turn, he ridicules *Jina* rituals. As the result, the Jainas are incensed and they wager in order to decide whose god is mightier. A promise is made by the Jainas to Ramayya in the written form that the *Jainas* will hand over the temple to *Shiva* worshippers, if Ramayya is to cut off his head and place it before the idol of *Shiva* to be rejoined by Lord *Shiva*. So, Ramayya cuts his head off and keeps it in front of the idol of *Shiva*. The devotees of *Shiva* worship his head for seven days and at the end of the period, his head is rejoined with his body without any mark or scar on the body. Naturally, the delighted *Shiva* worshippers start celebrating the act of God. However, the *Jaina* worshippers refuse to keep their promise and hand over their temple to *Shiva* worshippers. The betrayal of the *Jainas* anger Ramayya who goes inside the temple to replace the *Jina* god with *Shiva* idol. Later, *Jaina* worshippers approached Bijjala, the King of Kalyana, to get the matter settled by the King. Initially, Bijjala becomes furious to know that Ramayya has tried to convert the *Jaina* temple into *Saiva* temple. However, Ramayya produces the evidence that the promise has been made by the *Jainas*, which is written on a palm leaf. The incensed Ramayya is prepared to cut his head off again in order to prove his point. Ramayya challenges *Jainas* to convert all the 800 *Jaina* temples if he comes back alive. However, *Jainas* refuse to accept the challenge which makes Bijjala laugh at them. Subsequently, king Bijjala hands over a certificate to Ramayya

stating that he has won the wager and he is the rightful owner of the *Jaina* temple. The inscription ends with a eulogy dedicated to the King for granting a village to Ramayya and for having patronized the *Shiva* temple.

Slight changes in the description of the events can be noticed among the three works – *Abbaluru* inscription, *Ekantaramitandeya Ragale* and *Basavapuranam*. A great deal of historical and geographical details replete the narration in Harihara's *Ekantaramitandeya Ragale*. Minute details of the event have been captured in Harihara's work, whereas the details are more graphic in nature in *Basavapuranam*. The act of violence and the clash between *Jainas* and *Virasaivas* are quite explicit in *Basavapuranam*. Romila Thapar in her book *Cultural Transaction and Early India* writes "according to the inscription, Jain images were destroyed and *Jains* were killed" (Thapar, 1987). A scholar Julia Leslie refers to this incident in her essay *Understanding Basava: History, Hagiography and a Modern Kannada Drama* as a "clash between the *Virasaivas* and the *Jains* instigated by Ekanta Ramayya and recorded so fulsomely in the *Abbaluru* inscription" (Leslie, 1998). Although there is clear evidence regarding the clash between *Jains* and *Virasaivas*, it is clearly mentioned in *Basavapuranam* that *Jainas* are the ones who instigate Ramayya by going back on their promise to give up their temple. However, in *Abbaluru* inscription and *Ekantaramitandeya ragale*, there are no details available about acts of violence between the two communities. It is only in the *Basavapuranam* that there is a mention of explicit violence on the part of *Virasaivas* shown towards *Jainas*. It is mentioned in *Basavapuranam* that *Jainas* accept their defeat and they are ready to apply *vibuthi* (sacred ash) on their foreheads as a symbol of conceding defeat. It is worth noting that *Virasaivas* grew in strength though they did not have political power at that period of time in the region. On the contrary, the *Jainas* dominated the region and they were in control of more than 800 *Jaina* temples. Therefore, the statements by Romila Thapar and Julia Leslie need to be analyzed in a critical way.

### **The portrayal of Basava in the pre-modern texts**

Both *Abbaluru* inscription and *Ekantaramitandeya ragale* do not make any explicit reference to Basava or any *Virasaiva* saint of a city called Kalyana where Basava was born. The only indirect reference to Basava in Harihara's *Ekantaramitandeya ragale* is limited to his association with geographical places like Kappadi, where it is believed that Basava had been around that place. However, the relationship between Basava and Ekanta Ramayya is clearly established only in *Basavapuranam* written by Palkhurikhi Somanatha. It is mentioned in the work that Ramayya comes to meet Basava in Kalyana where the incident of Ramayya's self-beheading takes place. It is also mentioned in the work that this incident takes place in Kalyana and not in *Abbaluru*. The work describes that Basava appears only in the penultimate scene, where he blesses Ramayya for his heroic act. Pre-modern texts like *Ragalegalu* written by Harihara in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century on the *Virasaiva* saints show that *Jaina* domination was evident in the places like *Abbaluru* and not in Kalyana (Herut, 2009).

The role of King Bijjala, who ruled the place in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century is given prominence in the narrative of *Abbaluru* inscription. The description suggests that he is impartial. However, there is no reference to Bijjala in the narrative of *Ekantaramitandeya Ragale*. Bijjala's description is very passive in nature in *Basavapurānam*. All the three narratives on Ramayya are silent on the association of Basava with Ekanta Ramayya or other *Virasaiva* saints. However, Ekanta Ramayya's contribution to the rise of *Virasaivism* is well documented in these narratives.

### Colonial Narratives

In this section, I consider studying the translations of *Basavapurānam* written by Palkhuriki Somanatha in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Two important colonial scholars – Philip Brown and G.A Wurth - take up the text of *Basavapurānam* for translation in the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The intentions behind both the translation works is different. Brown wanted vernacular literatures to come into the limelight to show that the literature in Kannada is of equal importance when compared to literature produced in Sanskrit (Boratti, 2013). He was of the view that western oriental scholars so far had concentrated only on literatures written by Brahmin scholars produced to understand India. However, Wurth believed that the colonial literatures lacked absolute faith and sense of rationality. He was thus, of the view that natives should reject the illogical religion and accept Christianity. It is to be noted that there were many interactions between the local scholars and the western orientalist on the process of production and translation of a text.

Brown found that taking up translation of the literary style of *Basavapurānam* was difficult. So, he did not bother much about the style and translated the traditional poetic style of *Kāvya* into the modern prosaic form (Boratti, 2013). By doing this, he compared the *Virasaiva* literatures with the western literatures to show egalitarian principles present in the non-Sanskrit writings. The comparison of fables was taken up by Brown to prove his point. Brown was quite discontent with the works written by upper caste writers in Sanskrit which led him to compare vernacular literature with Sanskrit writings showing up the latter's repulsive features. He pointed out the significance of anti-Brahmin and anti-ritualistic attitudes of Basava and concluded that "the *Jangams* or *Virasaiva* is the modern anti-brahmanical creed" (Boratti, 2013). However, Brown's glorification of *Virasaivas* is not without ambiguity. Despite there being many instances in several parts of *Basavapurānam* that depict the violence and murder that *Jangamas* exhibit, Brown describes them as 'peaceable race of Hindu puritans'. This shows that he had selectively chosen the lines from the *Virasaiva* texts and showed *Virasaivism* in a positive light.

One of the major reasons for Wurth to take up translations of *Lingayat* literature is the numerical dominance of the *langayats* in the northern Karnataka region. Besides, he felt that the community was accessible and approachable for Christian missionary activities. Wurth was a member of the revision committee of the Bible in India and had

translated the Old and New Testaments into Kannada. It can be inferred that translations were used as means for propagating their missionary activities. Therefore, he constantly tried to portray *lingayat* literatures as illogical. The tensions between *Jainas*, *Virasaivas* and *Vaishnava* sects were constantly ignored and considered childish by him.

Wurth violates the basic rule of translation i.e. faithfulness to the original and inserts critical viewpoints in the translation of *Basavapuranam* (Lorenzen, 1971). He even establishes a nexus between Bijjala and Basavanna for the sake of power. These interpretations about Basava's motivation come from *Jaina* fables like Lingana's *Rajavali Kathasara*, which contains a derogatory history of Basava. Throughout the translation, he constantly underestimates the importance of Basava and establishes that there was distrust between *Jainas* and *Lingayats*. Also, he tries to highlight contradictions in the various texts of *Virasaivism* in order to expose *Lingayat's* primitive way of life. Boratti writes that "the intention of such comparisons was to persuade the *lingayats* that it was indispensable for them to overcome such divisive hostility and find redemption in Christianity" (Boratti, 2008). Wurth's explanation for translating the *Basavapuranam* was its significance for the *Lingayats*. So, Wurth wanted to ridicule the work and tried to prove the profanity in the *Basavapuranam*. He wanted to promote the Christian religious works by proving its insignificance. Therefore, we can see different approaches while taking up the translations of the same text twice by the two scholars namely Wurth and Brown around the same period of time.

### ***Lingayat* identity and the role of Vachanas**

During the late nineteenth century, a few land-owning elites of the *Lingayat* community felt the need to claim their identity as never before. They wanted their community to have a high status and thus, highlighted their religious identity and heritage (Boratti, 2013). However, they had a very ambiguous historical lineage. For instance, they did not know who the founder of their sect was and were unaware of the existence of their sacred texts. Being aware of this lacuna, "they responded by making crucial interventions into their scriptural heritage directed at canonizing certain historical, religious, literary works and icons into a rigid and totalized system. Pride in community's Sanskrit heritage also stimulated the canonization process as did the claim for Brahmanic status" (Boratti, 2013).

Nevertheless, the 12<sup>th</sup> Century texts did not get the required attention by these scholars. They did not consider Basavanna as the one who had established *Lingayat* sect. Instead, they looked upon him as the second avatar of Shiva and a revivalists of the sect. His *vachanas* also did not get adequate attention. Scholars like Ramaswamy Shastri and Munsri Shrinivasaiah have argued that anti-caste ideals are present in the *vachanas* of Basava (Boratti, 2013). But, the *Lingayat* elites were unhappy about these arguments and went on to justify the presence of Varna system in the community. They were also dissatisfied about projecting Basavanna as the champion of the downtrodden. A scholar named Kari Basava Shastri mentions that the word '*Lingayat*' came to be

coined only during the reign of Muslim rulers. So, he insisted on the recognition of *Virasaiva* sect instead of that of *Lingayat*, and claimed that the *Virasaiva* tradition existed prior to the advent of Basavanna. According to him, *Virasaivism* was grounded in the tradition of Vedas and Agamas. He quoted many Sanskrit verses in support of his thesis (Boratti, 2013).

Although 12<sup>th</sup> Century *vachanas* did not get much recognition, many shaiva texts, *kavyas* and *puranas* got compiled, collated, edited, translated and published in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was done majorly to create “community consciousness among *Lingayats*” (Lorenzen, 1971). According to Jan Peter Schouten, “All Indian Virasaiva Mahasabha, which was founded in the year 1904, played an important role in the emancipation process of the *Lingayat* caste. The leaders claimed a glorious place for their community in the history of India and they usually tried to demonstrate that lofty *Virasaiva* tradition was closely connected to the most orthodox Sanskrit schools of philosophy” (Schouten, 1995).

P.B. Halakatti, who belonged to *Lingayat* community, and was an advocate, found nothing significant in the way *Lingayat puranas* and *kavyas* had been depicted (When and why? Give reference.) Vijay Boratti mentions that “Halakatti’s acute sense of community and his angst over the low status accorded to the *Lingayats* by the ‘outsiders’, propelled him to establish a cohesive image of the *Lingayat* literature” (Boratti, 2011). He was not happy with the fact that modern education was giving an impression that there was nothing worthy about *Lingayat* literature. Moreover, a legal factor was bothering Halakatti. It was not possible to fight cases related to *Lingayat* heritage because of the lack of scriptural evidences to claim their identity. They had a heterogeneous culture. Hence, Halakatti proposed an authentic textual heritage for establishing a homogeneous legal, theological, philosophical, and cultural framework for the *Lingayats* (Boratti, 2011). This was a bold attempt and it enabled them to introduce *vachana* publications to the public which started shaping subjectivity of the *Lingayats*. Halakatti mentions in his autobiography that “we can notice explanations applicable to modern matters in the *vachana shastra*. That is why I brought all the *vachanas* together which are related to these matters. These *vachanas* are about resistance to caste discrimination, religious superstition, about work ethics, equality of women, etc.” (Boratti, 2011).

*Vachanas* changed the perspective of the way *Lingayats* were looked at and gave a more coherent image about the community. Halakatti observed that “*vachanas* are huge in number and it contains precious string of ideas which are not found in any other literature of the Hindu religion” (Boratti, 2011). He considered *vachanas* as an integral part of Hindu religion with rational ideas. Further, he added that *vachanas* were born out of the zeal for social reformation and hence, they are relevant for contemporary socio-religious reformation too. Halakatti was excited to introduce his discovery of new form of writing called *vachanas* to the large audience, which led him to translate the *vachanas* from Kannada into English. The translation began in

and went on till year 1916. Halakatti was excited about this project as he believed that it added a new knowledge system which was not present in any other religion. Along with introducing *vachanas* to the western world, he was also able to convince the local Kannada readers by providing them the new ethos and experience of reading.

### Non-Lingayat Narratives

The historical struggle of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century was later transformed into a myth in the hagiographic poetry and prose. The myth of the city Kalyana has become a matter of prime importance not only in the works of *Lingayat* Literatures but in the works of the oppressed communities as well. The city of Kalyana has been portrayed in diametrically opposite ways by these communities. H.S. Shivaprakash writes that "... all accounts of the movement and the city given by neo-brahmanical scholars and poets supported by the state, from the 15<sup>th</sup> Century onwards. By this time, *Lingayatism* had become frozen into a caste; it absorbed the hierarchic aspects of the hegemonic Hindu society" (Shivaprakash, 2007). On the contrary, narratives of the oppressed castes tell us a different story. Many of the stories portray that the ancestors of the city of Kalyana belong to oppressed castes and hegemonic *lingayats* of the region. In one of the stories of *Male Mahadeshwara Kavya*, a shepherd named Revanasiddhaya tries to enter Kalyana but he is stopped by *Jangama* priests because of his caste background. Basava tries to resolve the issue but his supporters insist that Revanasiddhaya perform a miracle to show his spiritual greatness. He is asked to revive a dead buffalo and while he successfully completed the task, Basava's supporters are forced to accept his status and Basava himself welcomes Revanasiddha into Kalyana. These conflicts between the caste groups are found in many stories of *Mante Swamy* and *Male Mahadeshwara Kavya*, the two folk epics associated with the untouchables of South Karnataka. All these myths have continued to haunt people even in the modern times, and this can be seen in the works of fiction, drama and poetry produced by a number of writers.

### Conclusion

In the essay, it has been observed that the Virasaiva history of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century is multi-faceted in nature. On the one hand, it talks about the ideas of equality by fighting against caste discrimination and on the other, it fails to provide the rationale to justify their violence against other sects. Therefore, as mentioned in the beginning, the modern terminologies fail to describe the Virasaiva tradition in its entirety. The sectarian conflicts during the 12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D make us realize that their fight was not just against Brahmanism as projected in the modern texts. The decline of Jaina tradition and the ascendance of *Virasaivism* are interpreted in many ways depending upon the political, cultural and social contexts in the pre-modern texts. The role of Basava, Ekanta Ramayya and other saints in the development during the 12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D and the period that followed it is a matter of importance considering the excessive focus on these texts in the modern era. The need to take up translations of the works like *Basavapuranam* by the writers during the colonial period had different motives.

For instance, Brown wanted to establish the fact that the idea of egalitarianism was present not only in the Sanskrit works of the period but mainly in the vernacular literatures. On the other hand, Wurth wanted to show Lingayat literatures in poor light as he considered them illogical in order to spread the Christianity. The study aims to highlight some of these significant departures in the corpus of Virasaivism that shapes up how it is understood today.

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## Paradox of Development in India's Northeast: the Act East Policy and Beyond

Akshay Jyoti Sarma<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*In recent decades, Northeast India has received some importance so far as policy and development discourses are concerned. The boost has come from an idea that demands remedy for the developmental deadlocks in the region in order to make it a passage to reach India's otherwise distant neighbours in the Southeast Asia. The region has unique history with colonial and post-colonial experiments leading to contestations and contradictions within the statecraft of the Indian nation-state. Starting from different colonial interventions in the region i.e. colonial annexations, inner line system, excluded and partially excluded areas to the post-colonial statecraft such as Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, special provisions under Article 371 etc. have primarily given a different identity and understanding of the region. The creation of North Eastern Council and a separate Ministry for development of the region also symbolises the necessity of special attention to the region. The region also experienced political assertions, ethnic conflicts, often buzzed with armed movements in different levels and magnitude. Such situations were blamed for developmental deadlock in the region. However, in a reconciling approach, the State of India has been trying to address such contestations and disorder by bridging the developmental bottleneck. Since late 1990s, there have been consistent efforts to mainstream the region through a 'development regime' which can be visualised in the discourses under India's Look/Act East Policy. This paper attempts to understand the paradox of development in the region which can be identified within the existing 'development regime'.*

### Introduction

The Northeast India remains at periphery in most of the post-colonial discourses barring apart its geo-strategic considerations. Geographically the region is a distant entity of Indian Union with potential resources and diversity in terms of ethnicity, language, culture and history. The region had been a strategic frontier under the

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<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, OKD Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati, Email: [ajsarma.86@gmail.com](mailto:ajsarma.86@gmail.com)

colonial 'governmentality' and the same understanding continued even in the post-colonial developments. The region experienced massive setback with the partition of the country leaving it land-locked and subsequently, a stalemate in the development processes. The physical infrastructure like transport and communication which play a key role in economic development is yet to be modernised. The policies in the region clearly expose lack of a vision for development of the region. However, with changing dynamics of neo-liberal geo-economics, the region has witnessed policy reorientation since the mid nineties for a developmental transformation.

The isolation of the region has been rooted in its historical and political contexts. The political integration of Northeast India remained an enigma for the nation-state for a long period of time. Security considerations both –internal and external predominantly drove India's policies and interventions in the region, which concomitantly deepened the divide between the mainland India and the region. Further, the isolation of the region from the mainland development discourses had left the region with a sense of emotional divide. This sense of isolation was captured succinctly when Prime Minister Vajpayee once stated, 'when people in New Delhi think of the North East, they usually think of the geographic distance, which translates itself into mental distance. When people in the North East think of New Delhi, they usually think of the developmental distance, which translates itself into emotional distance' (Vajpayee, 1998). The region required a developmental transformation to bridge the emotional distance which could be achieved neither through security perceptions nor through isolation. The developmental transformation in the region is not only a geo-economic reality but also a political compulsion for the nation-state to put this frontier region in order.

In the post-economic reform period, India faced newer challenges and geo-strategic compulsions. The disintegration of Soviet Union and its economy warranted India to reorient and strive for alternative economies for engagement. Further, in order to cope with structural changes and liberalisation of the domestic economy, the India had to look for newer partners and regional economic blocs. Such compulsions led to reviving the relations with East and Southeast Asian neighbours. Subsequently, India's initiatives for engaging with its eastern neighbours popularly called the Look East Policy began to take shape since the early nineties as a makeover to its outlook and orientation. Accordingly, India could reach out to the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and countries of Asia Pacific gradually expanding the economic and strategic relations.

It is worth mentioning here that irrespective of reasons and subsequent implications, the Northeast has been under a ‘development regime’<sup>2</sup> since mid-1990s. The push for development in the region has been articulated as –‘development regime’ which is also called as ‘development syndrome’ or ‘development paradigm’ by different scholars. However, it has been widely accepted that transformation at least in perspective of the state was visible and efforts to implement the same was also palpable. In reading this transformation, there are different interpretations: *first*, such shift was a result of the neo-liberal compulsion which does not denote the importance of the region but concern about the flow of capital; *second*, the change in the perspective of Indian nation-state towards the region has been a paradigm shift in itself; *third*, the transformation is a natural development in order to realise the objectives of country’s Look East/Act East Policy; *fourth*, the transformation is mainly about construction of rhetoric underscored in a conflict resolution strategy of the state. Nonetheless, the transformation has been taking place parallel to the development of the Look East Policy of India. Whether the later resonates with the former is a question unaddressed.

### **Development Discourse in the Context of Northeast**

Northeast India, a strategically important frontier region of the country, has remained underdeveloped even after seven decades of India becoming a free country. The region never saw a development strategy prioritizing the requirements of this frontier region either from the central leadership or the regional leadership. At the same time the region has neither remained insulated from the mainstream discourses in India, nor has its resourcefulness been winked away. Nevertheless, the region has received critical attention from the Government and other agencies as evident from different initiatives, reports and ‘vision documents’ at different time and contexts. Bhupen Sarmah (2016) argued that Indian state has been approaching the region with different ‘developmentalist agenda’ that supplements the ‘integrationist’ model of the state. However, it is evident that such ‘developmentalist agenda’ reinforces the binary between the mainstream and the Northeast (Sarmah, 2016). Talking about the perspective towards the Northeast, Jairam Ramesh (2005) spoke about four paradigms –the cultural paradigms in the initial years of independence, the security paradigm in the post-Chinese aggression, the political paradigm in 1970s, and the development paradigm since 1980s. These different paradigms existed with different contexts in the post-colonial history.

It was broadly accepted that there are few issues in the region impeding development particularly in respect of economic development. Realising the developmental

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Development Regime’ is defined as efforts and initiatives that have been advanced towards Northeast India since mid-1990s parallel to India’s Look-Act East Policy. It is argued that Look-Act East has brought about some apparent changes in the developmental scenario of the region in three different areas –institutional arrangement, physical infrastructure, and promotion of industry and investment to augment benefits to the region under a broad and ambiguous policy framework. (see Sarma, 2017, ‘Development Regime’ in India’s Northeast: the Look(Act) East Policy Perspective)

impediments in the region, North Eastern Council (NEC) was established in 1971. As an institutional innovation, the NEC was envisioned to be an advisory body in the field of social and economic planning and to secure balanced development of North Eastern areas.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, success of the NEC in its development approach has been debated and questioned at different quarters. While the vision and purpose of the NEC was development of the North-east region, why such a development agency was put under the Ministry of Home, Government of India is an intriguing question. It was only after establishing the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER), the administrative control of NEC was transferred from Home Ministry to a ministry focussing on development priorities of North-east region.

