

**GLOBALIZATION
AND THE
CHANGING SCENARIO OF
CULTURAL INTERACTION
MANIPUR EXPERIENCE**



Edited by

N. JOYKUMAR SINGH

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OF CULTURAL
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(Manipur Experience)**



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Prof. N. Joykumar Singh

**Centre for Manipur Studies
Manipur University, Imphal
&**

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*Globalization and the Changing
Scenario of Cultural Interaction
(Manipur Experience)*

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Preface

Manipur has been experiencing various forms of cultural interactions since early historic times. Streams of migrants came to this state during different phases of history. The state, thus, has experienced the assimilation and acculturation of the people of South Asia, Central Asia, Eastern Asia, South-East Asia in general and the Aryan culture, the Tai culture and the Mongoloid culture in particular. Many religions viz., Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity transformed the social and religious practices of the state in remarkable way. At the same time the emerging socio-cultural elements were also transformed to adapt to the earlier socio-cultural environment of the state like traditional animism, heliocentric and different tribal cults.

During the post-Independence period, the cultural interactions took a new turn. Development incentives viz., establishment of industries, commercialization of agriculture, expansion in transport and communication, etc., transformed the economy, polity, society and even the demographic composition of the state. Entrepreneurs, corporates, businessmen, laborers and even refugees migrated into the state in large number thereby resulting in a change in the demographic composition of the state. However, the economy of the state remained more or less backward and agrarian, with consumer items and other modern amenities of life coming from other developed areas.

Against this backdrop the indigenous people, who have lost their part tradition, resort to measures to assert their own identities: economic and political identities in general and cultural identity in particular. These measures took many forms e.g., armed struggles, ethnic and communal conflicts and even the 'Cultural war' against the 'alien' cultures. This

development is particularly evident in Manipur. It is at this juncture that, the impact of globalization produces new forms of cultural interactions in the state. These new cultural interactions which is mainly through the media, both print and electronic, erode the traditional values, ethos and practices.

Since, the early '90s the forms of cultural interactions arising out of the new world order have been addressed substantially and extensively. However, the unique form of cultural interactions experienced in Manipur in the backdrop of armed conflicts, ethnic conflicts, demographic transformation and even globalization is still grossly neglected. It was in this perspective that Centre for Manipur Studies, Manipur University, Imphal organized a national seminar on the theme "Globalization and Changing Scenario of Cultural Interaction: Manipur Experience" with the objective of addressing the neglected theme of cultural interactions in the context of globalization in Manipur. The present volume is an outcome of its proceeding papers contributed by the established scholars and young researchers who are currently engaged in the study of the themes and topics which are addressed in the Seminar. It includes the traditional cultural values of Manipur, Colonial impact on cultural values, Religious movements and cultural synthesis, and gobalization and cultural interactions in Manipur.

Dr. Lokendra Arambam in his paper, "Globalization and Cultural Encounters: The Manipuri Perspective", highlights the process of globalisation as experienced in other parts of the world including India. He argues that Manipur has yet to grasp the implications and ramifications and the various political and cultural movements as responses to the new global force are analytically examined. Further a textual analysis of India's 'Look East Policy' is analyzed vis-a-vis the social, cultural, political and economic environment of Manipur.

In the paper entitled "New Dimensions and Challenges for Human Rights in the Globalization: Cultural Relativism and Commodification" Dhanabir Laishram makes a critical observation of cultural relativism as an associated element

of globalisation. He put forward the argument that cultural relativism has led to the confusion of nationalism and in many ways the former becomes synonymous with cultural assimilation. The reality of globalisation for all the third and fourth world country was that the common culture engendered in the process of globalisation was based on economic basis which is advantageous to the first world countries. He argues that the new global order as responsible for the myriad of problems faced by the people in the North-Eastern Region of India. He concluded that unless there is check in the form of cultural relativism and cultural commodification superimposed by the first world countries and their local collaborators, the dream of another world is impossible.

Professor Amar Yumnam's paper "Globalisation, Culture and Development", highlights a brief history of globalisation since the Roman Era. Further, he emphasizes the necessity of hegemony as the major leading character of each epoch of globalisation giving its impact in all spheres of life. It shows the relationship between cultural and developmental economics in every era of globalisation.

P. Milan in his paper "Globalisation, Monoculturalism and Ethnicity" raises a polemic against single line pressure of cultural pattern from above with negative impact due to globalisation that also attacks all the ethnic values. Aheibam Koering's paper "Colonialism, Culturocide and Denial of Shares History: An Experience in Manipur Hills" contends that the conversion to Christianity in its introductory phase was detached from the value-free neutrality as it was done under the patronage of the colonizers. The paper also highlights the negative impact on the indigenous peoples of the Manipur hills when their existing ways of thinking brought about by Christianity and also explores the contemporary social crisis of Manipur in the form of fragmentation and the rise of micro nationalism as a consequent fallout of the concomitant deficit policy in their history, which engendered the denial of shares history. He argues that ethnicity and identity assertion in the form of ethnic violence can be reconciled by reappraising their close affinities and socio-cultural ties with each other.

Dr. Vijaylakshmi's paper entitled "Religious Movements and Cultural Synthesis in Manipur: An Observation on Manipuri Hinduism" focuses on the origin of the Meitei belief system and the cultural interaction with other places, viz., China, Burma (Myanmar), the Ahom Kingdom of Assam, etc. She puts an emphasis on the impact of cultural and religious practices on that of Manipur through the ages. Syed Ahmad's paper entitled 'Regional formulation of Islam in Manipur' is an attempt to analyse the cultural accretions and influences from the local socio-cultural environment on the Muslims of Manipur. Various practices that were adopted by the Muslims to acclimatize themselves with the local environment and later on the practices to cleanse the non-Islamic accretions are also analyzed in his paper. M. Bobo's paper "Globalisation and Culture: Manipur Experience" makes an attempt to define Globalisation with illustrations in the first place and gives examples and impact of Globalisation on the poor countries in comparison with rich countries with data from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Bank. Jagat Thoudam's paper "Globalisation and Cultural Interactions in Manipur", highlighted the individualistic pattern in all works of life and culture with Globalisation thereby affecting collectivism which is a part of tradition.

Professor W. Nabakumar's paper "Cultural Interaction and Growth: A Case Study of Leimaram, a Scheduled Caste of Manipur" analyses the little tradition of Leimaram people adopting the great tradition of the Hindus thereby indicating the metamorphic questions were raised for clarifications on the conceptualization of great and little traditions. The paper entitled "Globalisation and Krishna Consciousness: An Overview" by Amal Sanasam analyses the movement of ISKCON in Manipur valley. The writer argues that the 'Krishna Consciousness Movement' is the first concept of globalising the Indian culture in modern times. The impact of Vaishnavism cult on religion and culture of Manipur is analyzed in the presentation. The adjustment of the Vaishnavism to the local conditions and the effort of ISKCON, Manipur towards evolving a peace process are also discussed. In his paper "Place in a Placeless World: Nationalism and Globalisation in Manipur", Konjengbam Meghachandra Singh

makes an attempt to analyse some aspects of nationalism in the age of globalisation in Manipur context. His argument is that globalisation refers to time-space compression and thus the significance of 'place' has been reduced with the expansion of 'global village'. However many parts of the world are experiencing various political movements at national and sub-national levels, asserting territory and identity. These national and sub-national movements in Manipur face a number of obstacles viz., inter-outfit conflict and clash, factional rivalry and cultural imperialism, the last of which is patronized by globalisation itself. On the other hand, globalisation itself is almost an unrestrained phenomenon. The writer raises a question as to whether globalisation will take over nationalism and sub-nationalism.

I, on behalf of the Centre for Manipur Studies (CMS), Manipur University express my sincere gratitude to Prof. N. Bijoy, Former Vice-Chancellor of Manipur University for his generous initiative organizing the seminar. I also extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to the present Vice-Chancellor of the University for showing keen interest and also for his generous initiative in the publication of the proceeding papers. The seminar achieved success because of the valuable papers of the contributors as well as the contributions made by the staff of the Centre and the office of the Dean of School of Social Sciences of the University. Their contributions right from organizing the Seminar till the finalisation of this book are also duly acknowledged and deserve appreciation. I also express my indebtedness to Shri M.P. Misra, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi for readily accepting to co-publish this book with the Centre.