In 1981, the National Committee on Development of Backward Areas under the aegis of Planning Commission came up with a report on *Development of North-Eastern Region*. The report identified that lack of communication facilities; skilled manpower, geographical disadvantages, prevalence of traditional mode of production system etc. are impediments to modern economic development in the region among many others. However, the region has potentials of economic development considering its rich natural resources and diversity in terms of socio-cultural composition. The report also pointed out that any development strategy for the region has to be in a manner that maximises the benefits of the local community.<sup>4</sup> The same report stressed on a specific development strategy for the region that fitted into the conditions of the region. In envisioning a development strategy, it was argued that not only 'optimal use of natural resources' are required but also 'investment in infrastructure and production facilities' and a 'programme of manpower development' in the region are equally important.<sup>5</sup>

The importance of the said report was not in the result it could bring in the development scenario of the region but in identifying the economic backwardness and some of the critical gaps in understanding developmental deadlock in the region. The idea of development has always been driven by the interest of the state and the market which may lead to an aggressive development strategy. However, any such strategy has to ensure that the local community does not get exploited in the process. It was suggested that 'protective and promotional measures' has to be an 'integral part of the development strategy' to avoid exploitation of local people.<sup>6</sup> The acknowledgement of the fundamental stake of the local populace is a big in itself a developmental strategy.

The region witnessed development with this developmental approach in the following decades. However, nothing much could be achieved in terms of boosting economic development in the region. The pronouncement of Look East Policy in the early 1990s,

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<sup>3</sup> The North Eastern Council Act, 1971 (source: <http://necouncil.gov.in/about-us/nec-act-1971-0>)

<sup>4</sup> Report on Development of North-Eastern Region, National Committee on Development of Backward Areas, Planning Commission, Government of India (1981)

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*.

now renamed as Act East Policy by the Government of India, has brought the region once again in the forefront of policy discourses of regional development.

During 1990s, there have been attempts on the part of the government to strategise development in the region. The shift in the interest of the state in last two decades can be well understood from the growing importance of the region in India's thrust for regional cooperation and economic integration primarily with the Southeast Asia (Sarma, 2017). However, the state of implementation of promises and proposals do not reflect similar rigour.

The North-Eastern Region (NER) Vision 2020 prepared by North Eastern Council (NEC) under the aegis of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) published in 2008 had clearly stated that NER that was lagging behind all developmental parameters, had been a prosperous region at the time of India's independence and therefore efforts were necessary to return the region the position of national economic eminence that it enjoyed a few decades ago.<sup>7</sup> The significance of this Vision document lay on the fact that it had identified some of the critical gaps in locating the region in the changing political economy of 21st century. As outlined in the development strategy for the region, the Vision talked about six components which are critical primary conditions for augmenting development for the region. First, maximising self-governance where community would participate in the development process through grass-roots planning; second, creating opportunities for rural population through rural development initiatives; third, productive utilisation of the local resources to give maximum benefits and welfare to the people of the region; fourth, capacity development of local people and institutions; fifth, creating a conducive climate for investment; and sixth, ensuring role of government investment for strengthening physical and social infrastructure in the region.<sup>8</sup> The strategies outlined in the Vision signify the importance of making local people the primary stakeholder in the process of development. It was further stressed that development strategy for the region has to be based on 'prevailing resources, conditions and people's needs and priorities'.

A development perspective for the Northeast has been a relatively new idea in the post-colonial statecraft. The region, being identified as disturbed and conflict-ragged frontier, did not receive a special drive for economic development for almost three decades after the independence. The approach was rather driven by a security and strategic consideration leading to investment in political and administrative expansion devoid of a corresponding economic development in the region (Haokip, 2010). Such an approach was the result of an external threat perception in the post-Chinese aggression. However, understanding the need of a special development design for the region has been absent until recently. As already discussed, the arguments put

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<sup>7</sup> Views expressed in the 'North Eastern Region Vision 2020' prepared by North Eastern Council under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, Government of India (2008).

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

forward in the report of the Committee on Backward Areas established by the Planning Commission (1981) and the Vision 2020 of Ministry of DoNER (2008) had suggested for a development strategy based on the priority of local populace of the region.

Given the paradigmatic shift in the country's orientation towards Southeast Asia through the Look East Policy, the Northeast equally deserves a strategic reorientation for its development. Geographical proximity and ethno-cultural resemblance of Northeast India and Southeast Asia gives a unique opportunity for the region to become a centre of growth and development in the sub-regional formation between South and Southeast Asia. The fact has been widely accepted in the policy and academic discourses in the country in general and the region in particular. The future development of Northeast lies in locating the region within the framework of the Look East Policy, as Jairam Ramesh argued, 'political integration with the rest of India and economic integration with the rest of Asia, with East and Southeast Asia particularly, is certainly one direction that this region must be looking to as a new way of development' (Ramesh, 2005). Similarly, there are evidences of efforts initiated by the Government of India to push development in the region since mid-1990s in terms of economic packages, invention of trade and investment policies, special allocation of budgets, and creation of a special resource pool (Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources) etc. However, these initiatives were not in conformity with the overall understanding of the Look East Policy. Scholars argued that there are lack of political vision to make use of or give space to Northeast India in the initial decade of the Look East Policy (Chakraborty and Ray, 2014; Sundaram, 2013). There has been reluctance on part of policy makers to engage the Northeast in India's economic and strategic pursuit with Southeast Asia. Sanjib Baruah (2003) was of the view that 'by denying itself the use of its natural gateway, India is in effect scaling back its ambitions in Southeast Asia' to argue about India's inconsistent policy towards the Northeast (Baruah, 2003). Nevertheless, the initiation of the Policy raised hope and aspirations among the people and scholars of the region that 'economic integration could bring about a spurt of economic activities' and will open up 'new economic opportunities' for the region (Baruah, 2005:220). Although much has been written on Northeast in the context of Look East Policy since late 1990s, it was only in 2008, that the development strategy for the Northeast was formally envisioned keeping in mind country's Look East Policy. It was emphasised that the focus of the Look East Policy should shift so that Southeast Asia begins with Northeast India and to this end, it is necessary to build the bridges –diplomatic and infrastructural.<sup>9</sup>

The Northeast gradually became a part of the Look East Policy at least in rhetorical sense and the policy has become instrumental as a development strategy for the region. There has been a phase of rhetoric creation, a ray of developmental boon with an assumption that integrating the region with Southeast Asia would automatically bring fortunes of development. Pranab Mukherjee, the then Minister of External Affairs

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

once stated that the geography of Northeast has to be seen as opportunity and he was of the view that 'India is aware of the geo-economic potential of the North-Eastern region as a gateway to the East and Southeast Asia'; for him, the region can become the bridge between India and Southeast Asia (Mukherjee, 2007). Rajiv Sikri, the Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, was enthusiastic about the Northeast while saying, 'the Look East Policy envisages the North Eastern region not as the periphery of India but as the centre of a thriving and integrated economic space linking two dynamic regions with a network of highways, railways, pipelines, transmission lines, criss-crossing the region' (Sikri, 2004). Expectations loomed large in the region considering the rhetoric created at different levels.

Subsequently, the Look East Policy was upgraded as Act East Policy by the new regime at the Centre. It was assumed that the new version of the Policy would be an action-oriented strategy. As scholars argued in the context of India's engagement with Southeast Asia, the Policy is 'trying to take note of the rapid and complex developments in the region, particularly changes in the economic and security dynamics' (Palit, 2016). However, the renaming of the Policy without resonance with any strategy paper or policy document has created, as like the past, another new rhetoric. Nevertheless, the Policy has brought enduring promises for the region. As Prime Minister Modi stated 'we adopted Act East Policy of which the North-East is at its heart', giving a definitive shift in understandings of locating Northeast in the context of the policy framework.<sup>10</sup> The importance of the region was also emphasised as it was stated, 'India's growth story will grow at a faster pace only when there is a fast paced and balanced development of the people living in the North-East'.<sup>11</sup> The expectation in the region remained high thereon and the result of such renewed interests in the Northeast is awaited beyond rhetoric. Nevertheless, the Act East Policy is expected to be instrumental as a development strategy for the region.

The idea of development in the Northeast has to be comprehensive one and should not be directed only towards building a trade corridor between the mainland and Southeast Asia. Arguing in the similar context, Sarma (2017) was of the view that question of tradability and capacity building of the region has to be addressed with simultaneous efforts. 'Engaging people of the region in productive and profitable activities' is a primary necessity in order to mainstream the people of the region in the proposed trans-national interaction of trade and development (Haokip, 2010). Another fundamental condition would be making the Northeast 'central' to the policy perspective rather than a mere 'gateway' in the framework of India-Southeast Asia regional cooperation (Sarma and Choudhury, 2018). However, with some initiations in the areas of physical infrastructure, expansion of highways and railways etc. could be a definite shift in the development perspective from a 'security regime' to a 'development regime' for the region.

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<sup>10</sup> Narendra Modi, Prime Minister's Inaugural Speech at Global Investors' Summit held in Guwahati during 3-4 February, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

### **'Development Regime' under Look/Act East Policy**

For whatever may be the reason, the Northeast region remained in isolation for long especially in the policy discourses. Due to the prevailing security considerations, internal conflicts, unfavourable market conditions, lack of immediate dividend, or may be the lack political vision; the region could not get due attention for inventing a development strategy.

However, there has been an apparent consensus among most of the scholars and policy makers that the Look/Act East Policy could be the development strategy for the region. The same was also echoed in the Vision 2020 discussed above. This paper argues that there has been a 'development regime' (Sarma, 2017) in place in the Northeast which started more or less parallel to the advancement of the Look East Policy (LEP). The 'development regime', induced by the broad objectives of India's Look/Act East Policy, has outlined a concerted effort in unfolding developmental deadlock in the region.

A series of efforts could be observed which may in turn give dividends to the region by complementing the objectives of the LEP framework. Assuming that the trans-border trade between Northeast India and Southeast Asia will lead to growth and development, Laldinkima Sailo viewed that 'the Northeast India could overcome underdevelopment and achieve sustained economic development through trade beyond this region' (Sailo, 2014). Similarly, scholars also advocated for a sustainable development model in order to address the issues of conflict and violence in the region (Bhattacharya, 2014). Considering the diversity and complexities of the region, any development strategy has to be driven by a holistic approach. Atul Sarma advocated for an 'integrated approach to development for the entire region' considering the fact that states of the region are 'essentially interdependent sub-systems' (Sarma, 2018: 69).

The 'development regime' could be underscored for several initiatives to address some of the fundamental impediments of the region such as institutional arrangement for development, infrastructure development projects, and promotion of industry and investment (Sarma, 2017). Institutional arrangement for development remains a pre-requisite for any meaningful intervention. Accordingly, special attention was given to the Northeast region and the same was reflected when different institutions were created exclusively for the region. Starting from the institutions like NEC in 1971 to the establishment of a special Ministry (MDoNER) in 2001, the specificity of the region has been demonstrated in Centre's Northeast Policy, although not clearly defined. With the advent of the Look East Policy and giving the fact of continental connectivity to Southeast Asia through the Northeast, the region has some sector specific institutions to achieve sectoral developments such as North Eastern Development Finance Corporation (NEDFi), 1995; North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation (NERAMAC), 1982; North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation (NEHHDC), 1977; National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDC) etc. These agencies can provide

a renewed impetus to the development objectives of the region. Apart from these institutional innovations, the creation of the non-lapsable central pool of resources (NLCPR) with the provision of 10 % gross budgetary allocation of all central ministries, which is now replaced by the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS)<sup>12</sup> is also a constituent of the ‘development regime’ in the region.

There has been a renewed interest in expanding physical infrastructure in the region. During last two decades, the Government of India has taken up several projects for ‘improvement in road, rail, air, communication, waterways and telecom network in the region’.<sup>13</sup> Among others, expansion of physical connectivity has been one of the fundamental loggerhead of the region that needs fast-track strategy to address. The ‘development regime’ has promoted different schemes and programmes in order to develop physical connectivity in the region. The National Highway Development Project (NHDP)<sup>14</sup> is one of the special initiatives, bringing significant changes in the connectivity scenario of the region. The ‘Special Accelerated Road Development Programme for North East’ (SARDP-NE)<sup>15</sup> is an exclusive programme for the region which also includes a special package for Arunachal Pradesh. Further, the NEC and the NLCPR are also contributing towards development of physical infrastructure including building crucial road connectivity in the region. Besides the internal connectivity projects, the region has also been attached to many of the trans-national connectivity initiatives such as the India-Myanmar friendship road, India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway, the Asian highway and railway projects, the Kaladan multi-modal transit and transport project etc. with an apparent ambition of making the ‘land-locked’ northeast a ‘land-linked’ region connecting with Southeast Asia.

Initiatives for promotion of industry and investment observed in last two decades are also significant contributors of the ‘development regime’. There are inherent difficulties in creating conducive environment for industrialisation and investment in terms of its locational disadvantage, political disturbances, insurgency, lack of physical infrastructure, lack of entrepreneurial capacity and efficiency etc. and these were considered as major impediments of economic growth and development of an industrial base in the region (Sarma, 2017). The initiation of policies such as North Eastern Industrial Policy (NEIP), 1997 and North East Industrial and Investment

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<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region web page (URL: <https://mdoner.gov.in/activities/nesids-backgroud> accessed on 25 September, 2019)

<sup>13</sup> ‘Industrial Development in North Eastern Region’, Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, 28 July 2016.

<sup>14</sup> NHDP was initiated in 1998 to improve the condition and up-gradation of National Highways across the country. The Project is running in many phases in different parts of the country.

<sup>15</sup> The SARDP-NE is a special road development programme for the North East. Under this programme, up-gradation of National Highways connecting state capitals, roads connecting district headquarters, improving road in the strategic borders, and improving connectivity to the neighbouring countries are targeted. Recognising the special need, a separate ‘Arunachal Pradesh Package’ has been created for improving internal connectivity in the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Promotion Policy (NEIIPP), 2007<sup>16</sup> are examples of alluring investment in the region by giving tax exemption and subsidies for industrial development.

### **Beyond Act East Policy: A ‘Development Regime’ for the people**

The ‘development regime’ discussed above has itself been a paradigmatic shift in perspective towards the region. The advent of Look East Policy driven by economic and strategic compulsions has become euphoria for the region which necessitates a systematic strategy for the region in order to materialise the objective of the Look East turned Act East Policy. However, the critical issue that remained unaddressed was the kind of dividend that it will bring to the region by this ‘development regime’. As understood from the framework that contextualises the region as the ‘gateway’ to the Southeast Asia, it can be inferred that the region would be developed as a ‘corridor’ between India and Southeast Asia considering its prospects for continental connectivity. If this has been the understanding, there is a possibility of excluding many other dimensions from this ‘development regime’. By other dimensions, it is meant that overall participation of people of the region in the process of the proposed trans-national exchanges. What would be the nature of development for the people who are living at the margin and in isolation especially the people living in the borderlands? Similarly, question arises about the backend connectivity in the region to participate in trans-national connectivity network. It has been popularly idealised that the region has full of potentials in the areas of natural resources, energy, horticulture, tourism, other service sectors including health and education etc. but the present ‘development regime’ has not addressed these issues of complementarities in the region.

Moreover, until and unless the question of ‘tradability’ of the region is addressed, the region would unlikely to contribute in the proposed trans-national exchanges. As Sarma (2017) identified the critical gaps in the present ‘development regime’, there is a need to identify potential strength of the region and to focus on certain fundamental issues. Five points were suggested, “a) enhancing tradability and internal capability of the region, b) an innovative and sustainable industrial base based on the local strength, c) a seamless connectivity among the states of the region, d) a common market policy in the region, e) a comprehensive approach to the development of the region, which would be based on beyond the existing framework” for making Northeast ‘central’ to the Policy framework and to augment best possible dividends to the region by enhancing participation of local populace in the proposed trans-national interactions. The existing ‘gateway’ model that connects India with Southeast Asia via the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway has its own limitations with respect to its trade potentials. There are studies showing advantages and disadvantages of using continental routes *vis-a-vis* the maritime routes. Gurudas Das and Malabika Das (2017) argued that distance and travel time between Kolkata and Bangkok via

<sup>16</sup> Office Memorandum, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Government of India, dated 1 April, 2007 (Source: [http://dipp.nic.in/English/Policies/NEIIPP\\_2007.pdf](http://dipp.nic.in/English/Policies/NEIIPP_2007.pdf)).

sea route is much higher than that of the continental route via Northeast. However, maritime route is much cheaper and cost effective in comparison to the continental route (Das and Das, 2017).

The existing 'development regime' has been primarily concerned with improving the physical connectivity and infrastructure which would eventually prepare the ground for a seamless container movement from the mainland to the Southeast Asia. Taking cognizance of the ongoing or proposed connectivity and infrastructure projects, it is apparent that one major land port –Moreh has been targeted for developing as the primary connectivity towards Southeast Asia considering its potentials and economic viability. The reason to be concerned here is the lack of a similar effort to develop other border areas where traditional exchanges of goods and services take place. The construction of integrated check-post at Moreh is definitely going to boost the trade and commerce between India and Southeast Asia but there are possibilities of locals being sidelined or being excluded in the process. Further, there are some existing *border haats* and also proposals of constructing new *border haats* for the benefits of the locals in the different border points identified on the basis of existing exchanges and traditional linkages.<sup>17</sup> These *border haats* may be encouraging model for making locals participate in the trans-border trade and other economic activities, yet there is a need of attention regarding functioning of these *haats*.

Two examples to further illustrate the reality of the trans-border trade and development may be helpful. *First*, while visiting and interacting with the people engaged with trade and related activities in Moreh, it was observed that large quantities of beetle-nuts are imported from Myanmar.<sup>18</sup> These beetle-nuts are transported to some industrial locations in the mainland like Maharashtra, Gujarat etc. The people those who are engaged locally are primarily play the role of a middleman or facilitator of the process but the financial investments are based in the distant locations. Some of the locals also own the licence for export and import but are sponsored by the big business setups based in outside the region. Here, the question is not about who owns the business. But considering the 'development regime' in place, it would have been a better situation when –a) if people living in the region could have earned proper dividends not only by facilitating the trade but also by participating in the trade, and b) if the investments could have been in the region for setting up of industries requiring beetle-nuts. Similar concerns would replicate in other sectors as well.

*Second*, the designated *border haats* are also not giving proper return due to inherent problem in the policy itself. *Border haats* are bilaterally agreed points designated for exchanges of local goods. While visiting and interacting with people at one of such *border haats* in a place called Balat in the Meghalaya-Bangladesh border, it was

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<sup>17</sup> 'Border trade crucial for India's 'Act East' policy', Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Govt. of India, 15 June 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Observation made by the author at Moreh in Manipur-Myanmar border, 21-23 February, 2017.

observed that the very purpose of the *border haat*, as visualised, villagers from India and Bangladesh would be meeting in a designated point (mostly in the zero point of the border) to exchange their local produces and goods for consumption of the bonafied families.<sup>19</sup> The haat takes place in a fixed day of the week and only the bonafied vendors and vendees are allowed to enter the place. The vendors and the vendees are people living the vicinity of the border which is normally a radius of 5 kilometres.<sup>20</sup> This border haat model encourages the locals not only to exchange goods but also to meet people from other side, with whom they had social and cultural relations ceased after fencing of the border. It was observed that most of the vendees were working as transporter of goods (handload/headload) on behalf of people those do not access the licence of a vendee.<sup>21</sup> These people are hired by different suppliers or agencies who deliver the goods to business houses based in town and cities. The process has reduced them into daily wage earners, providing them with meagre ‘employment benefits’, that provides a living but not a livelihood security with decent earning. In this case, better provisioning could have been made –a) by enhancing capability of the locals to encourage participating in the trade exchanges by developing small scale production bases with local resources, and b) by better regulation and state support to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the locals.

### Concluding Remarks

The region is under a ‘development regime’ as elaborated in the discussion, but it has not evolved as a comprehensive and integrated strategy for the region. The way developmental transformation is taking place, with its inherent limitations, has remained narrowly defined and loosely implemented. The ambiguity in terms of locating the region within the Look/Act East Policy framework exposes limitations embedded within it. Accepting the general consensus among the academics and policy makers that the Look/Act East Policy could be the way-out in overcoming developmental impasse of the region, there is a need to re-construct the development strategy for the region.

While thinking about the existing model of trans-national connectivity with Southeast Asia, there is an apparent dividend for the region compared to the mainland India as the continental route via Northeast would be cost-effective for the states of the region (Das and Das, 2017). However, the region would get desired benefit out of such trans-national interactions only when the region enhances its ‘tradability’ including sustainable industrial production and service sectors with an improved internal connectivity for a seamless movement from any parts of the region to connect the

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<sup>19</sup> Article 14 of the Mode of Operation mutually agreed between officials of India and Bangladesh on 8 April, 2017

<sup>20</sup> Article 5 and 6 of the Mode of Operation mutually agreed between officials of India and Bangladesh on 8 April, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Observation made by the author at Balat in Meghalaya-Bangladesh border, 27-29 August, 2017.

trans-national highways. This would help the region in transforming itself from a mere 'gateway' or 'corridor' to the 'centre' of trade and development.

Taking note on the two illustrations given in the previous section, it is argued that the existing 'development model' and the very understanding of development for the region has to be reconstructed. The Look/Act East Policy has definitely given a boosting impetus in understanding and visualising development in the region hitherto been in isolation for decades. Acknowledging the contribution of this policy, there is also a need to think beyond the existing 'development regime' for making 'developmental transformation' a reality in true sense. In doing so, the most significant stakeholder –the local community has to be properly understood and need to evolve a sustainable development strategy considering the geo-cultural realities of the region. In other words, let a model of development evolve in a process from the grassroots and let the policies to be directed towards facilitating the process.

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## Tax and Non-Tax Revenues of the Autonomous District Councils in Mizoram and their Dependence on the State Government Fund Transfers

James L.T. Thanga<sup>1</sup>, Ashley Lalremruati<sup>2</sup> & Lianhmingthanga<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

*Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) were established under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India with a mandate of the administration of tribal institutions and protection of the interest of the tribals by regulating trading and control of land for the welfare and development of the tribal people in North East India. Presently, there are three ADCs in Mizoram, namely Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC), Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC), and Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC). These Councils are heavily dependent on the state government fund transfer, and more than 98% of their expenditure requirements are met from it owing to the negligible collection of tax and non-tax revenues from their own sources. This paper examines the trends and patterns of tax and non-tax revenues and the financial dependency of the ADCs on the State government. It was observed that professional tax is the most important source of tax revenue. Among the three ADCs, it was found that LADC has shown the highest tax efforts in tax revenue collection and the number of sources mobilized, while the performance of the CADC is the poorest in these measures.*

### Introduction

The emergence of the Autonomous District Council (ADC) in the Constitution of India can be traced back to its inclusion in the Sixth Schedule Provisions and Article 244 (2) and 275 (1). The provisions of the Sixth Schedule were created so as to facilitate the tribals of Excluded and Partially Excluded Area of the then undivided Assam and enable them to preserve their customs, culture, ethnicity, tradition, land, and language (Doungel, 2010; Ralte et al., 2021). The district council is like a miniature government at the district level (Prasad, 2004). They possess lesser power than the

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<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Mizoram University, Email: [jametea@yahoo.com](mailto:jametea@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Economics, Mizoram University, Email: [ashleyzls12@gmail.com](mailto:ashleyzls12@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Assistant Professor, Government Mamit College, Mizoram, Email: [vhminga@yahoo.com](mailto:vhminga@yahoo.com)

states but more than that of the local governments; and represent the incorporation of the predominantly tribal population as communities into the Indian states (Stuligross, 1999). Although ADCs are endowed with legislative, executive, and judicial powers, their primary mandate is the administration of tribal institutions and protection of the interest of the tribals by regulating trade and control of land ownership for the welfare and development of the tribal people of North East India (Umdor & Syiem, 2017; Islam, 2020).

The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India accords powers to ADCs to mobilize their resources through law-making powers for the socioeconomic development of their area. Article 275 (1) is the source of the ADCs for obtaining grants-in-aid from the Consolidated Fund of India through the concerned state government. The Sixth Schedule vested law-making powers to the district councils concerning land reform and allotment of land for agriculture and other purposes, management of forests other than reserved forests, use of canals for agriculture, regulation of *Jhum* or shifting cultivation, and public health. The district councils also have the powers to establish, construct or manage dispensaries, markets, cattle pounds, ferries, fisheries, roads, road transport, and waterways within its administered areas. They also possess the power to levy and collect taxes on land and building, profession, trade, calling and employment, animal, vehicles and boats, and entry of goods. Thus, the district councils have been provided a fair degree of autonomy for the welfare of tribal people living in Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, and Mizoram (Stuligross, 1999; Prasad, 2004; Doungel, 2013).

ADCs came into existence in Mizoram with the establishment of *Lushai* (later changed to *Mizo* in 1954) Hills District in 1952 in the erstwhile Assam state as per The Assam Autonomous District (Constitution of District Councils) Rules 1951 framed by the Government of Assam under Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution. The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) was also constituted in 1952 as per The Pawi-Lakher (Constitution of Regional Council) Rules, 1952, adopted by the Assam government under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The PLRC, which functioned from 1953 to 1972, was the only Regional Council established under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India (Doungel, 2015). The Mizo District Council was abolished in 1972 following its attainment of Union Territory status. Meanwhile, the PLRC was trifurcated into three Regional Councils on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1972 and subsequently upgraded to the status of ADCs on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2019, namely, Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC), Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC) and Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC). They are in the southernmost part of the State, falling within two administrative districts, Lawngtlai and Siaha. According to the population census of 2011, the total population of the three ADCs, viz., LADC, MADC, and CADC, were 82806, 56574, and 45307, respectively.

The administration of the district councils in Mizoram has been governed by "The Mizoram Autonomous District Council (Constitution and Conduct of Business) Rules, 1974", and a separate department called the District Council & Minority Affairs (DC

& MA) was created under these Rules. The State government entrusts the DC&MA Department with the affairs of the ADCs, and the latter would seek budget allocation for the ADCs from the former and channel it to them. The department became the main controlling authority concerning the affairs of the ADCs of the State (Doungel, 2008). The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution empowered the district councils to levy and collect taxes on profession, trades, callings, and employment; taxes on animals, vehicles and boats; taxes on the entry of goods into the market for sale therein, and tolls on passengers and goods carried in ferries; and taxes for the maintenance of schools, dispensaries, or roads (Prasad, 2004). At the same time, under Article 275(1) of the Constitution, the State government provides Grants-in-Aid (GIA), also called statutory grants, to the ADCs for specific purposes such as maintenance of primary schools, and development of roads, water supply, sanitation, and management of forests. Thus, the revenues of the ADCs broadly comprise grants received from the state government and revenue earned from their own sources.

### **Review of Literature**

There have been a few studies on the finance of the ADCs of North-East India. These include studies on Karbi Anglong ADC in Assam; Khasi Hills ADC, Jaintia Hills ADC and Garo Hills ADC in Meghalaya; and MADC in Mizoram. They share numerous similar results. In terms of revenue income, studies show that the main sources of own revenue in Karbi Anglong ADC and MADC came from forests and taxes. Major source of revenue from the forest is accounted for by sale of bamboo and timber, minor forest produce, etc. At the same time, the major sources of revenue in respect of tax comes from professional tax, sale tax, excise tax, land revenue, entry tax on the vehicle, trade license fees, and stamp and registration (Kumaran, 2003; Vanlalchhawna, 2021). The ADCs in Meghalaya have a low revenue base as assigned tax and non-tax revenue sources are limited. The annual revenue of Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC) is highest because of the high receipt under its share of royalty from coal and limestone as the area is rich in mineral deposits. The high dependency of the councils on the share of royalty on minerals is a major cause of concern, as any disruption in the flow of revenue from this source will severely affect the functioning of the ccouncils (Syiem, 2016; Umdor & Syiem, 2017)

In all the states studied, the pattern of revenue receipts indicated a high proportion of higher government grants-in-aid and a marginal contribution from internal revenue receipts. The council's' own revenue receipts from tax and non-tax revenue were negligible, and they could only meet a small percentage of their revenue expenditure from their own revenue. The ability of ADCs to fund their expenditure from their own revenue source is limited in the range of 6% to 43% in Meghalaya. Revenue transfers or grants-in-aid constituted as high as 99% of the revenue receipts of MADC in Mizoram. As such, there is circumscribed financial decentralization, indicating the negligible impact of the functions and activities of the ADCs in the states due to limited funds under their disposal. Even though ADCs continue to be heavily dependent on

financial support from higher government, the councils share a common problem in that sources of revenue originating from higher governments show high revenue volatility, indicating unpredictability and irregularity in the sharing of revenues between state government and the councils and also in the flow of grants from the State and Union governments to the councils. Primary information showed that grants provided by the Union government were not released timely by state governments, thus hampering their function even further (Kumaran, 2003; Syiem, 2016; Vanlalchhawna, 2021).

The most vocal political slogan of the ADCs in Mizoram at present is the issue of direct funding - the financial channel in which the ADCs will be empowered to receive funds directly from the Central government without passing through the state government (Doungel, 2014). Article 275(1) provides the funding pattern of the states from the Consolidated Fund of India through the state government. There is no constitutional provision where the ADCs can bypass the state government in receiving funds and financial assistance from the Central government (Ralte et al., 2021). As such, all answers from the Central government to the repeated requests of Mizoram ADCs on this issue suggest the amendment and enactment of the Village Council system in line with the provision of Panchayati Raj. This would enable villages of the Sixth Schedule area of Mizoram to receive Panchayati Raj funds directly from the Central government. Since the leaders of ADCs could not accept this suggestion, the Ministry of Home Affairs took steps to appease them and facilitate the ADCs with direct funding of the Border Area Development Programme (BADP) fund (Doungel, 2014; Ralte et al., 2021).

Syiem (2016) compared the revenue base of ADCs with Panchayati Raj Institutions and found that the Sixth Schedule had assigned very limited powers to the former to levy and collect taxes as compared to the assignment of tax and non-tax powers of the latter. Alok (2012) identified as many as 32 taxes or fees collected by the panchayat raj institutions in different states of India, while only about 20 sources of revenue for ADCs were identified in Meghalaya. Despite the sources available to them, a common problem faced by the councils was that they do not fully exploit their powers to raise their own revenue (Kumaran, 2003; Umdor & Syiem, 2017; Vanlalchhawna, 2021).

Some studies raised the constraints and challenges of the district council finances. Despite the facilities for direct economic administration provided by the Sixth Schedule, ADCs have had great difficulty both in collection of funds and administration of small-scale projects. ADCs face annual budget difficulties in the form of inadequate and irregular flow of funds and late disbursements by the state. The ADCs made no revisions to the old systems of revenue collection, and collection in itself is irregular. This shortcoming, with the fact that many tax sources are still untapped, amplifies the resource crunch. The lack of effort in mobilization of additional revenue by developing financial resources for undertaking development activities can be cited as the major constraint of ADCs (Stuligross, 1999; Kumaran, 2003; Kakati, 2019; Islam, 2020).

A major issue for researchers is that the ADCs do not follow a uniform reporting system of their sources of receipts, even in those of the same state (Umdor & Syiem, 2017). Also in some cases, receipts and expenditures of the councils are not properly maintained and classified (Syiem, 2016). There arises a need for better uniformity in the accounting of receipts and expenditures of the ADCs and these studies recommended that the councils may follow the accounting structures and system as maintained by state and union governments so as to bring clarity, transparency, and accountability to their finances.

Aside from these limitations, ADCs also face political challenges as they do not actually practice full autonomy. Schemes have been terminated before its successful implementation due to lack of funds. In addition, some schemes have been criticized for being too focused on the interest of the councils and not being demand-oriented for common people (Kumaran, 2003; Kakati, 2019). Also, the accommodation of competing for ethnic claims and interests has become the focus of the autonomy movement in North East India, instead of tackling the real issues of isolation and socioeconomic development, which was its initial purpose (Sarmah, 2011; Doungel, 2013; Riamei, 2021).

As mentioned earlier, there is limited literature on the revenue positions of the autonomous district councils in North-East India. The available literature is mostly concentrated on the history, legislative powers, and political issues of the ADCs. There have been no empirical studies on finances that encompass all the ADCs, and no such studies have been conducted for the three ADCs present in Mizoram. Considering their potential and relevance for grassroots implementation of development policies, it is pertinent to understand their current revenue sources and suggest measures to strengthen their financial positions.

### Methodology

The study used data available in the budget documents of the Mizoram State Government, CADC, LADC, and MADC. As the three ADCs do not follow a uniform budget accounting system, no clear-cut division was made between tax and non-tax revenue items in the budget documents. So, the classification of the two revenue sources was made by simply following the pattern used by the Mizoram State Finance Commission. A field visit to the three ADCs was conducted in June-July 2022 to enhance the data collected from budget documents. Officials of the district councils, leaders of NGOs, and knowledgeable persons were interviewed during the field survey. Data were analyzed primarily using simple statistical tools like percentage and average, and compound annual growth rate (CAGR) was estimated to examine the trend of each budgetary variable. CAGR is calculated by estimating the following log-linear regression

$$\log Y = \alpha + \beta \log T + \epsilon, \text{ and } CAGR(r) = e^{\beta} - 1$$

where Y is any budget variable (Tax Revenue, Non-Tax Revenue, State Fund Transfer, etc.), T is the time (year), and  $\varepsilon$  is error in regression.

Further, to find out the real growth of the tax and non-tax and state transfers, the current values were converted into real terms using the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) deflator. The GDP deflator is a price index that measures the aggregate price level of goods and commodities in the current year relative to prices in the base year (Mankin, 2015). It is calculated as

$$GDP\text{-deflator} = \frac{\text{Nominal GDP (current prices)}}{\text{Real GDP (at constant price)}}$$

The GDP 2011-12 series (constant and nominal) obtained from the Economic Survey, 2021-22, Ministry of Finance, were used to calculate the deflator. Accordingly, real (inflation-adjusted) revenues were computed by dividing the revenues at current prices by the GDP deflator (Anderson, 2012).

### State Fund Transfer to ADCs

The revenue sources of the ADCs in Mizoram can be broadly classified into two categories: Own Revenue (OR) and State Fund Transfer (SFT) from the concerned state government. Own Revenue (OR) comprises of tax revenue (TR) and non-tax revenue (NTR). Similarly, Grants-in-Aid (GIA) is broadly divided into three categories, namely (1) GIA for Salary, (2) GIA for non-salary (office expenses, etc.), and (3) state grants for creation of capital assets, CSS, and other plan schemes - categorized as Other Grants (OG).

Table 1 presents the trends in the revenue receipt of the three ADCs and indicates the contribution of OR (i.e., TR+NTR), SFT, and OG since 2010-11. The total combined revenue receipt of all the ADCs has increased by more than double in 12 years, from ₹17893.3 lakh in 2010-2011 to ₹49816.7 lakh in 2022-2023. SFT in the form of Grants-in-Aid (GIA) for Salary has increased rapidly from ₹17353 lakhs to ₹45949 lakhs in the same time period for all the ADCs. It may be noted that there was a sudden increase in GIA (Non-Salary) by several times from 2010-11 to 2011-12, but there was no clear pattern afterward in all the ADCs. The budget documents did not specify the reasons for this sudden increase, nor did the officials interviewed during the fieldwork could furnish the reason. At the same time, the OR, though meagre relative to state transfer, has shown robust growth from ₹168.1 lakh in 2010-2011 to ₹613.6 lakh in 2022-2023. The combined own revenue contribution of the ADCs on the total revenue receipts is exiguous as it revolved around 1% throughout the 13 years presented, except for the year 2020-21, when it spiked to 1.4% of the total revenue receipts but declined to 1.1% the following year. The Councils' own revenue receipts from tax and non-tax revenue were negligible, and the Councils could meet only a small percentage of their revenue expenditure from their own revenue (Kumaran, 2003).

Based on the Gazette Notification in 1992 and 2011, the State government has entrusted the three ADCs the task of implementation of some Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) on a need basis. The funds received are included under OG in Table 1. Notably, the OG has not shown a clear trend but showed a sharp decline in recent years and no receipt after 2020-21, with the apparent reason being the financial problems faced by the state government in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, GIA-Salary constituted over 90% of the state fund transfer to the ADCs for most of the years. Excessively high salary component of GIA with limited own revenue contribution, in turn, indicate limited abilities on the part of the ADCs to undertake development efforts.

**Table 1: Revenue Receipt Trends of the Three Autonomous District Councils in Mizoram**

Year	CADC					LADC				
	OR	GIA(S)	GIA (NS)	OG	Total	OR	GIA(S)	GIA (NS)	OG	Total
2010-11	28.0	3964.0	27.5	84.0	4103.5	81.4	7217.0	30.0		7328.4
2011-12	45.6	3616.0	565.0	745.5	4972.1	113.1	6058.0	1378.0	178.2	7727.3
2012-13	70.4	4148.6	408.4	2499.0	7126.4	125.8	6525.8	1551.5	702.0	8905.0
2013-14	64.8	4305.0	474.7	970.2	5814.8	128.8	7798.6	579.0	1985.5	10491.9
2014-15	65.2	5223.1	906.8	927.5	7122.7	133.4	9319.9	283.2		9736.4
2015-16	84.9	5521.1	670.0	114.1	6390.1	140.6	9685.3	1263.3	334.0	11423.2
2016-17	103.1	6077.6	553.7	39.0	6773.3	152.3	10936.7	888.5	293.0	12270.5
2017-18	102.8	6909.2	1628.8	255.6	8896.4	195.0	12336.9	1428.7	1360.5	15321.1
2018-19	87.0	9125.4	622.6	346.6	10181.5	197.8	15594.9	1062.5	469.8	17325.0
2019-20	114.6	10360.0	1057.3	37.5	11569.4	246.6	17581.2	1228.5	18.8	19075.1
2020-21	100.7	9763.2	663.0	212.4	10739.3	269.1	17395.0	1247.5	570.3	19481.9
2021-22RE	116.9	11097.8	663.0		11877.7	259.6	19195.0	1360.5		20815.1
2022-23BE	132.4	10547.2	663.0		11342.6	260.0	19363.5	1360.5		20984.0
Year	MADC					All District Councils - Combined				
	OR	GIA(S)	GIA (NS)	OG	Total	OR	GIA(S)	GIA (NS)	OG	Total
2010-11	58.7	6172.0	27.5	203.2	6461.4	168.1	17353.0	85.0	287.2	17893.3
2011-12	75.2	5813.0	1390.5	178.2	7456.8	233.8	15487.0	3333.5	1101.9	20156.2
2012-13	83.4	6638.0	563.0	1905.3	9189.8	279.6	17312.3	2522.9	5106.3	25221.1
2013-14	104.1	6880.8	413.0	1301.9	8699.8	297.7	18984.4	1466.7	4257.6	25006.4
2014-15	115.2	8465.2	692.4	1286.8	10559.7	313.8	23008.3	1882.4	2214.4	27418.8
2015-16	106.7	8830.2	396.0	241.1	9574.0	332.2	24036.5	2329.3	689.2	27387.2
2016-17	102.5	10310.3	856.7	145.8	11415.2	357.8	27324.5	2298.9	477.8	30459.0
2017-18	131.6	10995.1	1594.2	439.6	13160.5	429.4	30241.2	4651.7	2055.7	37378.0
2018-19	153.5	13721.4	911.9	533.5	15320.3	438.3	38441.8	2597.0	1349.8	42826.8
2019-20	167.4	15146.0	996.6	27.1	16337.2	528.6	43087.2	3282.4	83.5	46981.7
2020-21	297.0	14663.1	1107.6	276.8	16344.5	666.8	41821.3	3018.1	1059.5	46565.7
2021-22RE	193.1	16134.7	1230.6	2.0	17560.3	569.6	46427.5	3254.1	2.0	50253.2
2022-23BE	221.2	16038.4	1230.6		17490.2	613.6	45949.0	3254.1	0.0	49816.7

Sources: Budget Documents of CADC, LADC and MADC (2010-11 to 2022-23)

Note: OR: Own Revenue (Tax & Non-Tax), GIA(S): Grants-in-Aid (Salary), GIA (NS): Grants-in-Aid (Non-Salary), OG: Other. BE: Budget Estimate & RE: Revised Estimate

**Table 2: Flow of Central Fund to the Autonomous District Councils through Mizoram State Government**

Schemes / Programmes	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
<b>Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC)</b>									
Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)	700	320	329	59.2	39	27.3	16.86	14.88	
Special Area Basic Grant									
13th Finance Commission (infrastructure Scheme)			52.18	266					
Special Plan Assistance	150	288	287						
Special Central Assistance	400	362.22	240						
NLCPR	1248.48	282	787.52	54.91			226		33.9
Excluded Area Grants					220.6				21.4
Others				458			103.7		
<b>Total</b>	<b>2498.48</b>	<b>1252.22</b>	<b>1695.7</b>	<b>838.11</b>	<b>259.6</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>346.56</b>	<b>14.88</b>	<b>55.3</b>
<b>Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC)</b>									
Centrally Sponsored Schemes (all combined)				622		1361.32	475		185.17
Excluded Area Grant						346.72			356.79
<b>Total</b>				<b>622</b>		<b>1708.04</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>541.96</b>
<b>Mara Autonomous District Council</b>									
Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)				72	59	26.18	18.62	14.73	
SPP						86.79			
NLCPR							96.9		
13th Finance Commission (infrastructure Scheme)		67.54							
NEA	350.00					4.5		8	2
Excluded Area Grants				764		283.68			276.81
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>67.54</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>401.15</b>	<b>115.52</b>	<b>22.73</b>	<b>278.81</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2848.48</b>	<b>1319.76</b>	<b>1695.7</b>	<b>2296.11</b>	<b>318.6</b>	<b>2136.49</b>	<b>937.08</b>	<b>37.61</b>	<b>876.07</b>

Sources: (1) Budget Documents of CADC, LADC and MADC (2010-11 to 2022-23) & (2) Interactions with the officials of the three ADCs during June-July 2022

Table 2 presents the CSS fund received by the three ADCs from 2012-13. As some schemes and grants are non-continuous, it is rather difficult to accurately account for the fund flow in the three Councils' budget documents. In addition, the documents showed varying accounting formats. Meanwhile, LADC did not make a detailed scheme-wise classification and simply clubbed the CSS funds they received under one head in their budget documents. It can be seen from this Table that the state fund devolution of ADCs for developmental works is shaped by the flow of CSS and plan funds, which experienced a sporadic flow and a significant decline in recent years. Consequently, the Councils could barely undertake development works today. Moreover, grants provided by the Union government were not released timely by State governments which further hampers their function, while some schemes had even been terminated before being successfully implemented (Kumaran, 2003; Syiem, 2016; Kakati, 2019).