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1

Globalisation, Culture and Development: An Economist's Perspective

—AMAR YUMNAM

Introduction

Globalisation is the most tantalizing term in the world political economy today, and to come it even causes titillation. The sweep of this as both a term and a phenomenon is such that even anti-globalisation is now a globalized network.

But what then in globalisation? As Karlsson says it “refers to a number of inter-related economic, technological, social, political and cultural changes that together have so intensified interdependence that anyone who wants to exercise control over her future must do so with others locally, nationally, and globally” (Karlsson, 2001, p 8). In other words, globalization is an on going process of global integration that encompasses: (i) economic integration through trade, investment and capital flows; (ii) political interactions, (iii) information and information technology, and (iv) culture.” (Panayoton, 2000, p. 1). Globalisation, as economists perceive it, covers easing of transborder movement of goods and services, foreign direct investment, financial capital and migration (Williamson, 1999; O'Rourke, 2002).

Through the intense debate on the subject is relatively recent, the phenomenon is definitely not a new one. Speaking of around A.D. 150 Brown writes,

“. . . it was possible for a young student, Tatian, to pass from the eastern, Syrian, fringe of the Roman empire to Rome, speaking Greek philosophical culture. . . . To humbler men, [the Roman Empire] meant wider horizons and unprecedented opportunities for travel; it meant the erosion of local differences through trade and emigration; and the weakening of ancient barriers before new wealth and new criteria of status” (Brown, 1971, p. 60). This was in a time nearly two thousand years before an English princess with her Egyptian boyfriend crashes in a French tunnel, riding a German car with Dutch engine and driven by a Belgian drunk on Scottish whisky, followed closely by Italian paparazzi on a Japanese bike, treated by an American doctor using Brazilian medicine. (I am paraphrasing an SMS created by an Indian using a Chinese mobile smuggled by a Pakistani through a Nepali courier). In the case of Manipur, a contemporary researcher writes: “To prove that Manipur lies in the cultural area of South-east Asia with cultural layers of East Asia and other regions, e.g., a south Asian tint on it, will not be a difficult task” (Tomba, 2005, p. 21).

What I am basically trying to say is that globalisation as a process is as old as human civilization though the scale and geographical coverage might differ due to the differing levels of development—transportation, communication and information technology.

Conventional Logic

I understand that the conventional rationals of the economists legitimizing globalisation might be of little interest to the wider audience here, but kindly allow me to briefly mention the factors of consideration. Globalisation, as defined earlier, is understood to

- (a) enhance efficiency of allocation of resources both nationally and globally, and thus raising the growth

rate. The rising growth rate further leads to reduction of poverty;

- (b) intensify competition among nation states, and in the process contributes to enhanced governmental accountability. In other words, the credibility of governments is increased both nationally and globally; and
- (c) facilitate flow of technology.

I will, however, not dwell long on the economic logic, but rather concentrate on the empirics and the debates surrounding them. (Those interested in theory may refer to, among others, Aghion's paper in Aghion and Williamson, 1998).

Globalisation Epochs

As far as I understand, we are yet to have a periodisation approach from the angle of the Orientals. I am not aware of periodisation approaches using Hindu civilization or Buddhist culture as the basis. So I shall, by necessity, confine my periodisation approach to the lines already adopted in the globalisation literature, which is fundamentally based on Occidental civilization.

As implied in the quotation from Brown's work in the beginning of this paper, we may think of the Roman Empire as the first period of globalisation. This period covering two to three centuries extended over the land area from the Euphrates to Scotland and from the Gibraltar to Armenia. However, due to reasons of availability and reliability of data, most of the globalisation studies confine to the two recent epochs, one extending from about the mid-19th century to 1914 and another from post-World War II (1950) to till date. In keeping with this tradition, my discussion here shall confine to these two periods, 1850-1914 and 1980-2005 (some confine the 1850-1914 period to 1870-1939. Estevadeordal *et al.*, 2002). My selection of 1980 rather than 1950 as the initial year for contemporary globalisation is because of China and India factors and the end of cold war.

Driving Forces

The first modern globalisation epoch (1850-1914) was preceded by dismantling of mercantilism and adoption of

liberal trade policy, recovery after the Napoleonic Wars, structural transformation consequent upon agricultural depression in England and sharp drop in transport costs. (Lindert and Williamson, 2001). To these forces, a new dimension has also been added in a well researched paper by Estevadeordal and others - the common currency effect (Estevadeordal *et al.*, 2002). During the period from about 1800 to 1914, international trade volumes rose by a factor of about twenty and about ten relative to world output.

The current globalisation process is driven by the following factors (Agosin and Tussie, 1992):

1. Emergence of foreign direct investment as a more significant factor than domestic capital formation and rise in the volume of intra-industry trade globally;
2. The growing "internationalization of finance" and the accompanying massive increase in global financial transactions;
3. The communication revolution intensifying and altering the traditional comparative advantage positions (see also Evans and Harrigan, 2003);
4. The emergence of information technology as a general purpose technology contributing to internationalizing of both information and technology.

Hegemon and Imperialism

While accepting the above driving forces as significant factors in the globalisation process, there is now an intense debate as to whether these were enough to explain the phenomenon. One view is that, given the necessity of safe transportation and communication for a sustained growth of production and exchange, globalization can occur only under the aegis of a hegemon. The first globalisation could occur because of the duration and penetration of the Roman empire; Roman imperialism ensured the first globalisation. The globalisation of the mid-19th to early 20th century could take place under the British imperialism, and ended when fiercely challenged by Germany. The end of the cold war and the emergence of a unipolar world has made globalisation under a new hegemon a possibility once again.

While the relationship between imperialism and globalisation is more or less an accepted one, it is the impact which is being debated. While the de-industrialisation in India under the British rule is a strong thesis here, Western economists are working overtime to refute the negative impact of globalisation under imperialism: "Given the structural constraints imposed by location, climate and geography, on the way that the world economy evolved, as well as the entrenched positions of privilege, Europeans had already acquired, from centuries of successful mercantilism, comparisons between the colonized and autonomous economies of the Third World does not, however, leave an impression that any potential or counterfactual gap in transactions costs could have been wide enough to proclaim that the continued divergence in standards of living between the west and the Rest could be strongly linked to the persistence of imperialism between 1815 and 1948" (O'Brien, 2004, p. 50) reflecting the opposite view on Prakash writes:

"Given the reasonably resilient internal dynamics of the Indian economy, the colonial period was not altogether devoid of all growth though one could legitimately take the position that almost certainly things would have been distinctly better if the colonial episode had never happened". (Prakash, 2004, p. 40).

Globalisation and Convergence

Whatever the driving force behind the different globalisation epochs, what is of concern to us is its impact. Has the globalisation led to reduction in within country and across the country inequalities? Has it induced faster growth? Has it had any positive effect on poverty reduction? I shall now turn to the studies relating to these.

It has been found that the declines in transport costs between 1840 and 1910 was much more dramatic than in the post-1945 period; in fact, ocean freight rates have increased in the sort 1945 period, though there has been a decline in the air-freights (Harley, 1988; Hummels, 1999). So global integration in commodity markets was much greater in the 19th century than in the late 20th century (O'Rourke, 2002; Estevadeordal *et al.*, 2002).

As regards foreign direct investment, it is more diversified and more growth enhance today than in the 19th century (O'Rourke, 2002).

Regarding migration, we can definitely say that the 19th century. The migration from the Europe to the New World in the 19th century was of the order like 60 million individuals (Lindert and Williamson, 2001, p. 16) whereas firm data are not available on the south-south movements. The 19th century movement involved mainly poorer people moving to richer countries and hence was equality enhancing. But, thanks to the various restricts on migration in the 20th century involving selection bias, the movement of people now is not equality enhancing both globally and nationally.