**Table 3: Trends of Real Revenue Receipt of the district councils in Mizoram (2011-12 prices) (₹ lakhs)**

Year	CADC			LADC			MADC		
	OR	SFT	TRR	OR	SFT	TRR	OR	SFT	TRR
2010-11	30.4	4431.4	4461.9	88.5	7879.9	7968.5	63.8	6961.9	7025.7
2011-12	45.6	4926.5	4972.1	113.1	7614.2	7727.3	75.2	7381.7	7456.8
2012-13	65.2	6537.3	6602.5	116.5	8133.8	8250.4	77.3	8436.9	8514.2
2013-14	56.5	5016.9	5073.4	112.3	9042.0	9154.3	90.8	7499.8	7590.7
2014-15	55.1	5959.2	6014.2	112.6	8108.6	8221.2	97.3	8819.1	8916.4
2015-16	70.1	5205.3	5275.4	116.1	9314.4	9430.5	88.1	7815.8	7903.9
2016-17	82.4	5334.0	5416.4	121.8	9690.5	9812.3	81.9	9046.4	9128.4
2017-18	79.1	6763.5	6842.5	150.0	11634.0	11784.0	101.2	10021.0	10122.2
2018-19	64.5	7484.4	7548.9	146.7	12698.6	12845.3	113.8	11245.1	11358.9
2019-20	82.0	8200.5	8282.5	176.5	13479.3	13655.9	119.8	11575.9	11695.7
2020-21	68.9	7280.4	7349.3	184.2	13148.1	13332.2	203.2	10981.9	11185.2
2021-22RE	74.3	7474.3	7548.6	165.0	13063.6	13228.5	122.7	11037.4	11160.0
<b>CAGR (%)</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>4.8</b>

Sources: Budget Documents of CADC, LADC and MADC (2010-11 to 2022-23)

Note: The nominal revenue receipts are converted into real term using GDP deflator based on 2011-12 series OR: Own Revenue (Tax & Non-Tax), SFT: State Fund Transfer {GIA (Salary), GIA (NS), OG: Other Grants} CAGR: Compound Annual Growth Rate, & RE: Revised Estimate

While discussing the trends of the revenue receipts of the district council, it may be worthwhile to examine its real trend as the interpretation of only the nominal trend is likely to be affected by inflation. This will help us evaluate if there is an increase in real revenue receipts in each Council. The inflation-adjusted revenue receipts (real revenue), including own revenue and state fund transfer, have been calculated using the GDP deflator with the 2011-12 base year. For the sake of simplicity, all the grants

received from the State government, including CSS, are consolidated into state fund transfer (SFT). This is presented in Table 3. Own revenues in real terms have increased by more than 6% per annum in all the ADCs, while the state fund transfer registered an annual growth of more than 4% in all the ADCs. Thus, the financial position in terms of increasing revenue and state transfer has significantly improved during the period under study.

### **Tax Revenues of the ADCs**

The three ADCs have made several efforts to enhance their tax revenue (TR) by making appropriate rules and regulations, while at the same time keeping in view the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution. The trends in the total tax revenues by the three district councils from different sources are presented in Table 4. The Table shows that the three major tax revenue items which all the ADCs levy are professional tax, land revenue, and trade license. It was observed that LADC has tapped the largest tax revenue sources by introducing a tax levy on seven sources, while MADC and CADC collect tax revenues from 6 and 4 sources, respectively. In addition, LADC is the only district council that levies entertainment tax and entry tax on goods, and MADC is the lone Council collecting animal tax. Taxes on boats is collected in the CADC area only.

Among the different tax items, professional tax has been the most important source of tax revenue in all the ADCs. It constituted 64.4%, 48.5%, and 70.1% of the total tax revenues in CADC, LADC, and MADC, respectively during 2022-23(BE). This tax is collected as per their respective regulations legislated for collection - Profession, Trade, Callings, and Employment Taxation - and its amendment from time to time. Profession tax is levied annually on employees of the district council, and from state government employees, central government employees, defense personnel, other organized sector workers (banks, companies, etc.), and contractors working within their respective jurisdictions. Although this tax was initially made progressive by setting different tax rates for various income groups with a maximum limit of ₹2500 per person per annum, the pay and wage structure today had surpassed the taxing slabs, and practically, every professional taxpayer is at the maximum rate. Thus, keeping in view the economic development and increased earnings of the employees, the imposition of a ceiling on professional tax has limited the potential tax revenue to be leveraged by the ADCs. However, the revision of the ceiling on professional tax has to go through a constitutional amendment, which is not an easy task. Even though the successive Finance Commissions have recommended raising the ceiling of profession tax and vesting the power in Parliament to revise profession tax rather than go through a Constitutional Amendment route (Ahluwalia et al. 2019), the last revision of the ceiling was made well back in the 1980s.

Profession tax is followed by land revenue in LADC and MADC by contributing 42.5% and 19.6% of TR, respectively, in 2022-23. In the CADC, however, trade license is the

second most important tax revenue source, contributing 18% during the same period. At the same time, land revenue has been the most volatile tax over time in LADC and MADC by showing 15.9% and 27.1% annual growth since 2010-11, while trade license is the most volatile tax in CADC, which recorded 15.2% annual growth during the same period. It can be observed from Table 4 that professional tax and land revenue are the main sources of tax revenues in terms of the amount collected and its regularity and consistency. The two sources combined contributed 81.8%, 91.3%, and 89.7% of total TR in CADC, LADC, and MADC, respectively in 2022-23.

Revenue mobilized through the imposition of trading regulations and by issuing trade licenses has been one major tax revenue source for all the ADCs. Trade Licenses are issued through market auctions by the Council, and the license holders have to pay a trade license and renewal fee every year or two, depending on the validity of the license. Although levied in LADC, its budget document does not segregate it but is rather mingled with other revenue items collected by the Land Revenue Department of this district council. Meanwhile, it was also reported in MADC that while a trade license is issued by the Revenue Department to traders who have proper business establishment, a renewable vendor/hawker's license is also issued by the Local Administration Department for 3 months. This indicates that parts of the revenue receipt related to trading regulation are not reported under revenue receipt of trade license.

**Table 4: Trends in Tax Revenue Collection by the Three ADCs from Different Sources**

Year	CADC					LADC						MADC						
	Profession Tax	Land Revenue	Trade License	Taxes on Boat	Total	Profession Tax	Land Revenue	Motor Vehicles Tax	Entertainment tax	Entry Tax on Vehicles	Entry Tax on Goods	Total	Profession Tax	Land Revenue	Trade License	Entry Tax on Vehicles	Animal Tax	Total
2010-11	18.0	3.2	2.0	0.1	23.2	38.4	15.4			1.6		55.4	28.5	3.7	1.5	1.6		35.3
2011-12	23.0	7.1	4.0	0.1	34.1	48.4	15.3			1.6		65.3	31.5	2.0	1.5	1.9		36.9
2012-13	23.6	11.4	3.6	0.1	38.6	50.3	19.0			1.7		71.0	49.8	4.5	1.5	2.5		58.3
2013-14	24.0	10.8	3.0	0.2	37.9	53.9	22.4			1.7		78.0	72.1	2.3	1.6	2.9		78.9
2014-15	25.0	11.2	4.8	0.0	41.0	58.8	24.8			1.5		85.1	72.9	3.9	4.1	4.2		85.2
2015-16	32.6	12.8	6.7	0.5	52.5	58.1	26.5	1.3		1.3		87.2	61.4	5.5	1.7	1.3	3.3	73.1
2016-17	33.8	18.3	0.6	0.1	52.8	61.2	31.6	2.1		2.1		97.0	58.0	6.6	1.7	3.7	3.6	73.7
2017-18	32.3	18.3	2.5	0.5	53.6	63.1	57.2	2.3		2.3		124.8	70.4	9.5		2.0	5.0	86.9
2018-19	30.7	16.5	4.1	0.4	51.7	64.7	67.1	2.0		2.0		135.7	75.2	9.7	5.2	2.0	5.0	97.1
2019-20	36.8	17.9	6.2	0.7	61.6	71.1	51.5	2.2		2.2		127.0	75.2	10.8	5.8	2.2	3.7	97.7
2020-21	41.9	12.8	14.3	0.1	69.0	75.7	69.9	2.0	0.5	3.3	3.3	154.6	76.7	148.6	3.4	1.2	5.0	234.9
2021-22RE	46.2	17.8	19.7		83.8	76.3	71.1	3.2	1.5	4.3	4.3	160.8	80.0	19.5	5.0	2.5	1.0	108.0
2022-23BE	48.2	13.0	13.5	0.2	74.8	76.0	66.5	3.1	2.0	4.5	4.5	156.6	86.5	24.2	5.2	2.5	5.0	123.4
CAGR (%)	7.6	9.3	15.2	**	9.1	5.1	15.9	9.8	**	9	**	9.6	7.6	27.1	12.7	**	**	11.3

Sources: Budget Documents of CADC, LADC and MADC (2010-11 to 2022-23)

CAGR: Compound Annual Growth Rate / \*\* insignificant trend coefficient

It is also noteworthy that the LADC and MADC have imposed entry tax on vehicles entering their areas at rates ranging from ₹10 to ₹50 per vehicle per visit for different types of vehicles. The ADCs are trying arduously to impel the State government to amend the Mizoram Vehicles Taxation Act 1996 so as to enable delegation of functions on regulations of motor vehicles to the former, as was envisioned in the Notification on delegation of functions in 2011. If amended, it is expected that it would enable them to implement their own motor vehicle taxation rules and thus, permit them to mobilize more tax revenue from motor vehicle tax. In an interview in his office on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2022, Mr. V.L. Hmuaka, Chairman of the LADC, said that the Council's effort to raise more revenue by making new regulations are frequently gridlocked by the State government. For example, the LADC (Motor Vehicle Taxation) Regulation, 2013 could not be implemented due to a lack of will from the State government. He also said the Council had made several regulations for the mobilization of additional revenue sources, but the problem faced is that these legislations could not get through the State government and hence failed to reach the Governor's table for approval. Several legislations passed by the Council had dissipated with the State government in the past. In this connection, Dr. R.T. Hnialum, the first Secretary of LADC in 1972 and Secretary of erstwhile PLRC from 1962 till 1972, in an interview on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2022, said that when the Council was under the Assam government, legislations passed by the Council submitted to the Government for approval would not be simply kept on hold by the latter without stating valid reasons. The State government would inform the Council regarding any clarification and/or modifications needed with specific points or issues. This expedited the process of making laws by the District Council under the erstwhile Assam government. But now, the State government would delay several laws passed by the District Council without providing a clear rationale. This has hampered the effort of the Council to mobilize additional tax revenues.

LADC is the only ADC in Mizoram that levies tax on the entry of goods into the market within its jurisdiction. Collected by the Taxation Department of the Council under The LADC (Entry of Goods into Market Tax) Regulations, 2019, it is levied on 69 scheduled goods that enter into the market for sale therein. This is levied to every dealer or person who brings in such goods into the market for sale at the specified rates, which ranges from 1% to 3% *ad valorem* based on GST/VAT invoice. Although the stakeholders (NGO leaders and businessmen) interviewed during the study feared the cascading effects of entry tax on the consumer's price as it is charged based on GST invoices, they were of the view that there exists an avenue to minimise its impact on the consumers, while also increasing its collection through improved efficiency in assessment and collection.

Further, LADC levies entertainment tax from 2020-21 on local cable TVs at the rate of ₹20 per month per subscriber under the LADC (Entertainment Tax) Regulation, 2019. The estimated revenue receipt from entertainment tax for the FY 2022-23 is ₹2 lakhs. Meanwhile, MADC is the only ADC that collects animal tax. This is collected as per the provision of The Lakher Autonomous District Council (Animal Control and

Taxation) Act, 1983. Although the rate is only ₹0.50 per adult animal and ₹0.25 per young animal, the revenue receipt, as shown in Table 4, is quite substantial. Animal tax is believed to possess an even wider base as the domestication of animals has deep roots in the lives of the tribal people in these Sixth Schedule areas.

### **Non-Tax Revenues**

The district councils in Mizoram also collect revenues from various non-tax sources, such as rents, fees, user charges, etc., on properties (guest houses, etc.) within their respective areas. Table 5 details the sources of non-tax revenue and trends in revenue collections for the three district councils. The major source in terms of amount and regularity in all the ADCs are rent from properties (council quarters, houses, etc.), administrative services, general economic services, and forest and mineral resources. It could be observed from this Table that collection from forest and mineral resources has been the most important and consistent source of non-tax revenue in the three ADCs during the period under study. Revenue collection from forest and mineral resources come mainly from sand extraction or mining from the river and riverine areas within the three district council areas. The *Mahal* system is adopted in each district council, where license auctions are conducted yearly. The successful bidders, after depositing the required amount with the district council treasury, would attain the right to collect fees from individuals undertaking sand extraction for sale in the market. These contractors would collect a fee/charge from any person performing the extraction of the sands, usually by installing check gates at suitable places along the roads connecting major rivers.

**Table 5: Revenue Receipt Trends from Different Sources of Non-Tax Revenues in the Autonomous District Councils of Mizoram**

Sources	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22RE	2022-23BE
<b>Chakma Autonomous District Council</b>													
Rents from properties	2.83	7.68	8.43	12.24	11.23	10.01	9	11.44	15.27	15.59	6.42	2.36	12.96
Administrative Services	0.02		9.43	12.36	0.14	0.53	1.75	22.24	3.53	5.99	7.65	6.28	6.46
Fees from Educational Services						0.01	0.05		0.01	0.05	0.05	0.11	0.07
General economic services	1.45	1.38	1.17	1.55	3.88	3.7	7.1	2.5	4.12	6.19	3.01	10.2	26.6
Fisheries					0.07	0.14				0.16			0.5
Forest & Mineral Resources	0.47	1.18	1		8.71	18	28.71	13.06	10.26	25	14.54	14.22	11
other		1.18	11.76	0.75	0.16		3.68		2.04				
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.77</b>	<b>11.42</b>	<b>31.79</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>24.19</b>	<b>32.39</b>	<b>50.29</b>	<b>49.24</b>	<b>35.23</b>	<b>52.98</b>	<b>31.67</b>	<b>33.17</b>	<b>57.59</b>
<b>Lai Autonomous District Council</b>													
Rents from properties	5.09	4.04	7.98	8.05	7.21	9.35	10.05	12.61	10.44	52.45	43.64	18.69	29
Administrative Services	0.04	0.1	0.09	0.16	0.16	0.28	0.1	0.3	0.22	0.21	0.23	0.32	0.4
Fees from Educational Services	1.8	0.26	0.15	0.39	0.29	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.43	0.22	0.33	0.25
General economic services		13.74	10.7	5.63	5	4.17	3.65	4.18	4.79	7.97	2.71	5.43	13.75
Fisheries	2.29											4.5	
Forest & Mineral Resources	16.83	29.6	35.92	36.58	35.56	39.34	41.26	52.83	46.45	58.51	67.7	69.58	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>26.05</b>	<b>47.74</b>	<b>54.84</b>	<b>50.81</b>	<b>48.22</b>	<b>53.44</b>	<b>55.36</b>	<b>70.22</b>	<b>62.1</b>	<b>119.57</b>	<b>114.5</b>	<b>98.85</b>	<b>103.4</b>
<b>Mara Autonomous District Council</b>													
Rents from properties	3.16	2.43	2.48	6.41	9.174	13.67	9.58	15.31	21.02	24.86	4.29	3.99	10
Administrative Services	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.1	0.2	0.21	0.1	0.21	0.04	0.12	0.15	0.18	0.2
Fees from Educational Services						0.32	0.6	2	2	2	2	2.5	3
Rural water supply						13.65	11.28	18.73	18.5	24.61	34.34	55.69	60
General economic services	0.77	0.8	1.1	1.69	3.67	1.34	3.73	2	6.42	2.19	3.07	3.5	4
Fisheries									2.39	9.32	10.63	10.63	10.63
Forest & Mineral Resources	18.96	34.95	21.17	16	17	4.36	3.01	6.3	6	6	7.5	8.49	10
other	0.49		0.3	1.03			0.5	0.13		0.6	0.09	0.09	
<b>Total</b>	<b>23.41</b>	<b>38.22</b>	<b>25.08</b>	<b>25.23</b>	<b>30.044</b>	<b>33.55</b>	<b>28.8</b>	<b>44.68</b>	<b>56.37</b>	<b>69.7</b>	<b>62.07</b>	<b>85.07</b>	<b>97.83</b>

Sources: Budget Documents of the three Autonomous District Councils. / RE: Revised Estimate & BE: Budget Estimate

Furthermore, those who intend to establish a stone quarry in their own land would have to seek a permit for six months by paying the required fees to the Council. The district councils' Forest Department is responsible for ensuring that stone chips and other quarry products coming into the market are from these license holders only. At the same time, the ADCs also collect revenues from other forest products like (timber, minor forest products, *anchiri*, etc.) in the form of a transit pass or other miscellaneous charges. It was reported that they could not go far in any matter on the forest products as a contravention of the Supreme Court's judgment related to the Forest Conservation Act is feared.

### Revenue Efforts and Dependency

Having analyzed the different sources of tax and non-tax revenues, trends in revenue collection over time, and the efforts of the district councils to mobilize their own revenue sources in the previous section, it may be worthwhile to further examine the outcome of the revenue efforts using measurable parameters. The revenue efforts of the councils are measured by estimating the ratios of TR, NTR, and OR to the total revenue receipt (TRR) of the respective Council. The results are presented in Table 6. Looking at the average for the 13 years under consideration, LADC scored the highest among the three ADCs in all the measures of revenue efforts, i.e., *tax revenue efforts*, *non-tax revenue effort*, and *total own revenue effort*, followed by MADC while the CADC scored the lowest in all measures. As noted earlier, of the nine taxes introduced by the ADCs in Mizoram, LADC collect tax revenues from 7 sources, while MADC and CADC collects from 6 and 4 sources, respectively. So, the efforts of the ADCs in mobilizing additional tax sources have impacted the total own revenue receipt as well as scores in the measure of revenue effort.

Table 6 also reveals that the tax and non-tax efforts of the ADCs in Mizoram had not shown significant improvement during the last 13 years. The non-tax revenue effort is much lower when compared with tax revenue efforts as the average effort ranges from 0.41% in CADC to 0.38% in MADC and 0.50% in LADC. Meanwhile, the tax efforts hovered in the range of 0.50% to 0.90% of the TRR across the ADCs throughout the years, except for the year 2020-21 when it crossed the 1% mark in MADC. This year coincided with the introduction of *Cess* on the total compensation award arising out of land acquisition within the MADC area under the provision of the MADC (Land Revenue) Act, 2018. It may be noted that the National Highway and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), which undertook the road widening project of NH54 within the MADC areas, released land compensation to the landowners during the financial year 2020-21. Accordingly, the land revenue receipt of the MADC soared to ₹148.6 lakhs from a mere ₹10.8 lakhs in 2019-20, but reverted back to ₹19.5 lakhs the next year.

**Table 6: Revenue Efforts of the Three ADCs (TR and NTR as percentage of TRR)**

Year	CADC			LADC			MADC		
	TR	NTR	OR	TR	NTR	OR	TR	NTR	OR
2010-11	0.57	0.12	0.68	0.76	0.36	1.11	0.55	0.36	0.91
2011-12	0.69	0.23	0.92	0.85	0.62	1.46	0.50	0.51	1.01
2012-13	0.54	0.45	0.99	0.80	0.62	1.41	0.63	0.27	0.91
2013-14	0.65	0.46	1.11	0.74	0.48	1.23	0.91	0.29	1.20
2014-15	0.58	0.34	0.92	0.87	0.50	1.37	0.81	0.28	1.09
2015-16	0.82	0.51	1.33	0.76	0.47	1.23	0.76	0.35	1.11
2016-17	0.78	0.74	1.52	0.79	0.45	1.24	0.65	0.25	0.90
2017-18	0.60	0.55	1.16	0.81	0.46	1.27	0.66	0.34	1.00
2018-19	0.51	0.35	0.85	0.78	0.36	1.14	0.63	0.37	1.00
2019-20	0.53	0.46	0.99	0.67	0.63	1.29	0.60	0.43	1.02
2020-21	0.64	0.29	0.94	0.79	0.59	1.38	1.44	0.38	1.82
2021-22RE	0.71	0.28	0.98	0.77	0.47	1.25	0.61	0.48	1.10
2022-23BE	0.66	0.51	1.17	0.75	0.49	1.24	0.71	0.56	1.26
<b>Average</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>1.28</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>1.10</b>

Sources: Budget Documents of CADC, LADC and MADC (2010-11 to 2022-23)

Fiscal dependency ratios have been calculated for each ADC and is presented in Table 7 to supplement the revenue efforts given above. The fiscal dependency of the individual district council is calculated by dividing the total state fund transfer (SFT) by the TRR of the ADCs (i.e., TR+NTR+SFT).

Table 7 shows that the average financial dependency of the three district councils during the last 13 years is 98.86%. These ADCs depend on the State government fund transfer for around 98.86% of their total budget. The pattern of revenue receipts indicated a high proportion of grants-in-aid from higher government bodies and a marginal contribution from internal revenue receipts (Kumaran, 2003). Of the three district councils, LADC has the lowest dependency on the State government at 98.72% of the TRR, followed by MADC, having 98.86% dependency on the State government, while CADC has the highest dependency (98.96%). In other words, of the three ADCs, CADC has the lowest financial autonomy, while LADC has the highest autonomy. However, the Table also reveals that the financial position of the three ADCs has not shown improvement as their dependency ratios did not experience a declining trend over time.

**Table 7: Dependency of the Autonomous District Councils on State Fiscal Transfer in Mizoram (SFT as % of TRR)**

Year	CADC	LADC	MADC	Average
2010-11	99.32	98.89	99.09	99.10
2011-12	99.08	98.54	98.99	98.87
2012-13	99.01	98.59	99.09	98.90
2013-14	98.89	98.77	98.80	98.82
2014-15	99.08	98.63	98.91	98.87
2015-16	98.67	98.77	98.89	98.78
2016-17	98.48	98.76	99.10	98.78
2017-18	98.84	98.73	99.00	98.86
2018-19	99.15	98.86	99.00	99.00
2019-20	99.01	98.71	98.98	98.90
2020-21	99.06	98.62	98.18	98.62
2021-22RE	99.02	98.75	98.90	98.89
2022-23BE	98.83	98.76	98.74	98.78
<b>Average</b>	<b>98.96</b>	<b>98.72</b>	<b>98.90</b>	<b>98.86</b>

Sources: Computed from Budget Documents of CADC, LADC and MADC (2010-11 to 2022-23)

## Conclusion

With a scanty own revenue receipt at 1.14% of the total revenue receipt on an average since 2010-11, the three autonomous districts councils have to depend on funds transferred from the State government in the form of grants-in-aid for more than 98% of their expenditure requirements. The salary component of GIA constituted more than 92% of the total transfer, while the non-salary component has shown a declining trend over time. The state fund devolution to the ADCs for the creation of capital assets is being shaped by the flow of funds for CSS and central funded projects due to the limited financial capacity of the State government to devolve its own funds for capital expenditures. However, such central schemes are periodical and experienced a drastic decline in recent years, and the district councils could barely undertake development works today.

The progressive revenue efforts by the district councils have resulted in the generation of more revenue in recent years. LADC introduced the largest number of taxes, some of which are not levied by the other ADCs. The efforts shown by the ADC to mobilize more tax revenue sources are well reflected in the form of higher own revenue collection when compared with others. Moreover, the LADC has the highest efforts on tax and non-tax revenues when measured by the ratio of TR and NTR to TRR, respectively. Supplementary to this, by measuring the dependency of the ADCs on the state fund transfer, the study observed that the CADC has the highest dependency, while LADC has the lowest dependency.

The most important own tax revenue of all the ADCs in Mizoram, which, on an average, contributes more than 60% of the total tax revenue, is Professional Tax. As admissible under Article 276(2) of the Indian Constitution, the Councils collect this tax by legislating their own regulations specifying rates for different income slabs subject to the ceiling set by this Article, i.e., ₹2500 per person per annum. The ceiling, which was fixed way back in 1988, has failed to capture the changing income distribution, and the income of all the assesseees of this tax had breached this ceiling. Because of its significance in the ability of the ADCs to mobilize their own revenues, effort is necessary to make this tax volatile in view of the economic development and increasing earnings of the people. It is understood that revising the ceiling is beyond the authority of either the State or District Councils as it would involve a Constitutional Amendment. Thereby, revision of the rates may not be feasible in the near term. As of now, this tax is levied on organized service employees only. It is necessary to broaden its base through appropriate legislation to bring many salary and wage earners, medical practitioners, legal practitioners, technical and professional consultants, insurance agents, suppliers, etc. under the professional tax net.

The three ADCs have different accounting formats in the presentation of their annual budgets, which is a major issue for researchers as the ADCs do not follow a uniform reporting of their sources of receipts, even in the same state (Umdor & Syiem, 2017). As a result, it is difficult to effectively analyze the patterns of revenue sharing from the State government and the pattern of tax and non-tax revenues from various sources. A uniform accounting format in the budget must be adopted in all ADCs. At the same time, devolution of funds to ADCs may be accorded in detailed heads (share of tax revenues, GIA, etc.) in the budgets of both the State government and the District Councils.

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## Linkages between Informal and Formal Wearing Apparel Sector in Assam: An Economic Analysis

Nilam Adhyapak<sup>1</sup> & Bhagirathi Panda<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

*The present study aims to examine the inherent backward and forward linkages between the informal and formal wearing apparel sector in Assam. Using a logistic regression framework, we find that total workers, increase in profitability and future expansion plans is positive and significant in determining the probability of presence of linkages. On the quality of linkage, the linkage pattern has been found beneficial, only when the main supplier and main client are in the formal and informal sector respectively. We also demonstrate the limited market reach capacity of the enterprises indicating the fact that sub-contracting occurs mostly among the informal enterprises and households. The plight of the workers raises some relevant concerns which are addressed in the end, positing policy recommendations to reduce the gap between the sectors in terms of improving the level of technology and quality of the products.*

### Introduction

The wearing apparel forms a major segment of the Indian textile industries because of its production of clothing for men, women and children in both domestic and export markets. The sector includes production processes where activities like design, cutting, sewing of garments from fabric is involved (Ribhu & Agrawal, 2009; Sen, 2013) and is one of the largest employment providers in the country especially to women, semi-skilled and unskilled labourers (Indrakumar, 2013). The organisational structure of the wearing apparel sector is quite fragmented; comprising of the informal enterprises on one side and medium-sized/large scale factories on the other (Kalpagam, 1981; Unni et al, 1999; Kabeer & Mahmud, 2004; Mezzadri, 2008). In that regard, the works of many scholars suggests how the linkages operating within informal wearing apparel sector provides intriguing domains to work on as the integration of these informal

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<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Economics, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong-793022. E-mail: adhyapaknilam@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Professor, Department of Economics, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong-793022. E-mail: bhagirathi2@yahoo.co.in

enterprises with the formal units forms an integral part of their production operations (Gross & Kharate, 2017; Chen, 2014; Devey et al, 2006; Ince, 2003).

The manufacturing of wearing apparel plays an important role in the economy of the North-East India. National Sample Survey Office [NSSO] 73<sup>rd</sup> Round, (2015-2016) shows the share of wearing apparel in the total urban informal manufacturing sector comes to 42.4 %, 41 %, 30 % and 21.4 % in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Assam and Tripura respectively. For Assam, the textiles and wearing apparel sector alone constitutes the industrial group with the highest incidence of subcontracting (28 %).

The fact that manufacturing hasn't been able to compete on a larger scale in North-East is quite apparent. In Assam, apart from few significant industries, the state hasn't been able to tap the abundant labour force, natural resources to make the informal manufacturing sector more vital (Mazumdar, 2012; Saikia, 2014; Saikia & Barman, 2018). The wearing apparel sector, as evident from the literature, is a labour intensive sector and mostly involves the people belonging to the informal sector. The industry is fragmented into stages like, cutting, stitching, dyeing, printing which implies the presence of linkages (Uchikawa, 2012; Ribhu & Agrawal, 2009). The analysis of the linkages of this sector in Assam through a pilot survey exhibits a similar story altogether. Mostly dominated by small enterprises working in constricted quarters, the sector is highly informalised. It comprises of both medium sized enterprises and factories, which are less in number and a multitude of small enterprises.

The growing importance of the wearing apparel sector in income and employment generation, calls for a detailed study of its various dynamics in Assam, which is considered as a manufacturing hub of North-East India. The present study of the Informal Wearing Apparel Manufacturing Enterprises (IWAME) is an attempt to explore its linkages, which has become fundamental in the field of research. Examining its linkages, to see how these enterprises are integrated with the formal sector units will give major insights in what aspects they are lagging behind and what can be further done to make these enterprises at par with the rest of the clusters in India.

The study thematically divides the literature into two sections: firstly, we discuss the existence and pattern of linkages between the informal and formal sector. We then move on to outline the process of informalisation and the kind of linkages that are prevalent in the wearing apparel sector.

### **1. Existence and Pattern of Linkages in Informal Sector**

One of the influential works by (Breman, 1976; Uzzel, 1980) states how the informal sector cannot be viewed as a sector isolated from the rest of the economy as it has linkages with the formal sector. The most common type of linkages between them are the backward and forward linkages (Arimah, 2001) along with technological,

credit and consumer linkages (Sahu, 2010). Two fundamental views have been put forward regarding the linkages pattern between the informal and formal sector. The complementary approach which views the two sectors as mutually beneficial to each other (ILO, 1972; Papola, 1981; Devey et al, 2006; Breman, 1976; Brown & Roever, 2017) and the exploitative view, where the relationship between the two sectors is seen as exploitative in nature (Shaw, 1985). The exploitative nature between the two sectors is generally seen in manufacturing activities because of the formal sector's control on the marketing system (Romatet, 1983). In another study, the quality of linkages (whether they are complementary or exploitative) is explored by looking at which sector does the informal enterprise has its main client and main supplier (Kumase, 2018).

While studying about the linkages between the formal and informal sector, the system of subcontracting is important to understand their interaction (Monroy et al, 2014). Studies have argued that sub-contracting relations are more common among the modern segment of the informal sector (Arimah, 2001; Basole et al, 2015; Monroy et al, 2014). One of the fundamental reason behind subcontracting is the comparative cost advantage gained by the formal sector (Nagaraj, 1984). The availability of unlimited cheap labour in the informal sector gives a chance to the larger firms to farm out their production activities to the smaller units. Empirical evidences from West Bengal, Haryana and Maharashtra shows the existence of greater subcontracting arrangements in the urban areas mostly common in textiles and paper industries (Sahu, 2010). These linkages can help them to reach a wider market area (Bhattacharya & Kesar, 2018) along with an impetus to improve their technology (Basole et al, 2015), all of which can bring major transformations in the traditional informal units.

## **2. Informalisation and Linkages in Wearing Apparel Manufacturing**

The apparel sector which comprises mostly of the small units has vast potential to become competitive at the global level if the infrastructure and supply bottlenecks are addressed (Ramaswamy & Gereffi, 2000). The large scale informality prevalent in the sector has been documented by various studies (Goldar & Aggarwal, 2019; Mezzadri & Srivastava, 2015). Mostly, informalisation takes place through subcontracting arrangements to the informal economy which can include home-based workers or workers, who are not registered or part of any unions (Ascoly, 2004). We get a better understanding of the organisational structure of the industry by drawing attention to relevant literature in Bangladesh, which is considered as the hub for garment industries (Labowitz & Baumann-Pauly, 2015; Mottaleb & Sonobe, 2011; Yunus & Yamagata, 2012).

In India, detailed surveys have been conducted in major apparel clusters to give an idea on the working of the informal sector. Comprehensive studies by (Ribhu & Agrawal, 2009; Kalpagam, 1981), on unorganised garment manufacturing in India explores the apparel industry and its numerous series of processes from cutting, sewing, designing

of garments from fabric and other activities like dyeing, embroidery performed by the informal units. The interplay of independent, small units to subcontracting units and sometimes home-based workers shows the several layers of units engaged in the production process. The nature and role of the informal sector on the wearing apparel sector in India are mostly similar as shown by other studies. Studies by (Sen, 2013; Unni et al, 1999; Mezzadri, 2008) describes the inherent fragmentation of the wearing apparel labour market in West Bengal, Ahmedabad and Delhi respectively. In a typical garment unit in Delhi, workers are engaged in primary operations like cutting, stitching, thread cutting, packing of garments. Other processing activities are farmed out to the specialised agents but mostly tailoring activities are performed by the sub-contracting units (Mezzadri, 2008)

It's important to stress here that the literature focusing on these linkages is scanty in the context of North-East India. One of the reasons being is the lack of industrialisation and dominance of small scale enterprises especially in this sector. When looking at the linkages patterns in Assam, it is found that as compared to other states, the subcontracting linkages are weak in Assam and only a small percentage of the unregistered firms are linked with the registered firms (Dutta, 2017). Similar studies have been done where production linkages are analysed between the formal and the informal sector, and findings have revealed that the backward linkage of these informal enterprises is stronger than forward linkage as most of these enterprises purchase raw materials and other intermediate goods from the formal sector (Mazumdar, 2012) .

Looking into the various studies of sub-contracting, it has been noted that, the impact of subcontracting has been low in India (Bhattacharya & Kesar, 2018), due to the low level of technology, low skills and investment of the informal sector enterprises (Uchikawa, 2011). Before probing into these issues in our case study, we present a brief overview of the prevalence of sub-contracting in North-East India and Assam in particular.

Going back to the period of 2010-11, in the context of North-East (Refer to Table 1), states like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Nagaland shows higher prevalence of subcontracting in urban areas whereas, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura shows higher share of enterprises working on contract basis in rural areas. This scenario has changed in 2015-16, as for the urban region, only Tripura displayed higher share of subcontracting as compared to the rest, whereas for the rural areas, Assam, Manipur, Tripura are notable mentions. Overall, states such as Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura shows higher incidence of enterprises operating on contract basis.

**Table 1: Percentage Share of Enterprises on Contract Basis in North-East India**

	Percentage of Subcontracting Units			
	Rural		Urban	
States	2010-11	2015-16	2010-11	2015-16
Arunachal Pradesh	0.26	0.4	0.66	0.20
Assam	0.48	4.1	0.55	3.90
Meghalaya	0.81	1.1	0.40	0.00
Manipur	0.90	3.9	0.48	3.90
Mizoram	1.26	3	0.13	1.70
Nagaland	0.36	0.0	0.73	0.40
Tripura	2.12	5.5	1.68	8.00
Sikkim	0	0.8	0	0.60

Source: Authors' calculation using NSSO unit level data (67th and 73rd round)

Note: Given figures are percentages within the sector

Further, we have tried to identify the percentage of enterprises under manufacturing operating on contract basis among the major industry groups in Assam (Refer to Table 2). The industries broadly engaged in contract basis include the textiles and wearing apparel, manufacturing of furniture and other manufacturing (jewellery, other articles n.e.c). As corroborated by studies such as (Sahu, 2010; Nagaraj, 1984), industries which are labour intensive, segmented and where production runs through multiple layers mostly undertake subcontracting.

**Table 2: Industry Wise Percentage Share Operating on Contract Basis in Assam**

Description of Manufacturing Activity (NIC-08)	Percentage of Enterprises Working on Contract Basis 2015-2016
Manufacturing of food products (Div. 10)	1.12
Manufacturing of textiles and wearing apparel ((Div. 13-14)	27.61
Manufacturing of wood and products of wood (Div. 16)	5.22
Printing and reproduction of recorded media (Div. 18)	5.22
Manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products (Div. 23)	2.61
Manufacture of fabricated metal products (Div. 25)	6.34
Manufacture of electrical equipment , machinery	
Equipment, motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (Div. 27, 28, 29)	1.12
Manufacture of furniture (Div. 31)	39.55
Other manufacturing (Div. 32)	10.82
Repair and installation of machinery and equipment (Div.33)	0.37

Source: NSSO unit level data (73rd round)

Note: 1) The percentages are calculated among the industrial groups on a contract basis

2) Figures are shown for both rural and urban sector

Exploring further into the contract system prevalent in the informal sector in Assam (Refer to Table 3) our findings show similar results for both rural and urban areas. Majority of these enterprises work on a contract system but cater mostly to the customers. As regards to the backward linkages, in case of manufacturing enterprises, the dependence on the contractor for machinery is less since it is mostly self procured (Rural: 85 %, Urban: 86.7 %). Additionally, for a higher share of enterprises, the supply of raw materials is both self-procured and received from the contractor (Rural: 51.6 %, Urban: 45 %). However, the design specification is mostly specified by the contractor.

**Table 3: Structure of Contract System in Informal Sector in Assam**

Type of Contract	2015-2016	
	Rural	Urban
Working solely for other enterprise/contractor	16.6	20.1
Mainly on contract but also for other customers	22.3	35.1
Mainly for customers but also on contract	61.1	44.8
Equipment supplied by		
Self- procured	85	86.7
Supplied by the master unit/contractor	6.5	7.5
Both	8.5	5.8
Raw material supplied by		
Self- procured	20.9	26.7
Supplied by the master unit/ contractor	27.5	28.3
Both	51.6	45
Design specification		
Specified by the contractor	83	90
Not specified by the contractor	17	10

*Source: NSSO unit level data (73rd round)*

*Note: Given figures are sector-wise percentage shares*

As the literature points out, the various rounds of NSSO provide only limited information about the nature of subcontracting prevalent in the industries. Most of the aspects of quality of linkages, sources of linkages etc. are overlooked (Sahu, 2010). Also, there is a possibility these surveys underestimate the size of informal sector (Basole & Basu, 2011). Thus, it is often advocated to consider data from individual case studies for a more sound understanding. Additionally, even though the general nature of these linkages can be understood from the studies given by different authors, every manufacturing industry will have its own distinctive pattern of linkages which needs to be analysed. On that backdrop, due to the high prevalence of subcontracting in the wearing apparel manufacturing sector, the present study makes an attempt to investigate the linkages of IWAME in Assam to have a comprehensive understanding of the contract system in operation.

The following research questions are being addressed

- i. What are the factors that determine the likelihood of presence of linkages between the IWAME and the formal units?
- ii. What are the quality of these linkages in existence (whether complementary or exploitative)?
- iii. What are the differences in the sources of orders for IWAME and its formal counterpart?

Addressing these questions, the paper is organised into the following sections: Section I covers the Introduction; Section II is about the data sources, hypotheses and methodology; Section III presents the main findings of the study and Section IV provides the conclusion.

## Data and Methodology

### 1. Data Sources

The present study refers to the database taken from NSSO unit level data covering two rounds of enterprise level surveys of unorganised sector in India: 67<sup>th</sup> (2010-2011) and 73<sup>rd</sup> round (2015-2016). Additionally, secondary data was also collected from the District Industrial Centre, Guwahati for the formal enterprises listed in the city. For the primary data, information regarding IWAME has been collected from each of the six zones in the Guwahati Municipal Corporation Area. The final population/universe consisted of all the IWAME currently in operation in all these six zones. These were determined through snowball sampling method, street counting and through information from handloom expos, readymade garment shops, households and tailoring shops. It was followed by construction of the operational sampling frame (1200 enterprises) which consisted of those sampling units with less than 10 workers and that are at least in five years of operation or more. After constructing the sampling frame, the proportionate sampling method was adopted to decide on the no. of samples (500 enterprises) to be taken from each zone relative to the entire population (Refer to Table 4).

**Table 4: Proportionate Sampling technique**

Zones	No. of enterprises	Proportion to total	No. of sample units for zone	Actual no. of sample units for the study
Dispur zone	385	0.321	160.42	160
Lokhra zone	54	0.045	22.50	22
East zone	270	0.225	112.50	113
Central zone	202	0.168	84.17	84
South zone	112	0.093	46.67	47
West zone	177	0.148	73.75	74
	1200		500	

*Source: Field survey data*

## 2. Research Hypotheses and Methodology

Drawing from the existing literature, which explicitly mentions how sub-contracting linkages are more dominant among the modern segment of the informal enterprises (Monroy et al, 2014; Arimah, 2001) and larger informal enterprises in terms of more workers (Basole et al, 2015); studies have also argued how the absence of linkages are observed more among the lower rungs of the informal enterprises (Ranis & Stewart, 1999) and those with lower capital assets (Bohme & Thiele, 2012). In view of the above, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Larger informal enterprises (in terms of more hired workers) are more likely to have linkages with the formal units.

To test the hypothesis, a logistic model has been used to determine the likelihood of presence of linkages between the informal and the formal enterprises. The model specification is given in this form (Hakim et al, 2010):

Model specification:

$$Y_i^* = \beta X_i + u_i \dots\dots (1)$$

Where:  $Y_i = 1$  (presence of linkage) if  $Y_i^* > 0$

$Y_i = 0$  (absence of linkage) if  $Y_i^* < 0$

$B$  = vector of parameters

$X_i$  = vector of independent variables

$U_i$  = error term

Most of the variables considered for the model are adopted from (Mazumdar, 2012; Arimah, 2001) such as: whether the unit has future plans for expansion (FEXP), total workers (TWORK), whether the unit has seen an increase in profitability over the years (PROE), type of establishment (EST), access to training (TRAIN) and credit facilities (CRED).

The probability of enterprise  $i$  having linkages could be written as follows:

$$\Pr (Y_i = 1 | X_i) = F(X_i' \beta) = \frac{\text{Exp}(X_i' \beta)}{1 + \exp(X_i' \beta)} \dots\dots (2)$$

Where  $X_i' = [\text{FEXP}_i \text{ TWORK}_i \text{ PROE}_i \text{ EST}_i \text{ TRAIN}_i \text{ CRED}_i]$

Equation (2) is estimated to find out the probability of the enterprise having linkages.

The second hypothesis formulated is:

H2: Linkages between the IWAME and its formal sector are exploitative in nature.

To determine whether the linkages are exploitative or complementary, the log-lin model has been used (Kumase, 2018). The model follows some specific assumptions: Firstly, it assumes that all informal enterprises favour linkages with the formal units due to added benefits of higher prices and profits. Secondly, the linkage will be beneficial only when the informal enterprise can increase its sales while making transactions with the formal sector. Thirdly, for the purpose of this analysis, we concentrate on exploring the quality of linkage by looking at the sales aspect of forward linkage. To test the hypothesis, the following equation is estimated:

$$\text{Log}(m_i) = \beta_1 + \beta_2 DE_1 + \beta_3 DE_2 + \beta_4 DE_3 + \beta_5 DE_4 + \beta_6 DE_5 + \mu_i \dots\dots\dots (3)$$

Here, the dependent variable is taken as monthly earnings of the enterprises, which is regressed on various independent variables such as gender of the entrepreneur ( $DE_1 = 1$ , if male;  $DE_2 = 0$ , otherwise), part of a cluster ( $DE_2 = 1$ , if enterprise is part of cluster ;  $DE_2 = 0$ , otherwise), type of establishment ( $DE_3 = 1$ , if establishment is permanent;  $DE_3 = 0$ , otherwise), years of experience ( $DE_4 = 1$ , if years of experience is more than 10 years;  $DE_4 = 0$ , otherwise), the main supplier of the informal enterprise ( $DE_5 = 1$ , if the main supplier is formal;  $DE_5 = 0$ , otherwise).