The gap in per capita share of GDP between Western Europe (richest region) and Africa (poorest region) was around three to one about a century and a half ago (Maddison, 1995). Today the per capita income gap between Switzerland and Mozambique is a hopping 400 to 1. It is as if "divergence, big time" (Pritchett, 1997).

Lindert and Williamson (2001) argue that the British-led globalisation was unambiguously egalitarian at both the national and global level, "while the American liberalization in the 20th century was not". A recent study by Dollar and Kray (2001) speaks of the growth and poverty and poverty reduction implications of trade liberalization. However, this has not one without challenge. There are equally strong arguments refuting the benefits of financial integration to the developing countries (Gourinchas, 2004). Pissaarides (1997) and Wood (1997) reach at completely contradictory results of the welfare benefits of globalisation. Rodrik (2000) and Rodriguez and Rodrik (1999) refute the very growth enhancing effects of trade and argue that globalisation can never be a substitute for a development strategy.

Culture and Globalisation

The interface of culture, globalisation and growth is a relatively new area of research and the results are still highly tentative. (McCleary and Barro, 2003; Burro and McCleary 2003; Lal, 1999). In particular the interaction between culture

and growth in a context of globalisation is yet to be invaded by the economists though directions are now clearly visible.

The Road Ahead

While globalisation by itself may or may not deliver, the institutional requirements are highly demanding (Rodrik 2000). These would have far reaching effects on culture and governance in any country going for globalisation. Further as globalisation continues, the growth requirements for a given goal has been found to be rising in every period. Further, the role of geographical variables (case of access to market and input sources) in two harvesting of benefits for globalisation is an area yet to be properly explored.

Above all, globalisation in the past has always had its backlash. The association of the current globalisation, as in the past, with a hegemon will itself make it impalatable to the large masses of people.

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New Dimensions and Challenges for Human Rights in the Globalisation (Cultural Relativism and Cultural Commodification)

—DHANABIR LAISHRAM

Basically human right activists are bepeppering against the state terrorism like killing, torturing, rape, disappearance, custodial death and detention because for human right abuses and crimes done by non state actors, we have police and law courts. Besides, another burden is kept on their heads again to protect the rights of the people which is being violated by the globalisation. Fidel Castro rightly remarked, "I didn't oppose the globalisation". That means the open discourse is the victims should become the killers because of inability to pass out the frozen layers of exploitation and oppression in the uncountable numbers of global villages. So we have to analyse the associated elements of globalisation mainly cultural relativism and confusion of nationalism. Here one comes to understand new human rights dimensions and its obstacle and challenges. Even it could associate the process of cultural assimilation and confusion of nationalism.

Globalisation: Conceptual and Historical Analysis

In the post-cold war period, one could witness a unipolar system in the international politics after the disintegration of the USSR and their reversion to capitalism along with the East European countries. The most dominant economic campaign in this period (1990s) was 'globalisation'. The description of globalisation is the widening and deepening of international flows of trade, finance and information in a single integrated global market whereas the prescription for this was to liberalize national and global markets. The prescription cannot be administered at will on the sovereign states by force of arms as in 19th or early 20th century. Therefore, the process of globalisation has been manoeuvred in a clever and subtle way though it is associated with the sanction and plundering that were experienced in the colonialism of the 19th and 20th centuries. For doing so, the governments of the states should be agreeable to changes necessary and therefore a well thought-out logic, namely "Economic Reforms" was formulated. These reforms are mainly liberalization of national market and free entry of the multinationals, privatization of economic power. For these reforms to be undertaken there should be flexible structure of administration and governance for which there should be the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). If all these go well in the less-developed and developing countries, the highly industrialized countries can control all the economic, social and cultural activities of the poorer nations and the poor people of all the nations with impurity and conviction. Such is the design of globalisation¹. Besides, the question of culture commodification could not also be discarded because it plays important role to save causing of economic tsunami of first world countries. So that the advanced countries tried to Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Here, one could react and has reasonable claims to attain their best setters. But the problems are that in case of human right, it could be universal. So we the people of world always accepted and quailed the universal declaration of human rights and its articles. The same could not be conceived in the minds of second, third and fourth world peoples regarding universalist of cultural relativism. To them cultural relativism

regarding human rights and democracy is self-defeating parochial and just plain wrong.

Universalising of Human Rights versus Cultural Relativism

In the present discourse concerning human rights, cultural relativism is presented as a main challenge to their universality.

As observed by Brezezinski (1995):

“Culture is now going to be the dividing line in the debate over the question of freedom and the question of human rights. We are all familiar with the cultural argument. It rejects the notion of inalienable human rights on the ground that this notion merely reflects a very provincial, western perspective.”²

The acceptance of the very idea that person belonging to one culture should not judge the policies and values of other cultures, that any system of common values cannot and does not exist. Indeed, it undermines the very basis of the international community and the human family. They cannot function without the existence of standard allowing them to judge what is right or wrong, what is good or bad.³ The world commission on culture and development in its report “Our Creative Diversity”, pointed out that the logical and ethical difficulty about relativism is that it must also endorse absolutism and dogmatism. Cognitive relativism is nonsense, moral relativism is tragic.⁴

Cultural relativism in its extreme interpretations may even lead to or justify theories like that on conflict of civilization put forward by S. Huntington. In his opinion, the globalisation of the modern world has given rise to a conflict between the basic cultural systems. The theory of the beginning of an age of irreconcilable battles between the most powerful civilizations does not correspond to reality. Cultural diversity and plurality of cultures have to be seen as positive factors leading to inter-cultural dialogue. In the modern world, cultures are not isolated. They interact peacefully and influence each other. The inter-cultural dynamics is set in motion by the contemporary processes of globalisation which

lead, not without tension, to the emergence, consolidation or reformulation of specific cultural and ethical values common to the various cultural areas.⁵ Any culture in relation to and comparison with other cultures may find its own idiosyncrasies and peculiarities, its strong and its weak points.

The Vienna Conference and Rejection of Cultural Relativism

The analysis of statements during the Vienna Conference shows that the universality of human rights was not openly challenged, whereas cultural specificity were seen by many states as being fully compatible notions. The delegates from Tunisia, Kuwait, Iran, Vietnam, Etyma, Netherlands, Costa Rica and Bangladesh, recognizing the universal values of human rights, then stressed on cultures of humanity. However, no ready-made model can be presented at the universal level since the historical and cultural realities of each nation and the traditions, standards and values of each people cannot be disregarded.⁶ The Asian states in the Bangladesh Declaration of April 1993, underlined: "while human rights are universal in nature, they must be considered in the context of a dynamic and evolving process of international norm-setting, bearing in mind the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds".⁷

Very contrary to other countries, Chinese delegation, even, questioned the universality of human rights. This was balanced however by the assurance that the Chinese government complies with the principles formulated in the UN Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Thus the Vienna Declaration adopted by consensus of the World Conference confirmed the universality of human rights and rejected the notion of cultural relativism. The Declaration, and in its paragraph 1, reaffirms the solemn commitment of all states to fulfil their obligations to promote universal respect for and observance and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. It stress: "The universal nature of these rights, and freedoms is beyond question".

The problems of national and regional peculiarities is referred to in paragraph 5 of the Declaration which provides:

“All human rights are universal, indivisible and inter-dependent and inter-related . . . while the significance of national and regional peculiarities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of states, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

The results of the Vienna Conference confirm that cultural relativism is in retreat on many fronts⁸. This is important not only for the debate concerning the universality of human rights but also in a more general context for international relations. Rejecting cultural relativism and recognizing at the same time the significance of cultural specificities, the Vienna Conference intensified the discussion concerning relation between cultural values and human rights. This has been articulated, in particular, in the debate concerning the so-called ‘Asian Values’. Begun by the Bangkok Declaration of 1993, animated by declarations and statements of the governments of China, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, the debate quickly surpassed the governmental level and is now conducted at various seminars and in specialised literatures.⁹

By keeping above details in our mind, we come to understand that majority countries of the world, most probably third and fourth world people realised that homogenisation in the form of language, cloths, style of dressing and advertising is utilised by globalisation as an industry with large profit. So the challenges or contradiction ‘between cultural determinism and cultural relativism could be seen in the global scenario. So eminent Marxist scholar Aijaj Ahmad rightly remarked “Globalisation unites the market and divides human beings, because human beings can be best used for purposes of the global marketing if they act as individual consumers and not as a people in solidarity with each other. Post-modernism on a global scale, and post-colonial theory in relation to the third world, are the main instruments in this battle to replace the polity of equality with the politics of differences, the society of cooperation by the society of infinite competition, class consciousness vs. community

consciousness." Even it hurts to the concept of nationalism as consequence, the scale of ethnic-nationalism and ethno-culturalism are articulated as separatist movement on large scale within the nation.

In case of regional development in India; it has three major aims (productive, social and biological). It was an attempt to secure best condition and possibilities for an all-round development for everybody: minimize and ultimately eliminate inter-regional and intra-regional differences in quality of life and make the best possible use of natural resources, land, human values of the region to secure the production and social aims. These aims are comprehensive in nature and not restricted to economic (productive) aspects alone. They emphasize on distributive justice so that the differences in levels of living could be eliminated creating conditions for all-round development of all people of the regions. The philosophical foundation of such policy should therefore be based on cooperation rather than on competition, whereas the multinationals' mandate for globalisation, liberalisation and structural adjustment is the philosophical outcome of the "survival of the fittest".

It should be remembered that the social structure of the developing societies whether conceived in the national or regional levels is inhibitive of progress. The benefits of increased development in economic and social activities in these areas go to those who need them least. But investments to raise the level of living of the people should percolate downwards, upwards, sideways so that everybody gets benefit. This leads to better participation of all people in productive activities. Nobody progresses unless all progress and co-operations and mutual support should orient the development policies. Surplus productions would naturally get recycled for mutual benefit or in an inter-regional system gets invested in other regions to bring about inter-regional equity in development.

The description of our kind of development should therefore be the processes through which a society acquires greater porosity within its own body politic and enables its members to gain greater control over themselves and their

environment. For this, the primary considerations should be transforming the social structures and institutions especially restructuring production, changes in social structure, cultural change and changes in political and legal structure. Then only an economy can be geared to ensure productive employment for the whole population. The provision of health, education and similar other facilities is only a secondary aspect of social development which may be necessary but neither sufficient nor possible except making any headway in transforming social structure making our permeable society to a porous one.

The aims of regional development mentioned above need a comprehensive social development policy suitable for a developing country like India. But regional development encompassing not only productivity and income but also structural change in class and interest group relations, so that broad masses of working people are able to participate and sharing in productivity leading to increase welfare, in gross as well as 'net' terms should be the prescription of development. For this, policy of increasing growth automatically trickling down below canvassed till now, should be rejected.

The inadequacy of prevalent theories and practices of regional development (mostly disaggregated version of western macro-economic growth models) is that, development is conceived nearly in terms of study growth of production and income whereas social class interest and group relations which form the basis of distribution of the gains of development are assumed to change with increase in productivity. Human beings are treated not as goal but as factors of production and recipients of particular marginal investment through public expenditure in social welfare programmes such as health, education, housing, social security and so on. Social policies therefore reduced to operational allocation of various residual resources derived from national system for redistribution and for partially covering the accumulated deficit in certain welfare services. The government as well as academia by and large accepts globalisation as inevitable

in plea of TINA (There is no alternative). If that is so, one is to accept that policies for national or regional development are irrelevant in the wake of globalisation. In case of International policy options the question of relevance of state is also dubious. At one level the state is being resisted by ethnic and other groups pressing for greater autonomy and self-determination. At other level, they are being bypassed by MNCs who give a damn to local jurisdiction. So AK Maity (Globalisation *vis-a-vis* Regional Development, p.49) stated that "States therefore become too big for the small things and too small for the big". In short, international bodies like International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organisation could wipe away national borders and wipe out national policies for development, be it national or in regional plans.

Globalisation and Cultural Commodification

The response of individual countries to globalisation is different, but ethnic revival was on the rise in the nineties everywhere. In many countries globalisation underlined question of the unjust redistribution of goods and greater impoverishment. The issue of social justice led to the idea of "equality" of the collectivity of a homogenous nation. The new social democracy controls the government with the help of a selected elite, which supports neoliberalism and globalisation, like the right. Their bureaucratic and technocratic mode of communication isolates them from the population. The state under left or right withdraws into a role of guarding security and this transforms social life, turning democracy into a hostage. It leads emergence of ethno-nationalism in India particularly in NE in spite of having maximum efforts in the process of nation building.

Emergence of caste war in India in general and ethnic war particularly in NE are also impact of globalisation. In the process of globalisation every domains of country could be deemed by super-imposition of highly developed countries. Basically, culture is a composite behaviour pattern of the human being which is given by many factors. Dynamics of cultural change is given by education, information, administration, besides the economic factors of income and

social security. Culture undergoes change over time when these perspective change. When Manipuris were converted to *Vaishnavism* there was physical appearance and presence of Shantidas Gosai. But to-day without such physical appearance, people are socialised by world channel in *their* drawing rooms. Western education (not 'regional oriented'), illusive socialisation through global channel with new mode of life and administration brought about vast changes in the age-old culture of the various traditional societies of NE state. Nevertheless, if all evils of cultural types including folk society, feudal society and patrilineal could be changed through modern scientific and technological innovation, to some extent that is good. But these are still in the mindsets of all. It is said that new cars swept the small roads; mobiles in our pockets and world channels in our drawing rooms but still mindsets are in parochial. That is why, orthodox assertions could be denoted on large scale and reactions are also there. But on the other hand the people of the region are in the trap of cultural commodification of the globalisation. People are not concerned with the question of unemployment instead they are facing of job losing. Their indigenous products are completely at the outside of the markets. That means they are also economically marginalised day by day. Now, the question is how the institution of labour relations receptive to competitive development, as is prescribed by contemporary economic reforms given by the globalisation and how many states in India including NE states, the agrarian relations are receptive to agrarian reforms? But we are all putting on western dress, imitating western food and using all types of cosmetics.

During the Seven-Year Devastation (1819-26), when Manipur was occupied by *Ava*, swords in the hands of the men-folk who were protecting their motherland, were replaced by *Cortana* for *Sankritana* of *Vaishnavism*. Moreover, in the careless moment, our *penakhongbas* simply mentioned the fnaple of *Kunjamala* in the epic of *Khamba-Thoibi*. But today *Khamba-Thoibi* seems to be written after Hindu Conversion i.e. after 17th century. That means, cultural

assimilation either forcibly or in soft-line, the ultimate losers are the underdeveloped countries and indigenous people.

So the question is that the inter-cultural dynamics in the contemporary process of globalisation consolidated various cultural and ethical values in order to bring common culturalism. But the interpretation of common culturalism is completely based on economic basis. The tacit tussle is going on. The hidden agenda of cultural relativism and cultural commodification is on top priority. Thus, the economic festeration of the periphery is in the process of non-stop to dig up their graves. It is the reality of globalisation for all third and fourth world countries. That is why the periphery demos are in demegration with challenging tendencies.

Lastly, no one could ignore the negative impact of cultural relativism and cultural commodification in the process of the new world order like globalisation because the problem faced by the people of this region such as ethno-nationalism, ethnic conflicts, demographic transformations are impact of these global orders. Therefore, we the people of Northeast in general and Manipur in particular, far lagging behind in all fronts, should reject universalised cultural relativism, we should also challenge against the cultural commodification which was super imposed by the advanced countries of the world, ruling elites and local collaborators of the imperialist globalisation. Unless there is check and balance the dream of another world is impossible.