**Results and Discussion**

**1. Type of Contract System**

To develop an overarching understanding into the contractual system in existence for the IWAMEs, four important aspects of backward and forward linkages are summarised (Refer to Table 5)

**Table 5: Type of Contract System in IWAME**

	Percentage of enterprises
<b>Procurement of raw materials</b>	
Formal sector	16.4
Informal sector	45
Both formal and informal sector	38.6
<b>Procurement of machinery and equipment</b>	
Formal sector	31
Informal sector	26.2
Both formal and informal sector	42.8
<b>Type of main market</b>	
Domestic market	96.6
Both domestic and export market	3.4
<b>Kind of products given for production</b>	
Basic intermediate goods	46.6
Final products	10.6
Both	33

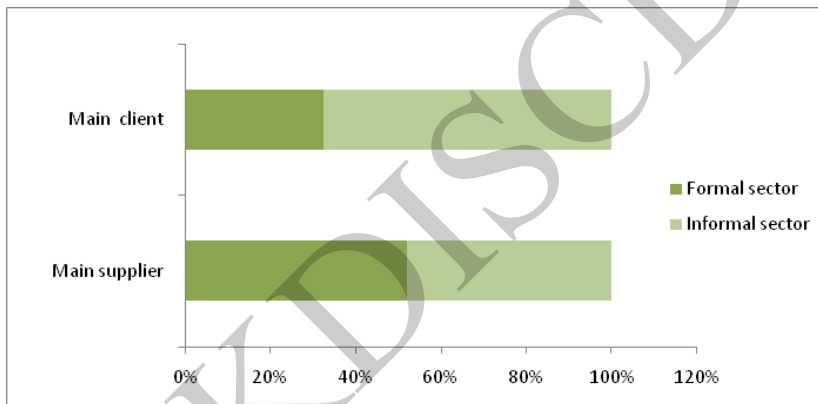
Source: Field survey data

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As regards to the backward linkages, the raw materials is mainly procured from the informal sector (45 %) however, procurement of machinery and equipment is from both formal and informal sector, as shown by 42.8 % enterprises. Clearly, we also observe the dependence of IWAMEs on the formal sector for capital goods (31 %). With regard to the type of main market, unsurprisingly, 97 % of enterprises serve only the domestic market. This reflects their inability to reach a wider market area. Coming to the sub-contracting agreements, the survey noted that the orders mostly restrict to basic intermediate goods (47 %) which demands simple sewing, stitching, thread cutting works to be done and sent back for final finishing.

The magnitude of these linkages has been further probed in the following section (Please see Figure 1) which shows the main client and suppliers of the IWAME.

**Figure 1: Main Client/ Supplier of IWAME**



*Source: Field survey data*

As evident from the findings, the percentage of formal firms that serve as main supplier (52 %) is higher than those who serve as main clients (32.4 %) for the IWAMEs, clearly indicating the dominance of backward linkages over forward linkages. Because of the greater magnitude of backward linkages, the next section examines the factors that determine the probability of existence of backward linkages between the IWAMEs and the formal units.

## 2. Results of Logistic Regression

As previously noted, the binary dependent variable takes the value of 1, if there is presence of backward linkages and 0, otherwise. For description of the predictors, refer to Table 6.

**Table 6: Description of the Predictors**

Predictors	Description
FEXP (Future expansion plans)	(Dummy) Yes =1, No=0
TWORK (Total workers)	(Continuous) Total hired workers
PROF( Profitability of the enterprise )	(Dummy) Yes =1, No=0
EST (Type of establishment)	(Dummy) Permanent = 1, Temporary =0
TRAIN ( Access to training facilities )	(Dummy)Yes =1, No=0
CRED (Access to credit facilities )	(Dummy)Yes =1, No=0

The enterprises which have envisaged to expand in the future are expected to engage in buying raw materials from formal sector; this also applies to enterprises that have seen an increase in their profitability. Moreover, enterprises which have permanent establishments are expected to be better interconnected with formal enterprises. The training of workers and credit availability also work as an added impetus to engage in purchasing raw materials from the formal sector. Finally, the no of hired workers, as stated in the hypothesis, is expected to positively impact the probability of having linkages. For the Model fit statistics, refer to Table 7.

**Table 7: Model Fit Statistics**

Log likelihood	147.599
$\chi^2$	50.956*
(df)	6
Nagelkerke R square	0.296
Overall predicted accuracy	95.2

\*Significant at 1 % level of significance

Note: Hosmer -Lemeshow test [ $\chi^2=11.622$  (non-significant) ( $p > 0.05$ )] show that the model is a good fit.

The estimation results of the parameters and the log ratios are shown below (Refer to Table 8). The estimated regression equation is written as:

$$\text{Ln (odds linkage)} = -0.779 + 1.919\text{FEXP} + 0.631\text{TWORK} + 1.477\text{PROE} + 0.392\text{EST} + 0.03\text{TRAIN} + 0.292\text{CRED}$$

**Table 8: Results of Logistic Regression Model**

Predictors	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Future expansion(1)	1.919	.499	14.783	1	0.00**	6.816
Total workers	.631	.296	4.531	1	0.03*	1.879
Profit(1)	1.477	.599	6.074	1	0.01*	4.378
Establishment(1)	.392	.455	.741	1	0.39	1.480
Training(1)	.030	.633	.002	1	0.96	1.030
Credit facilities (1)	.292	1.150	.064	1	0.80	1.339
Constant	-.779	.671	1.348	1	0.25	.459

$P < 0.05^*$ ,  $P < 0.01^{**}$

The findings revealed that FEXP, TWORK, PROE are significant in explaining the probability of presence of linkages, while the rest of the variables EST, TRAIN, CRED are insignificant. The predictor variable future expansion is found to be having positive effect on the backward linkage, as shown by the positive coefficient (B= 1.919); the effect size is also very large as shown by the odds ratio (6.816), implying informal units which have future expansion plans are 6.816 more likely to establish backward linkage with the formal sector. The variable profitability also is found to have a positive effect on backward linkage as indicated by positive coefficient (B=1.477). The odds ratio of 4.378 indicates that IWAMEs which showed higher profitability are 4.378 times more likely to establish backward linkage than the IWAMEs with low profit. The estimated results show a positive relationship between total hired workers and backward linkages. The odds ratio of 1.879 indicates that IWAMEs with more hired workers are 1.879 more likely to establish backward linkages than those units with fewer hired workers. This finding corroborates with our first hypothesis and we accept the hypothesis that larger informal enterprises are more likely to have linkages with the formal sector.

### 3. Results of Log-Lin Model

While examining the quality of linkages, we focus our attention into two aspects: whether the main supplier or the main client of the IWAMEs is in the formal or informal sector. A similar methodology has been adopted to explore the linkages between informal and formal units in urban Cameroon (Kumase, 2018).

With the assumptions and regression equation stated in Section II, Refer to Table 9 for the regression results of our model. Here, we have run two separate regressions: Model 1, where main client is in the formal sector and Model 2, where main client is in the informal sector.

**Table 9: Estimation of IWAME Sales**

Variables	Log monthly sales					
	Model 1			Model 2		
	Main client = Formal sector			Main client = Informal sector		
	Coefficient	Std.error	VIF	Coefficient	Std.error	VIF
Cluster	0.082*	.046	1.036	.026	.025	1.015
Gender	0.152***	.051	1.160	0.112***	.026	1.133
Establishment	0.219***	.058	1.316	0.096***	.027	1.189
Years of experience	0.229***	.052	1.297	0.200***	.029	1.171
Main supplier						
(Formal=1, Informal=0)	-0.002	.045	1.039	0.074***	.025	1.073
Intercept	3.795***	.063		3.811***	.026	
No. of observations	162			338		
R squared	.386			.337		
Adjusted R squared	.366			.327		
F statistic	19.578			33.685		
Prob (F-statistic)	0.000***			0.000***		
Durbin- Watson	2.097			2.029		

\*\*\* Statistically significant at 1 per cent confidence level

The results show that in both Model 1 and 2, the log of monthly sales is positively and significantly related to gender, type of establishment and years of experience. However, our main variable of interest is 'Main supplier. The findings showed that when our main supplier is in the formal sector, then on an average there is increase in sales only when the main client is in the informal sector, as shown by the significant positive effect. This suggests that linkages are beneficial when the main supplier is in formal sector and main client in informal sector (Model 2). However, in case of Model 1, when the main supplier is in the formal sector, we get a negative coefficient (although insignificant) indicating that with formal sector as the main client, the IWAMEs are not able to increase their sales which leads us to intuitively argue that its more beneficial for them to engage with the informal sector. Moreover, our findings haven't supported our hypothesis, because although linkages with the formal sector have been found exploitative, given our sample, we didn't get a significant outcome.

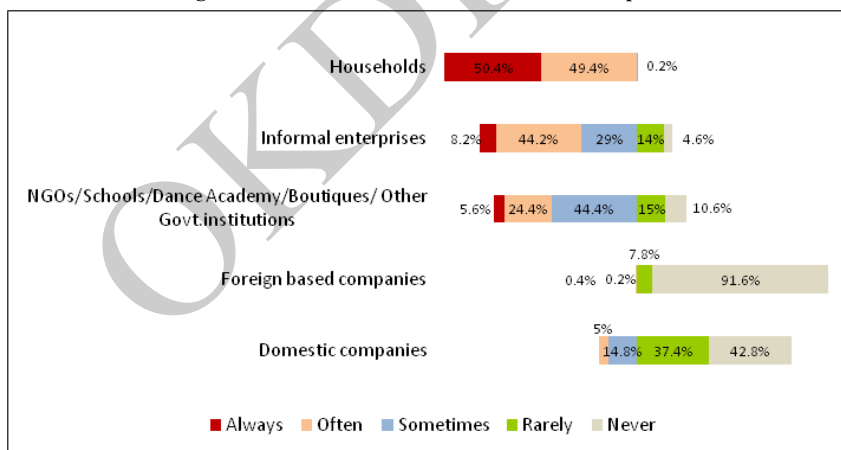
#### 4. Sources of Orders

One of the fundamental questions asked during our survey was regarding the different sources these enterprises get their orders from to get an understanding into the kind of formal and informal units they are linked with. The entrepreneurs' responses are ranked on a 5-point likert scale from 'Always' to 'Never. We draw our results from both the informal enterprises and formal enterprises (Please see Figure 2 and 3). In case

of informal enterprises, five major sources have been identified: Domestic companies, foreign based companies, other wearing apparel informal enterprises and consumer linkages<sup>3</sup>, which we have sub-categorized into households and NGOs/ schools/ dance academy/other Govt. Institutions. Two clear observations are apparent from the empirical evidence: Firstly, the inter-connectedness of these informal enterprises among each other and secondly, the disconnectedness with the domestic and foreign based companies.

Figure 1 shows how linkages with consumers and informal enterprises are depicted to the left side of the centreline (indicating positive outcome) and that of companies (domestic and foreign) are placed to the right (negative outcome). Around 50.4 % of enterprises are receiving orders from households at all times<sup>4</sup>; more than 50 % enterprises are regularly receiving orders from other informal enterprises (This aspect of linkages are quite common where the informal enterprises exchange orders in times of overwork period such as during festivities). Moreover, linkages with NGOs and other private/public institutions indicate that around 24.4 % and 5.6 % of enterprises receive orders from them quite often and at all times respectively. Looking closely to the right side of the figure, orders from the domestic companies are quite negligible (43 % enterprises have never received orders). That also holds true for orders from foreign companies as linkages with them is non-existent.

**Figure 2: Source of Orders for Informal Enterprises**



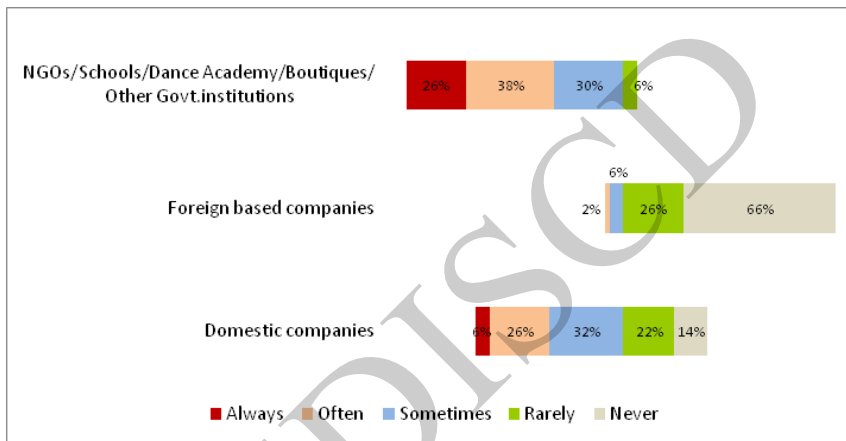
Source: Field survey data

<sup>3</sup> See, (Kumase, 2018), for more information on the category of linkages outlined.

<sup>4</sup> Such observations have been supported by studies [See: (Bohme & Thiele, 2012)] where households constitute an important recipient for informal sector's output.

For comparison purpose, we have attempted to identify the sources of orders for formal enterprises (for three categories) as shown below (Please see Figure 3). The observations show how linkages with the NGOs (along with private/public institutions) and domestic companies aligned more to the left side of the centreline indicating majority of these enterprises catered to these sources (around 26 % and 6 % regularly receive orders from the former and latter respectively). However, orders from foreign based companies didn't see much of an improvement (only 2 % reported to have received orders regularly).

**Figure 3: Source of Orders for Formal Enterprises**



Source: Field survey data

Additionally, we conducted Mann-Whitney test to compare the informal and formal units in terms of differences in the source of orders (Refer to Table 10). The non-parametric test is conducted since the non-normality assumption is violated due to skewness of the ordinal data (Siegel, 2012).

**Table 10: Differences in the Source of Orders**

Statements	Mean Ranks			
	Informal	Formal	Mann- Whitney	Significance
	(n=500)	(n=50)	U	(two-tailed)
How often do you receive orders from outside sources?				
Domestic companies	262.55	405.04	6023.00*	0.00
Foreign based companies	268.99	340.62	9244.00*	0.00
NGOs/Schools/Dance Academy				
Boutiques/Other Govt. institutions	264.53	385.17	7016.00*	0.00

\* $p < 0.05$

The higher mean ranks of the formal enterprises implies that this group can be considered as getting the highest orders from the three categories as compared to the informal enterprises. It is also concluded that the orders received from domestic companies ( $U=6023, p=.00$ ), foreign based companies ( $U=9244, p=.00$ ), NGOs/schools/dance academy/boutiques/other Govt. Institutions ( $U=7016, p=.00$ ) for the formal units are statistically significantly higher than the informal enterprises.

The main findings reflected from the above analysis suggest that although differences are visible between formal and informal units, their association with the domestic and foreign based companies is low. For the IWAMEs, linkages or subcontracting arrangements mostly happens within the cocoon of households, NGOs and other informal enterprises. Although some enterprises have reported sourcing their orders from outside the country such as that from Bangladesh, most of them cater to the regional orders. The widening gap with the foreign and domestic based companies can be explained from the fact that these enterprises haven't technologically evolved over the years. Their dependence on manual machines, low working capital are added bottlenecks to their production operations. Evidently, this also implies that the activities given out for sub-contracting mostly involve less specialized work such as *dahi bata*, *picou* (forms of sewing design in traditional attire for women), stitching, button work, interlock work, logo making for custom T-shirts and hand-embroidery other than specialized activities like printing, sitaramoti, zari work which are only farmed out to specific units.

#### IV. Conclusions

The paper tried to explain the different dynamics of linkages between the IWAMEs and the formal units. An overview of the probability of existence of linkages, linkage patterns, and source of subcontracting agreements was elucidated. These issues were analysed because, studies will only be effective when we can have a fruitful analysis on how this sector can be incorporated or linked to the formal sector especially when our economy mostly relies on the labour intensive industries.

The findings revealed that future expansion plans, total workers, increase in profitability are positive and significant in determining the probability of presence of linkages. On the quality of linkage, the linkage pattern has been found beneficial, only when the main supplier and main client is in the formal and informal sector respectively. Additionally, the sources of orders mostly confine within the households and informal enterprises. One of the major conclusions drawn from our findings is the dominance of backward linkages over forward linkages; which indicates that although raw materials are procured from the formal sector, the final products are not being sold to the formal sector. In situations, where the formal sector is the main client, the IWAMEs are not able increase their sales. On that backdrop, the main questions to reflect and ponder upon are: What is the reason behind low forward linkages with the formal sector? Why does the production operations involve less specialised activities? Why do these

enterprises mostly cater to consumer orders? These issues deserve more attention especially when we are examining linkages in North-East India, where despite being situated in close proximity with the major garment hubs of the world, there hasn't been any growth of major apparel clusters.

Our findings call for policies to bridge the pervasive divide between the sectors and tailor them to the advantage of the IWAMEs by blocking existing bottlenecks. Firstly, the technological challenges need to be addressed. The reason for low specialisation is due to their dependence in obsolete machines, mostly operated manually. Thus, incentives need to be provided to improve their level of technology along with investment in machinery and other equipment. Secondly, skilled labour should be prioritised as both technology and human capital investment are interlinked and go hand in hand. Thirdly, the survival of the IWAMEs in the growing competitive environment depends on quality improvement of the finished products. The reason for less prevalence of forward linkages is an indicative of the fact that their products don't have good finishing and can't compete with those from the formal sector. Thus, appropriate measures to create opportune spaces for them to make their products innovative are required. Drawing lessons from other countries, China shows an interesting example of how double digit growth rates were achieved through the growth of the informal sector (Jutting et al, 2008) mainly driven by the dynamic development of small business units, innovativeness in the products and services not supplied by the formal sector and ability to cater to the market demand rapidly (World Bank, 2007). Needless to say, it's important to stress here that the right kind of policies can definitely shed light towards embarking more competitiveness and productivity within the sector.

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## Out-Migration from Tripura: An Exploration

Pradip Chouhan<sup>1</sup>, Indraneel Bhowmik<sup>2</sup>, Dilip Kr. Rana<sup>3</sup> & Pritam Bose<sup>4</sup>

### Abstract

*The aspect of out-migration in India varies enormously across the different regions and has several dimensions. In the North-Eastern region, out-migration has been rising in recent years owing to limited economic opportunities, widespread social and political stress, and the changing aspirations of the people, particularly youth. Census data provides a substantial glimpse over the causes of migration, but there is not much to learn about the consequences. In this context, the present paper examines the causes, linkages, and factors behind the incidence of out-migration from Tripura using primary data in the backdrop of the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM).*

*The paper observes that the most prominent cause of out-migration is employment and work, followed by education; as a result, the incidences of remittances are also noted. A probit regression model indicated that factors like location, religious background, income, and education are significant determinants of the incidence of out-migration.*

### Introduction

Migration in India is a significant occurrence, as in certain parts of the country, for every four households, at-least three migrants are found, and the dynamics of migration on the individuals, households, and regions has a strong and significant impact on the national economy and society (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003). Moreover, the implications and facets of migration in a vast country like India are immense; many times, migration and migrants have a profound opinionated lineage that no government can ignore. Thus, migration issues remain extremely politically sensitive in India.

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<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Faculty of Management and Commerce, ICAFI University, Tripura, Email: pradipchouhan08@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Professor, Dept. of Economics, Tripura University, Email: eyebees@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Assistant Professor, Dept. of Economics, Tripura University, Email: diliprana@tripurauniv.ac.in

<sup>4</sup> Assistant Professor, Faculty of Management and Commerce, ICAFI University, Tripura, Email: pritambose2008@gmail.com

Migration in the case of North-East India, both legal and illegal, has been a contentious issue for a long and is considered as one of the factors responsible for the state of affairs in the region as it is now. The altered demographical profile of the region in the post-independence period is undoubtedly an outcome of India's tragic partition and the associated migration. According to Census 2011, these seven states are home to 3.73% of the country's population and account for 3.28% of the total migrants in the country. Interestingly, the population of migrants includes international and domestic (inter-region and intra-region) movements but ignores several short-term and seasonal travels for livelihood, a common feature in agrarian and less developed regions like North East India.

The aspect of outmigration in India varies enormously across the different regions and has several dimensions. It may be noted that though North East India is experiencing both inflows and outflows of people, some pieces of the literature suggest rising out-migration from the region in recent years, mainly owing to- a] people seeking refuge from conflict, b] limited livelihood opportunities & c] changing aspirations and attitude of the growing middle class (McDuié-Ra, 2013; Remeingam, 2016; Muktiar, 2017; NES&H, 2011). Many persons from the NER, including Tripura, reside across the country, though the crux is concentrated primarily in the metros like- New Delhi, Bangalore, Kolkata, Mumbai & Chennai. The causes for migration vary; some have moved out for education and settled down later for work, facilitating migration perpetuation. The out-migrants are a heterogeneous mix with varying skill levels and join diverse activities ranging from the hospitality sector to security services, from agricultural labourers to professional services. It may be noted that Census data provides a substantial glimpse over the causes of migration, but there is not much to learn about the consequences.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

Theoretical expositions on migration generally focus on two orientations- the origin of the process and the system's perpetuation. Numerous studies have led to various theories, mostly built upon the basic tenets of microeconomics- rationality and self-interest. Smith (1776) and Ravenstein (1889) believed people moved following differentials until the economic equilibrium was attained, while the convergence of wages in the source and destination was the basis of the analysis of Heckscher (1949) and Ohlin (1933); Todaro (1969), Harris-Todaro (1970), and Todaro (1980) explained rural-urban migration on the assumption that people moved not because of recent earnings but on the expected earnings of the future.

Personal factors were the determining issue for migration, according to many theorists. The human capital theory of Sjaastad (1962) considers migration as an investment decision; Lee (1966) analysed migration decisions based on positive and negative factors in the destination and origin countries in his early decision-making theory. The Dual Labour market is also a contributory factor to migration (Piore, 1979), while Borjas (1987)

believes migration as an outcome of self-selection. The commonality of these cited studies are the focus on the individual, which is the primary trait of neo-classical economics.

On the other hand, the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) depart from the neo-classical framework as the family and the community come into the decision-making process. The family migration theory (Kubursi, 2006) suggests that the practice of risk-sharing among family members in case of migration not being positive. The relative deprivation theory (Epstein, 1967) indicates that poor people have a greater incentive to migrate, while the motivation decisions theory (Sell and Dejong, 1978) considers the possibility, motive, expectation, and incentive to influence migration. The rational expectation theory suggests migration to a place where the return is highest (Haug, 2008), while the consumption theory (Wallace, 1997) proposes utility maximisation.

However, the continuity in research on migration issues has brought in several new considerations into the analytical expositions. The migration process appears to be more complex than the scope of the traditional model (Bonasia and Napolitano, 2012); thus, newer studies consider a host of variables influencing migration decision-making. The subjective well-being and aspirations for the future (Czaika and Vothknecht 2014), along with factors like the general economic and unemployment prospects, foreign employment, and networks (Czaika, 2015), are emerging as factors influencing migration decisions.

Pure economic variables like- Real wage; real GDP per capita (Jennissen, 2004; Cattaneo, 2008; Kurunova, 2013)); Unemployment; the number of new jobs created (Tupa and Strunz, 2013) are found to be factors affecting migration as are social sector issues like- educational level; learning and practising language skills; new knowledge; fertility rates; ageing of the labour force, material and cultural linkages between countries (Jennissen, 2004; van der Gaag and van Wissen, 2008); Bonasia and Napolitano, 2012; Tupa and Strunz, 2013). Polgreen and Simpson (2011) used happiness as a variable in explaining migration, while environmental factors like carbon dioxide emission are also considered (Bonasia and Napolitano, 2012).

The use of social, demographic, financial, and environmental variables along with standard economic variables in recent years indicates the widening dimension of the migration system. Five types of migrants have been listed: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualisation needs. The new pieces of literature indicate that social, psychological, and biological could be potential areas affecting migration decisions in the future. In this background, the argument about analysing migration dynamics and migrant behaviour from the perspective of behavioural economics is being voiced (Zickute & Kumpikaite-Valiuniene, 2015).

The theoretical exploration of migration is thus extremely vast and has several facets. However, the multitude of variables affecting migration is an indicator of the system's

complexity and is often beyond the scope of any single study. For the present study, the analytical framework of NELM shall have been considered, particularly because of the disagreement about the causes and consequences of migration and the alleged reverse direction of remittances to facilitate the education and job search of the migrants. NELM is based on the view that migration is a family decision often made by household members together for the greater well-being of the family. The rationale behind the migration decision is to maximise income and status on the one hand and minimise risk on the other (Taylor, 1991). NELM is an attempt to link the migration decision to the outcome and impact of migration, and in most cases, the remittances act as the link between these two episodes occurring at two different points of time, which are highly dynamic in nature. However, one cannot deny the fact that migration and remittances from it have both positive and negative effects on the welfare of participating households and communities, depending on the type of household/community.

In this context, the present paper examines the causes, linkages, and factors behind the incidence of out-migration from Tripura using primary data in the backdrop of the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM).

### **Objectives**

1. To analyse the causes of out-migration from Tripura
2. To examine the form of linkages of the migrant to the home base
3. To determine the factors behind the incidence of out-migration

The present paper is structured into four parts, including the present one comprising an introduction, theoretical underpinnings, and objectives. The Methodology for the study comprises the second section, followed by the results and Data Analysis in the third section. The fourth section surmises the earlier sections and provides the concluding remarks.

### **Section: II**

#### **Methodology**

##### **2.1 Data**

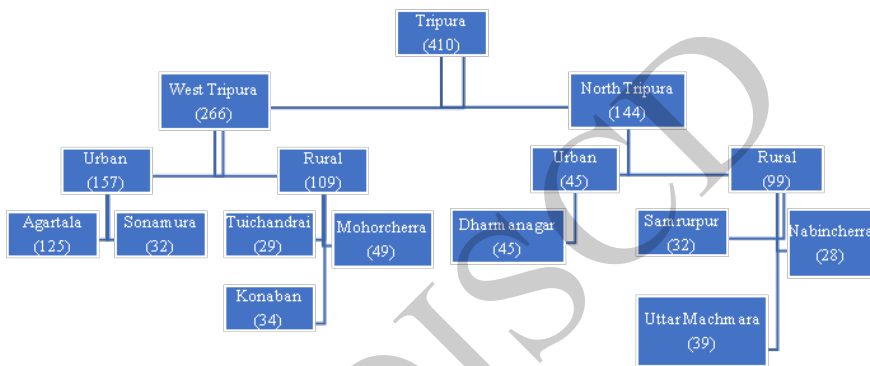
The study is based on primary data. It is obtained through a field survey of 410 households (a minimum sample size of 384 is needed when the population size is large and undefined<sup>5</sup>) across the state of Tripura spread over two districts, three urban areas, and six villages. Information was collected through a structured schedule explicitly developed for the purpose. The representative sample selected for the study has 202 respondent households from urban areas and 208 respondent households from rural areas, which satisfies the minimum size requirement.

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<sup>5</sup> Cochran, W.G. (1963) Sampling Technique. 2nd Edition, John Wiley and Sons Inc., New York.

**2.2 Sample Distribution:**

A multi-Stage (3 stages) random sampling procedure has been adopted for the selected samples for the study. In the first stage, two districts, West Tripura, and North Tripura have been selected. Further, districts are further segregated into urban and rural areas in the next stage. Among the rural area, we have selected six villages/GPs, and among the urban areas, we have three cities/towns as representatives.



Agartala is the capital of Tripura state, positioned near the Bangladesh border astride the Haora River and the state’s commercial centre. Sonamura is a Nagar Panchayat city in quarter of West Tripura, Tripura. Konaban is located in the Bishalgarh Block the of West Tripura quarter. Tuichandrai is in Teliamura Tehsil of the West Tripura district in Tripura. It is positioned 4 km down from sub-district head-quarters Teliamura and 40 km from headquarters Agartala. Moharcherra is in Teliamura Block of West Tripura District.

Dharmanagar is a city in the North Tripura district of Tripura. It is the alternate-largest civic body within Tripura, after Agartala, and an important commercial centre in the state due to its strategic position connectivity and numerous business & fiscal institutions. Uttar Machmara and Nabincherra are in the Pecharthal Block of North Tripura District. Uttar Machmara has located 29 KM towards the South of the District headquarters Kailasahar and 105 KM from the capital Agartala. Nabincherra is located 23 KM towards the East of the District headquarters Kailasahar and 112 KM from the capital Agartala. Samrurpar is in Gournagar Block in the North Tripura District of Tripura State, India. It is located 4 KM towards the west of the district headquarters of Kailasahar and 104 KM from the State capital Agartala.

### 2.3 Tools and Techniques

The study has used standard tools for addressing the objectives. Moreover, a regression model has been used to identify the determinant factors-

$Y = \alpha + \beta_i X_i + \epsilon_i$ , where the dependent variable Y is migration behaviour, X is behavioural variables &  $i=1 \dots N$

The dependent variable used was the incidence of out-migration in the household, and the explanatory variables include- age, gender, and educational level of the head of the household, household family income, religion, caste category, economic status, and family size. Since the dependent variable is categorical, having a binary outcome of 0 and 1, and the independent variables contain both numerical variables as well as categorical variables; we have used the Probit model for estimation, and the functional form of the relationship is-

Migration = f (*Age of HH, Family Size, Education of HH, Household Income, Gender of HH, Location of the HH, Caste/ Community, Religion, Type of Ration Card*)

### Section III

### Results & Data Analysis

#### 3.1 The Extent of Out-Migration

Table 1: Incidence of outmigration

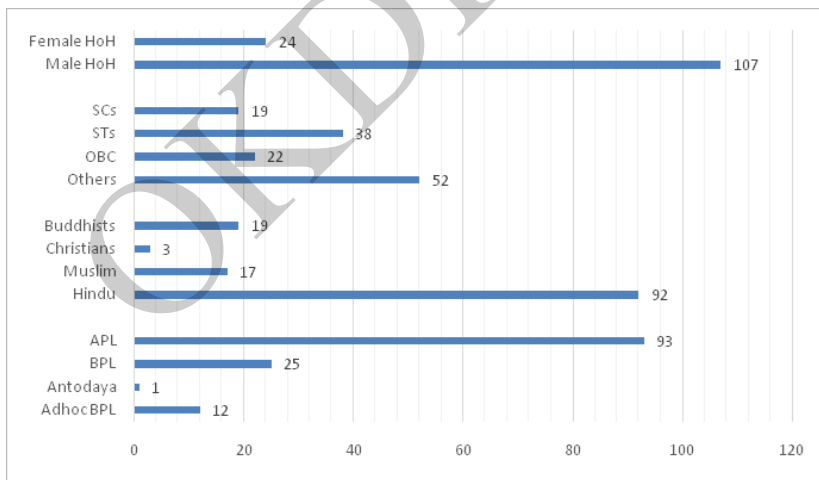
	Place	HHs with out-migrants (nos.)	Share in Area Sample (%)	Out-migrants from sample HHs(nos.)
1	Konabon (Kn)	2	5.9	2
2	Moharchara (Mo)	12	24.5	12
3	Uttar Machmara (Um)	18	46.2	19
4	Tuichandrai (Te)	10	34.5	10
5	Samrurpar (Sp)	9	31.0	14
6	Nabinchhara (Nc)	14	50.0	15
A	Rural (RT)	65	31.3	72
1	Dharmanagar (Dn)	12	26.7	12
2	Sonamura (Sm)	13	40.6	15
3	Agartala (Ag)	41	32.8	46
B	Urban (UT)	66	32.7	73
C	Tripura (TR)	131	32.0	145

Source: Computed from field survey, 2019

Table 1 shows that 32% of the respondent households have family members residing beyond the household currently in a different place. The incidence of out-migration is marginally higher for the urban areas, 32.7%, while it is 31.3% among the rural respondents. Within the rural areas, the incidence is highest in Uttar Machmara, while it is least in Konabon. On the other hand, among the urban areas, the incidence is highest in Sonamura, while it is less in Dharmanagar. However, the interesting part is that 131 households account for 145 out-migrants with Samrurpar, Uttar Machmara, and Nabincherra, all belonging to the rural region of the erstwhile North Tripura district, suggesting a few households with more than one out-migrant. Similarly, Sonamura and Agartala, from the West Tripura district, indicate a few such households among the urban areas.

From Fig. 1, we see that among the households with family members as out-migrants, almost 107 are male-headed (82%), while 92 (70%) of them are Hindus and belong to the APL category ration cardholders. The religion-specific division indicates that Buddhist and Muslim households account for around 19 (15%) and 17 (13%) of the out-migrant households, whereas only 3(2%) are Christian. Also noted is that 25 (19%) out-migrants belong to BPL households, while 12(9%) are from the ad-hoc BPL category. The community-wise breakup shows that others or unreserved category lead among the out-migrants household with almost 52(40%) share followed by ST households which account for 38(29%); the SCs and OBCs share the rest.

**Fig 1: Socio-economic features of Households with Out-migrants (Nos.)**



Source: Computed from field survey, 2019

### 3.2 The Out-migrants

Table 2 shows that the average age of the out-migrant from the respondent household is 29.08 years. The out-migrant from a rural areas is 28 years old, while those from urban areas were 29.49 years. The average age of out-migrants from Samrurpar village

is the highest among the sample areas, 39.44 years, while those from Konabon and Nabincharra are the youngest. The average age of out-migrants from urban areas is lowest in Dharmanagar and highest in Sonamura.

The gender distribution of out-migrants indicates male dominance. Out of the 145 out-migrants from the sample respondent households, only 40 were female. In rural areas, 76.4% are males, while 68.5% are males in urban areas. The incidence of female out-migrants is highest among the respondent households of Agartala city and least in Mohorchara village, ignoring the exception of Konabon, whereof the two out-migrants, one is female thereby making a ratio of 50:50.

One person from Samrurpar village is illiterate among the out-migrants, accounting for 0.7% of the total out-migrant. In aggregate, we find that 22.1% of the out-migrants are graduates while 20% of them are secondary school pass-outs. Almost 7.6% of the out-migrants are technically qualified, while another 12.3% are post-graduates. Considering the rural out-migrants, it is observed from Table 2, that almost one-fourth of them are higher secondary pass, and 23.6% are secondary school pass-outs. Expectedly, the urban out-migrants are higher degree holders, with 26% being graduates and 17.8% being post-graduates. Interestingly, 41.3% of the out-migrants from Dharmanagar are graduates, the highest for any area.

**Table 2: Profile of out-migrants (in %)**

	Kn	Mo	Um	Tc	Sp	Nc	RT	Ag	Dn	Sm	UT	GT
N	2	12	19	10	14	15	72	46	12	15	73	145
Av Age (Yrs)	23.0	28.5	28.6	24.9	39.4	23.7	28.0	27.6	26.6	34.3	29.5	29.1
<b>Sex*</b>												
Male	50.0	91.7	78.9	70.0	85.7	60.0	76.4	60.9	75.0	86.7	68.5	72.4
Female	50.0	8.3	21.1	30.0	14.3	40.0	23.6	39.1	25.0	13.3	31.5	27.6
<b>Education Level*</b>												
Illiterate					7.1		1.4					0.7
Pri		8.3			21.4		5.6	2.2		6.7	2.7	4.1
Elem #		33.3	10.5	10.0	28.6	6.7	16.7	13.0	8.3	40.0	17.8	17.2
Sec	100.0	8.3	26.3	10.0	35.7	20.0	23.6	13.0	8.3	33.3	16.4	20.0
HS(+2)		16.7	26.3	30.0	0.0	53.3	25.0	8.7	8.3		6.8	15.9
Grad		33.3	26.3	10.0	7.1	13.3	18.1	28.3	41.7	6.7	26.0	22.1
PG.			10.5	20.0		6.7	6.9	17.4	25.0	13.3	17.8	12.4
Dip (T)				20.0			2.8	13.0	8.3		9.6	6.2
Deg (T)								4.3			2.7	1.4

Source: Computed from field survey, 2019

Notes: \*- Components in percentage and sums up to 100; #- Elementary Education; ^- Secondary Education GT- Grand Total; UT- Urban; RT- Rural; Ag- Agartala; Dn- Dharmanagar; Sm- Sonamura; Kn- Konabon; Sp- Samrurpar; Mo- Mohorcherra; Um- Uttar Machmara; Tc- Tuichandrai; Nc- Nabincherra

### 3.3 Causes of Out-migration

Table 3 shows that the most prominent cause of out-migration are employment and work. Almost 47% of the out-migration has occurred for this reason across the state, with the incidence being higher in rural areas. Work and employment issues as the major cause are found in all the three urban sites and among four of the six rural sites. The second most prominent cause of out-migration is Studies and education (33.1%), which is the most prominent reason in the two ST dominant rural areas, Nabincherra and Tuichindrai. Education-related migration stands in the second position in all three urban areas. Marriage as a cause of migration is found in Agartala mainly and occurs among females only. Out-migration for business is found among 7% of the samples and is more prominent in rural areas than urban areas. Social and political factors have also been the cause of out-migration in some rural areas. Further, there have been instances of out-migration of dependent family members, which as per census terminology is called as moved with the household; and such cases though negligible, are found in both urban and rural areas.

**Table 3: Causes\* of out-migration (in %)**

	Kn	Mo	Um	Tc	Sp	Nc	RT	Ag	Dn	Sm	UT	GT
<b>N</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>145</b>
Emp/Work	50.0	58.3	64.3	20.0	57.9	40.0	<b>50.0</b>	34.8	50.0	66.7	<b>43.8</b>	<b>46.9</b>
Business			14.3	20.0	5.3	13.3	<b>9.7</b>	6.5	0.0	0.0	<b>4.1</b>	<b>6.9</b>
Education		16.7	7.1	60.0	36.8	46.7	<b>31.9</b>	32.6	41.7	33.3	<b>34.2</b>	<b>33.1</b>
Soc/Pol		16.7	7.1				<b>4.2</b>					<b>2.1</b>
Marriage	50.0		7.1				<b>2.8</b>	26.1			<b>16.4</b>	<b>9.7</b>
MovHH		8.3					<b>1.4</b>		8.3		<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.4</b>

Source: Computed from field survey, 2019

Notes: \*- Components in percentage and sums up to 100; GT- Grand Total; UT- Urban; RT- Rural; Ag- Agartala; Dn- Dharmanagar; Sm- Sonamura; Kn- Konabon; Sp- Samrurpar; Mo- Mohorcherra; Um- Uttar Machmara; Tc- Tuichandrai; Nc- Nabincherra

### 3.4 Occupation and engagement of Out-migrants

**Table 4: Occupational\* Profile of out-migrants (in %)**

	Kn	Mo	Um	Tc	Sp	Nc	RT	Ag	Dn	Sm	UT	GT
<b>N</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>145</b>
Defence		33.3	14.3	10.0	5.3		11.1	4.3		6.7	4.1	7.6
Govt. Serv			14.3		10.5	6.7	6.9	4.3		6.7	4.1	5.5
Professionals								6.5	16.7	6.7	8.2	4.1
Skilled Work		25.0	21.4	10.0	5.3	13.3	13.9	2.2		40.0	9.6	11.7
Unskilled work	50.0	8.3	7.1		5.3		5.6	8.7			5.5	5.5
Teacher		8.3			15.8		5.6	10.9			6.8	6.2
Busi/ Tradi			14.3		5.3		4.2	4.3		6.7	4.1	4.1
Private Service			14.3		5.3	20.0	8.3	8.7	33.3	13.3	13.7	11.0
Homemaker		8.3	7.1				2.8	10.9			6.8	4.8
Student	50.0	16.7		80.0	36.8	60.0	37.5	37.0	50.0	20.0	35.6	36.6
Unemployed			7.1		10.5		4.2	2.2			1.4	2.8

Source: Computed from field survey, 2019

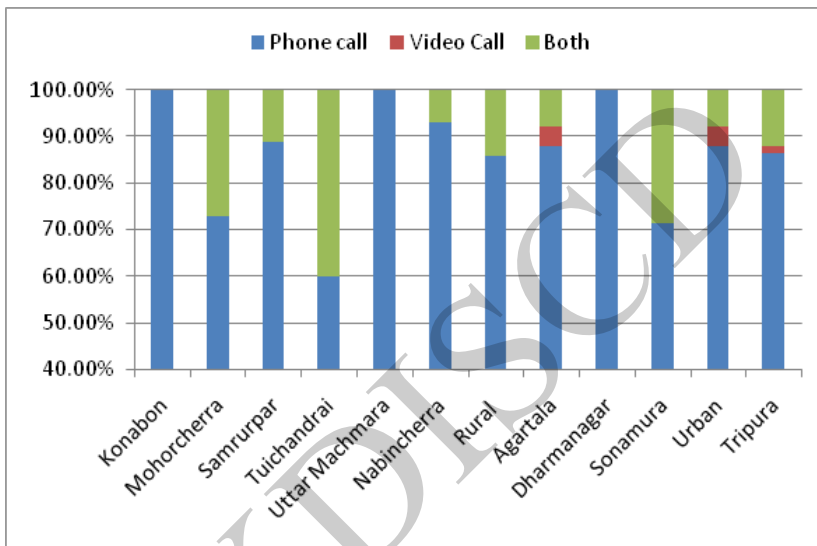
Notes: \*- Components in percentage and sums up to 100; #- Formal Education; GT- Grand Total; UT- Urban; RT- Rural; Ag- Agartala; Dn- Dharmanagar; Sm- Sonamura; Kn- Konabon; Sp- Samrupar; Mo- Mohorcherra; Um- Uttar Machmara; Tc- Tuichandrai; Nc- Nabincherra

Table 4 shows that the respondent households' largest chunks of the out-migrants are students, 36.6%. Interestingly, some out-migrants have moved away for a different cause but are currently pursuing education. Few female out-migrants moved away due to marriage but are presently pursuing some educational courses. Among those moving away for work, a heterogeneous mix is observed. Almost 12% are skilled workers at a place different from their permanent residence. 11% of the out-migrants work in the private sector, whereas only 5.5% of the out-migrants had to move away as an outcome of government employment. Work in the defence services and paramilitary forces accounts for 7.6% of outmigration among the respondents. Interesting to note here is that the incidence of occupations like- defence & paramilitary forces, skilled workers, and government services are much more in rural areas than in urban areas. Also, interesting to note here is that the rural sector leads in terms of the incidence of studies/education as a current vocation. The role of the homemaker is higher in urban areas when compared to that of rural areas. Among other occupational engagements included are that of a teacher, businessperson, traders, and alike. In other words, we may say that economic activity-based engagement accounts for 56% of the employment, while non-economic activity-based occupational classifications include

homemakers, students, and employment aspirants, and the unemployed account for 44% of the sample group. It may be further noted that students account for 80% and 60% of the out-migrants in Tuichandrai and Nabincherra, the two ST majority rural areas of the sample.