NOTES

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Globalisation and Cultural Encounters: The Manipuri Perspective

—LOKENDRA ARAMBAM

Introduction

Globalisation is now the most 'happening' event in the light of vast changes taking place throughout the world, when the economies of nation-states open out to mutual integration processes through principles of deregulation, privatization and liberalization, thereby effecting structural adjustments in tune with the logic of global capitalism. In the words of one Indian Industrialist Rahul Bajaj, 'More liberalization and deregulation of the Indian economy is needed. Globalisation is inevitable. There is no alternative'. This mindset reflected the change in the economic policies of the Indian state, which started with the liberalization programme by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in 1991. Now the present government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh proclaimed the concretization of the Look East Policy, initiated by the former Prime Minister in 1996. This shall mean, as a follow up from the Kunming initiative of 1989 (where late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi played a very important role) a greater regional cooperation in economic and cultural matters such as between Bangladesh, India, Myanmar and China (BIMC). India is looking towards

the transformation of Northeast India for a greater economic and cultural integration with the Southeast Asian countries, while remaining politically as an integral part of India (Ramesh, 2004). What shall be the likely ramifications of this new trend of thought and action on the Manipuri people as a whole may form the key issue of this address. The exercise has however its own limitations, since the material history of the subject of study is yet inadequate for a proper objective discourse to develop, and we have to depend on speculative sociological insights to form a proper viewpoint on the same. Also Globalisation per se had been debated upon extensively in contemporary social science discourses, but Manipur has yet to grasp fully its implications and ramifications in a conflict ridden environment. Economists of the state speak about it often, but we have yet to articulate the very processes of Globalisation (another term may be modernization under contemporary capitalist transformation) and its impact upon traditional ethnic societies (of which we are part), and on people and polities who had experienced the historical burden of imperialism and colonialism. Any studies of social science or the humanities and their cross-disciplinary interactions have to undergo an intense examination of how we as people responded to imperialism and colonialism. Developments since then in subsequent historical periods also reflect veneers of that colonial impact on our values, ideals and forms of knowledge, and successive political and cultural patterns we manifested was reflective of our having undergone experiences of bondage, subjugation and subordination. Our relationship with the Indian state since 1949, and the succession to the power vacuum created by the dissembling British Empire by the modern Indian state, and the logic of its national development as a third world power incorporated hegemonistic interventions in the so-called peripheries, resulting in re-creation of earlier imperial and colonial processes, thereby resulting in the advent of serious challenges to its legitimacy and political authority. The problems of contemporary Manipuri peoples agonies are therefore the crisis created by unequal development untrue to its status and dignity, undermined by an inadequate national discourse of post-colonial India, whose incorporation of the ancient Asiatic state

destroyed its originary structures and energies. Manipur's development in the wake of the fresh onslaughts of globalisation and its interventionist role under a coercive Indian state shall be of greater incoherence and disequilibrium noticed in violence all-around the social and moral world of the ethnic societies. Globalisation discourse had not depicted any all-round development of ordinary people. In the words of Koves, 'The new historical phase of imperialism, globalisation destroys the fabric of human societies; claims to go back to roots and essences which support fascisization in various forms' (Koves, 2004). Also as the pressures of the global era on the state increase, there were less possibilities for implementation of social policies, and making of decisions that result in a more equal distribution of income (Sijuwade, 2004). What India showed as a result of liberalization and globalisation, was how it 'had been subjected to economic reforms to an increased duality of growth experiences during the 1990's-high growth rates of the secondary and tertiary sectors in a few states enjoying large advantages in terms of industrial locations and infrastructures, and low growth rates in the poor states with a high burden of poverty and stagnation'. (*Ibid.*, 2004).

Retrogression in Culture

The economic impact of globalisation has been studied by many contemporary social scientists, and the results show symptomatic patterns of the power hungry middle class aggressively slave-driving the productive forces of society, disinvesting unwanted labour, creating social anomie and compromising on welfare measures and leaving nothing for the poor and the weak. Productivity is the key word, and massive unemployment, closure of avenues of livelihood, and sheer attrition in living and meeting the challenges of consumer expenditure from inadequate incomes, thereby impacting on young and ignorant lives to become violent and demanding are the social phenomena for peripheral economies of states like the Northeast. In spite of some local productivity in agriculture in the sixties and seventies, Manipur had witnessed a recession and stress since the nineties, which is symptomatic of the pinching impact of India's economic

programmes, which had resulted to the increase in violence in society. The blame for the anarchic condition and social disequilibrium are heaped upon 'insurgency', without however taking into account the massive corrosion of values, ideals and moral of the governing class, the corruption in the government and institutions, and destruction of collective life through inorganic developmentalism enforced from the logic of the centre for rearranging the periphery at its behest. New social and economic classes had risen to political and social power, but this new class, which did not have any relationship with core traditional values and ethics had become rapid operators of mercenary onslaughts through economic opportunism and corruption. These classes are at the helm of public affairs. The younger generation of students, youths who are in forefront of public movements are also devoid of any civilizational linkage with tradition, and adolescents in society are bereft of familial and social ties, due to the retreat of parental care, concern and interaction. The system of modern education are heavily structured for enhanced dependence for enslavement of minds, rather than for freeing the intellect from routine knowledge and perpetuation of received ideas. The new individual, which had been severed from its moorings in the collectivity of the Asian past, is underdeveloped and ill defined. Yet he is presumed to be the pillar of the contemporary democratic polity, when he is however motivated by sinister self-interest, self-aggrandizing habits, and is prone to intrigue and back-stabbing culture, which are traits brought in by India's educational and cultural influences. The character of the Manipuri individual had been transformed rapidly since the incorporation of the state into the Indian Union, and the subsequent historical experience in the era of 'development'. Primordial passions of conflictual duality (Anee Thokpee), incompatibility and personal equations of jealousy and rancour amongst leading social, political and intellectual elites, non-communication amongst colleagues in spite of space sharing in institutions and pro-modern establishments reflect the transformed character of the Manipuri individual. Small egos had been boosted like that of the frog in the well, due to false operation of influence and patronage from the central institutions of power.

This cultural transformation in a retrograde manner, in inverse proportion to modernization processes had not been critically reviewed in any of our public discourses. Modernization theorists presume modern values to include 'an openness to new experience, readiness for social change, orientation towards the future, efficacy, long-term planning, valuing technical skills, and educational and occupational aspirations (Inkeles and Smith, 1974). All these are not simply happening. On the other hand, it is right to agree with Dependency theorists that economic and cultural dependence only produces the 'development of underdevelopment' (Frank, 1969, Galtung, 1975). Manipur now reflects an intense example of forcible underdevelopment in modern times, a fall from a high degree of indigenous civilizational experience in pre-colonial times reflected in its 'national' ethos built up in some two thousand years of sheer tryst with history. Why this is so is the profound question of the day.

The probable answer by leading official policy planners on the issues of the decay or decline of societal and civilizational mores are laid on the doors of massive 'political violence' created by conflict and insurgency. Violence, or propensity to damage the body of the other is not only the pre-occupation of the non-state actors, but also of the ruthless suppressive presence of the coercive Indian state, whose combined impact on society had revealed the tragedy of contemporary Manipuri society. Violence is not simply a physical act destroying the body or life of the individual in society, but it accompanies the structural disintegration of norms, institutions and social universes, which are not properly visible due to the resilience of tradition. The insides of the polity are gradually corroding, due to the complex networks of the corrupt civil, military, police and bureaucracy whose combined onslaughts into the realm of power and resources are destroying all semblance of democratic aspirations. Both state and non-state actors are mutually unleashing a stranglehold on the fragile lived-experiences of the people. A cold and numbing presence is reflected in the moral and social world, and an atmosphere of silence (*Le de Silencio*) pervades in the public sphere (in spite of severe ferocity of agitations and demonstrations). Sheer violence of

confrontation, attrition and mutual acrimony destroys the equilibrium of extended households, constituencies and human settlements of artificially created boundaries, through the demands of heavily monetized electoral politics, and veteran politicians often experience mental and physical wreckage and trauma. Women activists who struggle to protect the innocent son from the onslaught of the instruments of the Indian state often die unnoticed deaths from complex traumatic experience unleashed in the Meira-Paibee movement. Sheer epistemic violence is noticed in the interstices of family, language, culture and behavioural norms and the entire originary world of the autochthons are ruptured beyond repair. The Manipuris do not live their lives, they live the life of others. Such is the character of the transformation of the Manipuri in the world of global capitalism.

Politics of Culture and Identity

What consumes the contemporary civilization of the people of Manipur is the advent of cultural re-configuration of politics through the principle of ethnicity or the politics of identity, severely accentuated by the global scenario of reckless motivation for access to power, resources and territory by groups and communities. Ethnic identity, which propelled the individual to affiliate to the group, which became a global concern after the end of the cold war were impelled by the struggle by elite formations in their search for space and dignity in the global rush for re-distribution of spoils after the aftermath of imperialism. Imperialism however had not ended with the shrinkage of the erstwhile European states with their vast networks of rule over alien populations and territories. The system of rule and the cultural and behavioural forms of knowledge created by empires left vestiges of their influence on the natives who sought re-empowerment of their re-discovered selves in the new environment of economic competition and survival of the fittest. Ethnic categories which existed in plural orders were enabled to assert themselves for power and resources through strong mobilizational networks on the principle of primordial consciousness. Though British imperialism created ethnic difference amongst the multiple plurality of the Manipur societies in pre-colonial

confrontation, attrition and mutual acrimony destroys the equilibrium of extended households, constituencies and human settlements of artificially created boundaries, through the demands of heavily monetized electoral politics, and veteran politicians often experience mental and physical wreckage and trauma. Women activists who struggle to protect the innocent son from the onslaught of the instruments of the Indian state often die unnoticed deaths from complex traumatic experience unleashed in the Meira-Paibee movement. Sheer epistemic violence is noticed in the interstices of family, language, culture and behavioural norms and the entire originary world of the autochthons are ruptured beyond repair. The Manipuris do not live their lives, they live the life of others. Such is the character of the transformation of the Manipuri in the world of global capitalism.

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times, it was the successor Indian state which ensophisticated the ethnic divide amongst the Manipuris by differential treatment amongst the ethnic groups, balancing out and playing upon the weaknesses and prejudices of the aroused ethnic communities. The policies of the Indian state over the peoples of the Northeast under the principle of National security in the wake of insurgency are replete with intrigues, manoeuvres, and advantage seeking for self-perpetuation through severe and sinister manipulation of ethnic jealousy amongst the communities in the Northeast. Cultural identity which could have been positive values for human development had been re-arranged and re-structured for mutual hostilities and rancour, that the successor state would use it to self-perpetuate their hold over peoples of the Northeast. All ethnic unrest in the Northeast are not simple by-products of European Imperialism, but are enhanced by policies of Hinterland Imperialism propagated silently by the Indian state under the official hegemonic discourse of 'Development'.

Under such conditions of suppression, directed developmentalism and coercive rule under the official discourse of National Integration and development, what exactly shall be the profile of the cultural encounter faced by the people of Manipur in the fresh wake of globalisation and the Look East Policy of the Indian state? The answers shall not lie in the narratives of the obvious impact of circulation of global cultures, of rap music, dress styles of the young, or the homogenized images and practices of consumerism, now making a stranglehold on the economy of arrested production in Manipur. The answers must be sought on the state of 'intellectual haemorrhage' already suffered by the Manipuri people, where the second colonial experience of Indian rule had drained the minds of the Manipuris of all contents of reality. One has only to study the colonial experience of the African tribal societies which had been extensively debated upon by African intellectuals like Fannon, Aime-Cesaire, Nguigi-wa-Thiongo, Wole Soyinka and others which had not reached the intellectual domain of the university teachers and faculties in this forlorn state. The representation of the Manipuri intellectual shall need intense analysis and introspection, since they had not lived up to the challenges

thrown open by massive onslaughts of dehumanization spawned on the people as a whole by the discourse of development.

For now the Manipuris need a higher form of experience and knowledge to unearth the true genius of the Manipuri people which had been subsumed under the contemporary culture of the second Indianization. The first phase of Indianization resorted to severe state violence accompanied by attempt to destroy native learning and philosophy by the burning of the puyas, physical torture of conscientious objectors, desecration of places of indigenous worship, destruction of native idols and tremendous arousal of primal passions, contests and debates on values and principles. Yet the national war being fought against the expanding Burman Empire in the eighteenth century brought the lineages, clans and tribes together under the banner of the ethno-national formation, and the Manipur experience was of high civilizational energy. The sensuous, diplomatic efforts of Bhagyachandra did not result in what contemporary scholars term the Hinduization of the Meitei, but rather the Meeteization of Hinduism, which is intrinsically different in meaning and emphasis from the earlier concept. The assimilation and synthesizing experiences did not accompany a hegemonic relationship with the core culture's domain in the Indian heartland, which enabled the ruling classes of Manipur to devise ways and means of indigenous response to world cultures and influences. What was drastically different was the defeat of the national state in 1891, which created a system of dependence to the colonial power in the centre, thereby beginning the patterns of relationship between core and periphery, ruler and subject with varying degrees of response, in the anti-colonial awakenings of the early twentieth century. The British Empire decimated the military strength of the lineage aristocracy, started social-engineering processes for creation of a subservient colonial order, and encouraged cultural production which was not subversive of the new hegemony. However Imperialism could not destroy the strength and resilience of Manipuri women, who withstood the forces of exploitation and dominance by resorting to direct political activism and resistance in the two women's wars of

the early twentieth century. The ethnic brethren also resisted the penetration of colonial rule and exploitation resulting in the Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-19, and Jadonang Gaidinlieu movement in 1932-34. All these struggles were suppressed through military interventions by the central power authority of the Empire.

The second wave of Indianization starting from the early secularization and democratization processes of the Mahasabha era was a transformation from hegemony through consent to ruthless subversion of indigenous development, thereby resulting in suppression of native dignity, pride and history, systematic degradation of the political status of the post-imperial state was organized through modern Indian subtlety, intrigue and intimidation. After the integration of the Manipur state into the Indian Union in 1949, the first step taken towards incorporation of the people to the mainstream was the cancellation of the Foreigners Registration Act, which had earlier attempted to regulate entry of other demographic components and racial categories, so as to preserve the identity and protect the weak work ethic of the native populations. The new sense of Indianism propagated by the Indian rulers was to make the virgin states of the Northeast share the national burden of partition which affected the future social and economic scenario of simple polities of Tripura, Assam, Manipur and the Northeast. Large scale influx of refugees, internally and externally displaced populations from the eastern Indian semi-heartland was to shift the demographic, economic and political environment of the Northeast towards conflictual alignment and attrition. Earlier, the states of the Northeast were extremely humanitarian in their outlook and character, and rulers like Bodhchandra of Manipur and Vikram Chandra Manikya of Tripura were exemplary in their attitudes towards the refugees of war and partition, and there were little animosity towards the ethnic order. Sheer ethnic hatred, and competition over resources and territory were the gift of the Indian state, with their insidious presence and influence through political, business and military actions. The character of counter-insurgency operations in Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura shall reveal the racist paradigms of distance, mistrust and suspicion,

which blocked out awareness of the development of an 'other' people in history. Large scale napalm bombing in Nagaland, rape of its women, decapacitation of not only the 'hostile' insurgents but widespread destruction of homes, family and property accompanied the counter-insurgency operations. The Indian Air Force was extensively utilized to counter the Mizo insurgents, and forcible grouping of villages, displacement of ethnic populations, and twentieth century violations of rights to life and security were perpetuated before the international rights activism was in the ascendant, and thus the question of engagement with the North easterner people were not based on principles of natural justice. The Indian state had another brutal mind, in spite of proclamations of the 21st century Pan-Indian national ethos propelled by the aspirations to become a global player in Asia. This double face, this double-speak (what one politician says one and does the other in different spaces) has been an innate trait of the new Indian political and business classes who are in league with ethnic elites of the North Eastern states. The character of the Indian democratic classes in league with political elites are representative of the new Indianism, when the resources and properties of the virgin states are open to appropriation and exploitation for mutual benefit, and the linkages of the mainstream leaders with the willing compradors of the native states have sinister implications for the health of the polities. Even some national parties were funded from the illicit economy of drug and contraband goods accruing from the highly internationalized (globalized) transactions of global capital with transit through the interiors of Manipur and the North East.