### 3.5 The tying knots- Links with the homeland

Fig- 2: Modes of Connection



Source: Computed from field survey, 2019

Fig 2 indicates that phone calls are the most prominent form of connectivity between the out-migrant and his family back at the permanent residence. With the advent of mobile telephone, when connecting to home, it was no longer a hard task. Apart from voice calls, video calls are also in practice, particularly because of the greater access to Internet facilities. Konabon and Dharmanagar are the only exceptions where visual medium is not practised. The incidence of video calls is highest in Tuichandrai, 40% of the respondents use both voice and video calls. In Agartala, two households, accounting for above 4% of the city’s respondents, reported exclusive video calls as a mode of contact among themselves.

Table 5 suggests that daily phone calls are the prevalent norm among 56.83% of respondent households across the states. The feature is higher in rural areas (64.18%), with rates being more than 80% of the samples at Mohorcherra and Samrurpar. Among the urban areas, 60.0% of respondents from Sonamura report daily phone calls. Weekly phone calls are reported by 14.3% of respondents in aggregate with greater intensity in urban areas. Frequent phone calls are more common in rural areas, where no specific routine is followed, but the two extensions of the families

talk over the phone at least a few times a month. Monthly phone calls and contact have been reported by 13% of households, with higher reporting from Nabincherra and Dharmanagar. However, monthly frequency has declined over time with better and improved connectivity across the state.

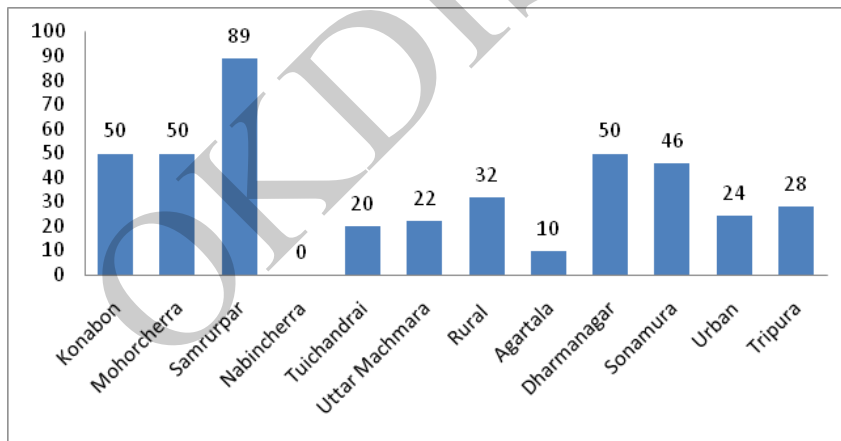
**Table 5: Frequency of Connection**

	Kn	Mo	Um	Tc	Sp	Nc	RT	Ag	Dn	Sm	UT	GT
N	2	12	19	10	14	15	72	46	12	15	73	145
Daily	50.0	83.3	57.9	60.0	88.9	46.6	64.2	45.6	50.0	60.0	49.3	56.4
Weekly	50.0		5.3	10.0	11.1		5.9	19.6	25.0	26.7	21.9	14.3
Frequently			31.9	20.0		26.7	17.9	19.6		13.3	15.1	16.4
Monthly		16.7	5.3	10.0		26.7	11.9	15.2	25.0		13.7	12.9

Notes: \* - in percentage; # - Formal Education; GT- Grand Total; UT- Urban; RT- Rural; Ag- Agartala; Dn- Dharmanagar; Sm- Sonamura; Kn- Konabon; Sp- Samrurpar; Mo- Mohorcherra; Um- Uttar Machmara; Tc- Tuichandrai; Nc- Nabincherra

**3.6 Aspects of Remittances**

**Fig 3: Incidence of remittances (%)**

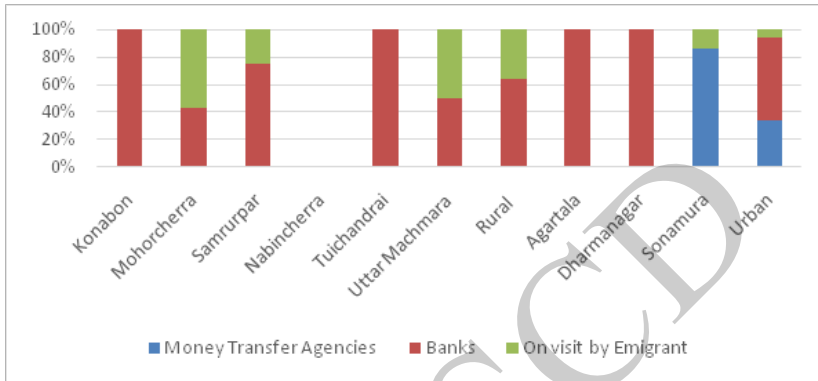


Source: Computed from field survey, 2019

Out-migration for work is associated with remittances, and the sample in our study is no exception. 28% of the out-migrants are found to be remitting to their families at the origin. The incidence of remittances is higher among the rural respondents, 32%, whereas for the urban respondents, the incidence is 24%. Samrurpar records the highest incidence while it is entirely non-existent in Nabincherra village. The incidence is least in Agartala among the urban areas, as seen in Fig 3. Places with a higher proportion of education-related out-migration indicate lower remittances. Funds are generally

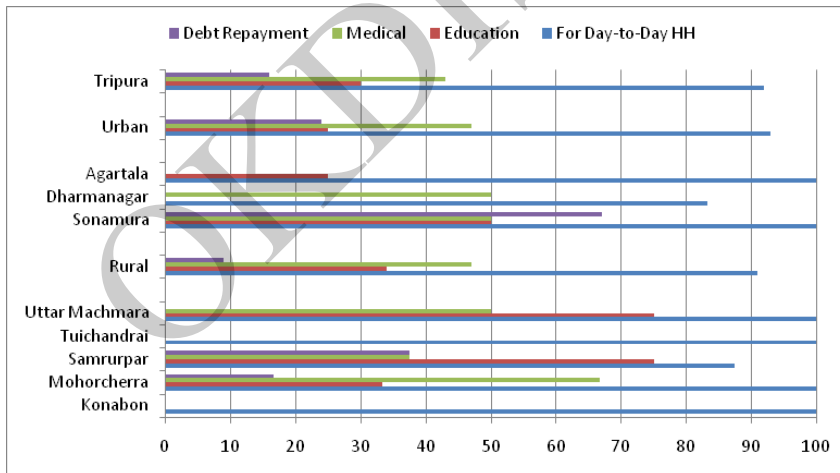
transferred through bank transactions in almost all areas, the sample areas, with 100% cases at Konabon and Tuichandrai villages and Agartala city. However, in Sonamura, transactions through specialised money transfer agencies are reported. Also observed is the incidence of cash remittances during the visits of the out-migrant to home.

**Fig 4: Modes of Remittances**



Source: Computed from field survey, 2019

**Fig 5: Use of remittances**



Source: Computed from field survey, 2019

Fig 5, shows that the remitted money is used for various purposes. Almost 92% of the households receiving remittances report using it to meet their transactions demand. All households from Agartala, Sonamura, Tuichandrai, Uttar Machmara, Moharcharra, and Konabon depend on remittances for their day-to-day consumption behaviour. Remitted money is also helpful for medical purposes, as reported by 43% of households. Remittances for medical usage are higher in rural areas and more

specifically in Samrupar and Uttar Machmara. Remittances provide for educational support to household members, as reported by almost 30% of respondents across the state. Almost 75% of households in Uttar Machmara indicate using the available fund for the education of younger household members, while in Sonamura, such usage has been reported by 50% of households. Last but not least, remittances are useful for debt repayment, as indicated by 16% of households with incidences in Sonamura, Samrupar, and Mohorcherra.

### 3.7 Factors contributing to Migration

Nonetheless, based on the above discussion, it is seen that there are wide variances in the nature, type, and character of the migrants and their households. As seen earlier, the incidence of migration has been more or less similar among the urban and rural regions. However, there are differences in terms of various social and economic characteristics.

The dependent variable, in our case, is the incidence of outmigration among family members. The explanatory variables include- age, gender, and educational level of the head of the household, household family income, religion, caste category, economic status, and family size. As the dependent variable is categorical in nature, there are two options- households with an incidence of out-migration and households without out-migration; the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression technique will not be applicable. Therefore, we resort to generalised linear modelling. In our case, the dependent variable is a binary outcome coded as 0 and 1. Households with an incidence of out-migration are assigned one, while those without out-migration are coded as 0. Among the explanatory variables, we have both the numerical variables as well as categorical variables. We use the Probit model for estimation, and the functional form of the relationship is-

**Migration = f (Age of HH, Family Size, Education of HH, Household Income, Gender of HH, Location of the HH, Caste/ Community, Religion, Type of Ration Card)**

Here, numerical variables include- Age of the head of the household, family size, years of schooling, and income. The natural log values of these four variables have been used in the regression model. Binary coding has been used for two variables, namely the Gender of the head of the household (male =0; female =1) and the location of the household (rural=0, urban= 1). We have used dummy variables regarding caste categories, religious affiliations, and types of ration card possession to indicate the household's economic status. The dummy structures for the three characters are as below-

For religion, considering Hindus as the reference group, Drel1 refers to Muslim=1, 0 otherwise, Drel2 refers to Christians=1, 0 otherwise; and Drel3 refers to Buddhist=1, 0 otherwise; similarly for ration card possession, considering APL as the reference group, we have – Drc1 refers to BPL=1, 0 otherwise, Drc2 refers to Antodaya=1, 0

otherwise; Drc3 refers to Adhoc- BPL=1, 0 otherwise & Drc4 refers to Annapurna=1, 0 otherwise. Finally, for caste and community status, considering SCs as the reference group, Dcc1 refers to STs=1, 0 otherwise, Dcc2 refers to OBCs=1, 0 otherwise; and Dcc3 refers to General/ unreserved=1, 0 otherwise.

**Table: 5 Regression Results of the Probit model**

Number of Observations	408			
LR chi2(15)	67.21			
Prob > chi2	0.00			
Log Likelihood	-222.4905			
Pseudo R2	0.1312			
	<b>Coefficients</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>z</b>	<b>P&gt;  z </b>
Location	-0.3227	0.1684	-1.9200	0.0550
Gender	0.1488	0.1868	0.8000	0.4260
drel1	0.5381	0.2509	2.1500	0.0320
drel2	0.5353	0.5510	0.9700	0.3310
drel3	0.5847	0.2749	2.1300	0.0330
drc1	-0.1210	0.1908	-0.6300	0.5260
drc2	-0.5866	0.5826	-1.0100	0.3140
drc3	-0.0479	0.2333	-0.2100	0.8370
drc4	0.0000	(omitted)		
dcc1	-0.1590	0.2446	-0.6500	0.5160
dcc2	0.1531	0.2358	0.6500	0.5160
dcc3	0.1434	0.2172	0.6600	0.5090
lnY	0.4833	0.1032	4.6800	0.0000
Lnfs	0.1179	0.2185	0.5400	0.5890
Lnage	0.1802	0.2898	0.6200	0.5340
Lnedu	0.2340	0.1254	1.8700	0.0620
Cons	-6.5854	1.3643	-4.8300	0.0000

*Source: Computed*

The regression results in Table 5 indicate that the probit model is satisfactorily applicable in explaining a few factors behind out-migration in Tripura. The location of the household, religious background, household income, and the level of education of the head of the household are significant factors contributing to out-migration among the sample respondent household. The regression results show that outmigration is

significantly higher among rural than urban households. The coefficient of other explanatory variables like income and education level of the head of the household also increases the probability of incidence of outmigration significantly. Further significant coefficients are found among Buddhist and Muslim households. In other words, we find that household income is significant at 99% levels, while the religious identities are significant at a 95% confidence level. The location of the household and the years of schooling of the head of the household are found to be significant at a 90% level of confidence.

**Table: 6 Marginal Effects after Probit Regression**

Variables	dy/dx	Standard Error	Z	P> z
Location	-0.1116	0.0584	-1.91	0.056
gender	0.0515	0.0646	0.80	0.426
drel1	0.1862	0.0867	2.15	0.032
drel2	0.1852	0.1906	0.97	0.331
drel3	0.2023	0.0950	2.13	0.033
drc1	-0.0419	0.0660	-0.63	0.526
drc2	-0.2030	0.2013	-1.01	0.313
drc3	-0.1657	0.0807	-0.21	0.837
drc4	0.0000	(omitted)		
dcc1	-0.0550	0.0846	-0.65	0.516
dcc2	0.0530	0.0816	0.65	0.516
dcc3	0.0496	0.0751	0.66	0.509
lnY	0.1672	0.0356	4.69	0.000
Lnfs	0.0408	0.0755	0.54	0.589
lnage	0.0623	0.1002	0.62	0.534
lnedu	0.0809	0.0432	1.87	0.061

*Source: Computed*

Table 6 shows the marginal effect of the probit regression variables. It is seen that one-unit increase in household income increases the probability of outmigration by a family by 0.1672. Similarly, the probability of incidence of outmigration in the family increases by 0.0809 if the years of schooling of the household head increase by one year. Interestingly, it is observed that if the household belongs to the urban, the probability of incidence of out-migration decreases by (-) 0.1116; also noted here is that if a household belongs to the Muslim community, the probability of incidence of out-migration increases by 0.1862, while for a Buddhist household, the probability of incidence of out-migration would be even higher owing to an increase of 0.2023. It

is to be noted here that among the significant factors, the marginal effects are highest for religious communities even though their significance level is lower than income.

## **Section IV**

### **Conclusion**

Based on the preceding discussion, we may sum up that the incidence of out-migration among the sample households in Tripura has been around 32%, which is lesser than the 35.47% incidence of the census 2011. In Tripura, migration is a feature found among all communities, including the scheduled tribes, scheduled castes, and unreserved. The migrants are mostly young, and their average age is less than 30 years. Two-thirds of the migrants are male, 22% are graduates, and more than 12% are post-graduates. There is a negligible share of illiterates among migrants; work and employment are the primary cause of moving out. Education and higher studies are also important factors in moving out. The migrants are found to be working in the defence and paramilitary forces, working as skilled workers, and even a few are government servants. Some of the urban migrants are professionals.

The migrants are regularly in touch with their families, and phones are the most common medium, and there are instances of video calls also, and the interactions are held almost daily. Remittances from working migrants are common and such incidences are more in rural areas. Generally, bank transactions are the norm for transfers though a few also use specialised money transfer agencies. The remitted money is used for meeting transaction demands as well as precautionary demands. Further remittances help in the education of the young family members and, last but not least, are used for building assets and loan repayment.

The Probit model suggests that the probability of migration from a household increases with the level of income and level of education of the head of the household. In other words, migration is likely to occur more if the household income is more and the head of the household is better educated. Such a scenario can be contextualised in the light of NELM, where migration is considered to be a family decision. The higher income levels at the origin ensure an environment of support to the migrant in the early days of struggle to find steady work/employment. The support of the family during the study or skill-building period may be considered as an investment against future returns in the form of a better quality of life in the afteryears. The higher levels of education of the household head may be considered as higher knowledge and better empowerment in decision-making regarding issues including migration. Higher learning of the household head also stimulates the importance of skills and facilitates migration for education and higher studies. The positive impetus from the religious characteristics can be understood in the background that a large number of ST youths, practising Buddhism, from Nabincherra are migrants for studies to other parts; while several of the Muslim migrants from Samrurpar village and Sonamura town have moved out

in a manner which literature terms as network theory whereby the original migrants attempt to help his/her relatives, friends and juniors from the place of origin. It may be noted here that the stream of migration among the sample households are generally urban to urban and rural to urban. A movement to rural areas is negligible; as a result, the negative yet significant coefficient for urban areas indicates the greater urge among rural households to use migration as a step to improve their quality of life.

Nonetheless, to conclude, we may say that out-migration in Tripura is more of an economic consideration. The decision for migration is mostly oriented toward a better quality of life, which can be ascertained by education and better employment and earnings. In most cases, the decision for migration is not an individual decision; instead, the family decides jointly for a better future.

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## **Book Review**

### **Migration & Indigenous Population**

**Puspanjali Kumari<sup>1</sup>**

Kikon, D. & Karlsson, B.G.(2019). *Leaving the land: indigenous migration and affective labour in India*. New Delhi:Cambridge University Press.

Leaving the Land Indigenous Migration and Affective Labour in India is a multi-sited ethnography project work funded by the Swedish foundation for humanities and social sciences. It is a collaborative research work of Dolly Kikon and B.G Karlsson. This book is mainly concerned with the issue of the outmigration of indigenous youth from northeast to south India. Northeast has a rich culture and diverse ethnic groups, and also compared its beauty to Kashmir on the basis of geographical features. But unfortunately, since independence, the region has been trapped in armed conflict, political disturbance, and militarization. Thus the region is performing low in many developmental indicators, including a lack of job opportunities, healthcare facilities, infrastructure, education, etc. compelling young people to migrant to the other part of India. The authors provide a vivid scenario of the situation and working culture of the indigenous migrants from the northeast India in the service sectors across other places of India. The process of youth migration from the northeast to mainland India is not a smooth passage as compared to others. Because of their non-Indian look, they have to face day-to-day challenges in the form of identity crises, discrimination, racism, sexual violence, and harassment.

The book is divided into six chapters, including introduction and conclusion. The authors have done justice with the title “Leaving the Land” and explained that they leave their land but the land doesn’t leave them, they experience it through the food, culture, ethnic group, and social and religious practices. Indigenous migrants from the northeast move to the metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Chennai, Tiruvannatpuram, Bangalore, and Delhi for better job opportunities, to fulfill their dreams, to explore the world, and to financially support their families. They work in five-star hotels,

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<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. Research Scholar, Dept. of Sociology, Banaras Hindu University. Email: pushpanjalipathak@bhu.ac.in

restaurants, salons, spas, bars, and other hospitality industry, the position, and salary they get is decided by their proficiency in English language, physical appearance, good skin, personal hygiene, and soft skill. For this, they join a grooming class at Dimapur named The people channel (TPC) and learn how to walk, talk, dress, apply makeup, and how to present themselves to the neoliberal world. The authors have also described how the hospitality industry imposes various forms of control and power by refashioning their bodies. Thus, the workers in the hospitality industry have an extra burden to invest money and time to maintain their physical appearance to sustain in the neoliberal and customized world.

It is not easy to leave their native place with a decent identity although it is difficult to return home with an empty hand and face the family and society. Through this book, authors tried to describe departure and return patterns through various real-life stories by conducting interviews and highlighting the struggle between dreams and reality of the society. For carrying different looks youths from northeast are treated as outsiders and are vulnerable to incidences of eve-teasing, gang rape, murder, and other forms of violence at the workplace, in public transport, public places, and locality. To live the character of the migrants, author spent days with them to narrate their stories and moved to their native place to conduct interviews with their parents. The authors conclude that migration is not an individual choice it has a collective effect both on migrants and their families, and society too. Families of migrants suffer in different ways as they have to work hard to send money to their children who are opting for their studies in other cities in the country. The parents remain anxious and worried about the safety and security of their wards working in the service sector. The authors bring out through their narration how parents remain anxious about their children who experience hardships and discrimination in everyday life. The narratives bring out how migrants have different reasons to migrate and work in different sectors; while some find themselves in better positions with a secured income, others struggle to spend their lives in scarcity.

As described in a migrant's story in the book, leaving the land involves a long process of migrating from a rural community located in an interior location to an urban area in search of opportunities for jobs, education and healthcare. It has often been a difficult position for the migrant's family to accept back their loved ones to return home. The reasons for an unwelcome retreat to home lie in the uncertain environment of political turmoil, armed conflict, and ethnic violence which has shrunk opportunities for education and employment. The authors have carefully brought out the stress of conflict situations and how conflicts induce outmigration. A recount of the history of armed conflict and political disturbance in the northeast by one of the migrant family members how some insurgent groups targeted the young population and influenced them to join. The refusal to join such calls often brought in torture and adverse treatments. The conflict between the state and the insurgent group gave rise to unequal distribution of resources into the hand of powerful politicians and organizations. The migrants from conflict torn areas therefore search for alternative places and do not want to return home.

While leaving one's hearth and home is one set of challenge, finding a foot in the new place involves yet another struggle. The authors try to bring out how food and culture play an important role in the context of building new relationships and joining new groups belonging to the same community far from their native place. This forming of new connections help the indigenous migrants to stay connected with their native lands and homes, they have left for trying out a new way of life. They build new social and political connections among the indigenous population from the northeast to overcome the anxieties of being alienated from families and homes. There are several organizations, groups, and unions working in south India to help the migrant people belonging to the northeast, Northeast India Welfare Association Chennai (**NEIWAC**) is one, and has been working since 2014 for the welfare of the northeast community. The association has a strong connection with the political parties and other government stakeholders. The members of the association have stood against discrimination and speak for the rights of the people of Northeast, organize cultural and religious events to tie the community in a single bond. Authors collected information about the work of the association from the social media site approx. 10,000 Northeast people are connected through this association and work in many ways, sharing jobs opportunity, raising funds for emergency situations in case of accident and death, etc. Such diaspora of networks play an important role in the life of indigenous migrants.

The authors in their work have tried to elaborate on the vulnerabilities of the migrants and their families through various stories, and also describe their struggle and challenges facing holding their non-Indian look. The book examined the recent patterns of indigenous migrations and their contribution to the service sector in the form of affective labour and is an important contribution in understanding the outmigration and its pattern from northeast to other cities of India and the diaspora of the migrant community and its vivid interlinked networked space away from home.

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