The failure of the state to eke out any welfare measures for the people, the insidious cutting off of funds by the centre for even routine expenditures of the government, and ethnicization of poverty which is taking place are normally blamed on the disequilibrium created by insurgency. Yet at the same time, emergence of lumpen elements in the social sphere, the link between adventurers and self seekers with the high authorities of state, corruption in police, bureaucracy and the institutions are not caused by the insurgents alone. They are all products of a system spawned by what is

proclaimed as 'Development', but which has unread and unspoken about dynamics in the operation of socio-economic processes. What the development jargon had undertaken was to corrupt the leading economic, social and political classes, continue the framework of democracy, under which all forms of oppression, exclusivism, ethnic prejudices, could be aroused, pacified, played upon, and manipulated without the knowledge of the humanized world.

Look East for What?

What then could be the new challenge of opening out culturally and economically to the affluent states of East and Southeast Asia, though with some contradictory attachment to an intriguing polity of Myanmar? Globalisation, though is a new term, connected mainly with economic paradigms of capital shift and focus, free flow of goods, services and knowledge, but cultural and societal patterns, relationships and engagements had been taking place in one form or another throughout the historical experiences of Manipuri people. Having had originary historical experiences from the cultural East, the Manipuris should be proud of re-locating itself in the promised opening of the Eastern Door (Nongpok Thong Haangba). Wisdom teachers like Chingoo Khongnangthaba had come and gone, but their apocalyptic visions through sheer meditative practices and spiritual discipline had seen the evils of opening up of the Western door. The new imagined connection with the East has some practical implications which shall wash away false pride and soarings of ethnic imagination however.

For what the Look East Policy of the Indian state entails is there shall be material transformation in the infrastructures of roads, railways, hydro-electric resources, and trade between the adjacent countries like China, Thailand and other South East Asian states shall be enhanced within agreed patterns of socio-economic principles seminally formed in the Kunming enclave of 1989. It shall involve, first the finishing off of insurgent elements physically (through UN Human Rights bodies advised political approaches), permanent stationing of the two thousand odd kilometre long sub-Himalayan ranges in the international border by the Indian military, the luring

of transnational corporations whose sole motivation was of profit and profit only after proper road, rail and air connectivity between the states of the promised regional zone of economic cooperation had been materialized. Cultural productions emanating from the native in the forms of dances, music, theatre and the arts shall have an unrestricted flow and exchange which may benefit the cultural workers of the state. More trading shall follow, with mutual competition between the regional manufacturing and industrial centres, which shall heighten the quality of the goods in competition.

However, what shall be the role of ethnic populations who are, and still shall remain, in the global periphery, with an unequal exchange system in the praxis of livelihood and material existence? What role of participation, or decision making in polity concerns had ever been empowered to the natives? Who are the institutional heads of governments, and how many sons of soil are recruited in the decision making bodies in governance, in development departments, and in civil and military establishments? What really constitutes the natural, indigenous development of the region, without exogenous control and direction? What represents Manipuri reality? Is Manipuri reality conceived, inscribed and perceived by the contemporary Indian state, or is it another form of reality which exists in the nerves and veins of the Manipuri people? Who benefits from the new Indianism, a sense of belonging to India's new nationhood, leaving aside or forgetting the atrocities perpetrated by the security agencies against innocent men and women who bear the agonies of the violence between the state and non-state actors? Are the Non-state actors aware of the deeper implications of the Look East Policy and obvious semiotic influences of the recent counter-insurgency operations? The tumultuous disarray and disequilibrium which is likely to occur when the state is in internal war with political dissidents, and the sociological syndrome of 'dysarchy' when the forces against the powerful state often fall into factionalism and divisiveness because of the sheer power of the state are in operation, shall have to re-structure their thoughts and ideas of human emancipation in the grand design of coercive hegemony under the discourse of development. The Northeastern states, including Manipur,

are rapidly transforming into fascist comprador states with greater infiltration into the private lives of democratic citizens, and the emergence of a great South Asian power as a Police state is in the offing. Civil liberties are under threat again. Portents of globalisation!

These are some of the issues implied by the recent overture to global capitalism. The obvious fears of Chinese economic expansionism, and their conversion of Myanmar into a Chinese satellite state had provoked the foregrounding of the Look East Policy. One must remember the reality of Chinese neo-colonial practices on Myanmar, that the northern Shan states like Lashio, Myitkina, Bhamo etc. had already been colonized by Chinese moneyed immigrants, and ethnic Shan and other populations had withdrawn into the suburbs and villages. The Salween river systems had been modernized to carry heavy mercantile shipping, and China is also planning modernization of the Irawaddy and Chindwin river systems too.

In the words of Robb (2003) a contemporary Myanmar watcher, 'Burmese people in regions close to the Chinese border, are understandably less comfortable with the increasing foreign presence in their traditional territories. At the most immediate level, recent reports describe rising real estate prices in northeastern cities, to the point where long term residents are being forced into satellite towns and villages, when main cities begin to look like Chinese colony-towns' (*China Rights Forum Journal*, May 2003).

Looking at the way modern states exercising sovereignty in international relations, do exploit peripheral regions as captive populations, and how the latter experience deep processes of national hurt and wounded historical dignity, we may reflect that the Manipuris may continue to remain as simple carriers of goods and services without developing qualitative entrepreneurial enterprise to benefit from the proposed economic cooperation between the regions. The atmosphere at the recently developed Moreh town, which had become a melting pot of social inequilibrium because of absence of a long rootedness in community life may become indicators of the new scenario in the era of globalisation. So also is Dimapur as a complex of commercial activities, where

community culture had not built up traditional forms of interdependence and sanity, and the new townships spawned by the money economy shall witness deeply delicate imbalances in social and cultural relationships, always prone to violence and conflict. It is however not to deny that some pragmatic solutions are worked by the inter-ethnic stakeholders in the economy, but that is not enough for rapidly transforming economic centres in the harsh, competitive world unleashed by global capitalism.

Witnessing grassroot experiences of people, economy and culture along the national highway reflect various forms of adaptation and change in traditional communities when economic imperatives impel new formation of townships, relegation to oblivion of traditional places of ritual or cultural importance, and subsequent human interactions taking place in newly constituted districts and centres of administration and governance. The newly constituted districts of Senapati hide ugly features of ethnic distance, alienation of major hill populations from other ethnic brethren, an almost complete closure to plains interaction at the administrative infrastructures and subsequent governance initiatives. Incidents of closure of government offices and institutions, cultural affiliation to the neighbouring state and repeated economic blockades of the highway traffic, pressure to faceless transport operators are some of the regular symptoms of ethnic divide, of policies of identity and difference, which are being played upon by non-state forces and the security agencies. The peoples alienation from the plains brothers had reached unenviable stages of possible conflict, which civil societies at both levels had not succeeded to mitigate. Ethnic variables amongst other indigenes also hinge upon resorting to arms to safeguard clan, lineage or group interests. Other expatriate communities like the Nepalis also sustain delicate balance in the mutually suspicious environment, and the propensity to resort to arms are not the exception amidst marginal communities. Groups and other ethnic minorities often subvert their traditional identities or historical origins in order to affiliate with bigger tribes who could promise more material and moral aid, protect their interests in the insidious political manouvres. The impact of the economy, the necessity for survival and safeguarding

of group interests often impact upon issues of identity, and the ethnic balance are poised at a critical level of rupture and fission created by the modern economy. Small ethnic communities shall no longer remain voiceless, passive witnesses to the changing socio-economic scenario. Ethnic identity shall remain the unavoidable plank for tribal mobilization and assertion for power and resources.

Cultural Conflict and Suppressing Mutualities

The emergence of the national construction of Naga identity and the recent the political negotiation with the GOI on the one side, and the furious confrontation of the Indian security agencies with the militant non-state actors in the southeast and southwestern regions of Manipur bordering Myanmar are two vital subjects upon which Manipuri intellectuals and the academic circles are unable to express a view point, which is the unfortunate reminder to the marginalization of the literati in popular discourse of the day. The sensitivity of the subject, the environment of insecurity, and the hold of the non-state and state forces and their coercive hold on territory and population, and the presence of the elements of fear psychosis and the disastrous destruction of democratic principles and practice by the instruments of the Indian state in their violations over life and security, the hidden alignment of non-state groups within the subterranean regions of politics and insurgency are some of the vital factors which inhibit frank discussion on the subjects. The issues of Naga's claim to nationhood cannot be wished away as a figment of imagination of a long oppressed community, but the context of their 'destabilization' of former territorial concepts and frames of geography and culture are uneasy claims which the major community from the plains could not easily let by. In the massive agitation on the cease-fire issue in June 2001, some eighteen lives were lost, yet the plains community did not possess an adversarial attitude towards the Naga brethren, which reflected ingredients of plural community which the pre-colonial state cherished, but which had been dented by hierarchical attitudes developed by world religions, and through unenlightened ethnic prejudiced policies pursued by the comprador classes spawned by the Indian

electoral system of democratic rule. The grievances on both sides are not democratically discussed amongst the ethnic communities themselves, but were left to the indifferent, self-perpetuating arbiters of New Delhi, who had no other principles other than play upon native weaknesses. The major plains viewpoint realistically stem from the simple logic of some 20% of the population claiming 75% of the territory and geography of the state, which is also inhabited by other ethnic components, and the fact of how 66 per cent of the population concentrated on one-tenth of the geographical area, which itself has extensive demographic pressures on land would consider reconstitution of ethnic states when multi-ethnicity and pluralism should become a fact of post-colonial life, is the major historical reality of the moment. Ethnicity and Ethnic identity and politics of culture would have been major historical subjects on state formation, which problem the issues of globalisation shall accentuate.

The other issue of militarization of parts of the Manipur state are propelled by the necessity for pragmatic implementation of the Look East Policy of the Indian state in the context of globalisation and integration of the economies of sub-regional groupings like BIMC, which enabled the Indian state, flushed from the Bhutan Operation of 2003, to undertake this exclusive counter-insurgency operation under the pretext of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's diplomatic tour of the Northeast in Nov. 2004. The issues become important since the Indian state has been severely jolted by the 9/11 syndrome, the attack on Parliament, and the communal divide between communities, and more importantly, the strong emergence of left-extremism in the heartland. The recent developments in the heartland, when the Maoist Communist Party from Nepal, the Maoist Communist Centre from Bihar, and the Peoples War Group from Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are reported to have forged an alliance termed 'Compact Revolutionary Zone', which had corrected the earlier Naxalite mistakes of the late Charu Majumdar from the 1969-71 experience. The fast emergence of left extremism due to the hegemonic concentration of power and resources by some three hundred million middle class, the communal divide between Hindus and Muslims as a result of politicization of

religion, the internationalization of the dispute over Kashmir, and the mushrooming ethnic insurgencies in the Northeast were the compelling features of the hard look at the National security issue. Though the economy of the Indian state was fast developing to counter China's hegemony over Asia, the logic of the capitalist transformation compelled the Indian state to assume the character of a Police state where coercive and suppressive measures against internal subversion were to be exercised, the defence forces had secured a vital space in the decision making power structure, since the 9/11 tragedy and global terrorism became the political counterpart of the economic term. While economic integration benefits the fast developing social class, the global network of 'Terrorism' whose meaning had been subsumed without the principle of distinction being applied, should be finished off. Physical elimination was the key, which prompted conscientious journalists of Tehelka to reveal corruption in the defence forces, and also the issue of how body counts became the watchword for upward mobility and career achievements for the rank and file in the armed forces. Such is the atmosphere under which the Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958, a colonial and imperial legacy, was utilized in the Northeast. Repressive contemporary political culture then is the hallmark of the suppressor regimes which was ushered by economic development. The compulsions of Look East Policy necessitated the new counter-insurgency operations, where the insurgents of Manipur should have to be wiped off, or forced to resort to 'negotiation' through conflict fatigue, and then subsume them through prolonged attrition within the temptations the Asian global power could provide. The character of the Indian state as a modern Leviathan should have to be studied by social science researchers engaged in the project of politics and culture in the era of global capitalism.

This issue then raises the fundamental question of how political morality and international humanitarian laws should operate to protect basic dignity, security and the inalienable rights of the human being embroiled in conflict. Customary International humanitarian law provides essential 'principles of proportionality' whereby the measures undertaken by State

Parties to counter threats to national security should not be beyond the level or intensity produced by the non-state actors. In a sense, what the force or equipments used by the state should be in proportion to that used by the non-state actors. Also the principle of distinction should be exercised to discriminate who are the combatants and non-combatants. Also the principle of time limitation in a sense of how states of emergency should not be continued too long, that excessive extension of repressive laws tend to become permanent thereby infringing upon basic inalienable rights of the human being to live with dignity and security. In the era of globalisation, when economic integration had become the universal principle, the matter of how international morality and respect for human rights are being denied is a serious moral and ethical question, that cultural values in democracy and justice should emphasize. The manner how the Indian state does not ratify the additional protocols of the ICCPR and ICESCR, as well as the Additional Protocols of the Geneva Conventions reflect on the attitude of the Indian government on issues of National Security *vis-a-vis* Human rights and International Humanitarian Law, which any State Party joining the bandwagon of Globalisation should, as a moral principle, practice in order to respect basic democratic values. The state's function as a re-distributive institution of justice had been undermined in dealing with questions of conflict and violence. Also, in this global era of intense violence, civil wars, and internal wars, the global concern for respect for human dignity cannot be brushed aside from the simple reason of internal security, and international debates on how state sovereignty should be curbed to establish the rights of society and the human individual had been in full swing. Any one interested on this issue appreciate the contribution of Michael Foucault in developing this international discourse (Neal 2004).

Women for Resurgence

Lastly, the future scenario for the Manipuri people in the tense, attritive challenge of the globalisation programme and the Look East Policy of the Indian state, cannot neglect what contribution the Manipuri women should make in evolving a 'national culture' to carry forward the civilizational struggle

in the future. The present state of complete subjugation of Manipuri womanhood into servile social reproducers, the reduction of the market women into wage-earners, and general gender insensitivity and distorted cruelty over the body of Manipuri women reflect the heinous decline of the Manipuri civilization. For Manipuri civilization was based on the principle of women's basic role as the source of energy, of grace and of inclusivity. The principle of fertility which the ancients emphasized in food production and biological reproduction was intersticed into the concepts of polity functioning and social engineering processes of the past. Women were the subject of the culture's attention, that a simple look into the intricate marriage rituals would reveal how society cared for the 'woman', and that all activities in life, relationships and concerns were based on the basic acknowledgement of the importance of the 'woman'. All civilizational mores were built up in her care. She was not only the mother and the procreator, but also the polity organizer and cultural ambassador. She was the catalyst of the multi-ethnic social organism of the past, was the educator of values, of language and of societal networks of pluralism, that the basic structures of kin and blood ties were all built up on the body of the woman. The pre-colonial Manipur was a gendered polity. Women who acted as instruments of state in the international scenario, are still remembered in folk memory by extra-territorial ethnic neighbours. Princess Kuranganayani is remembered by the Ahoms, Princess Chandrapabha is still revered by the Dimasas of North Cachar Hills, and many other women had left their imprints for services to inter-ethnic harmony and polity equilibrium. These legacies are forgotten by present day 'feminists' and women's rights activists, as well as the general academia. The Meira-Paibeas had become symbols of resistance against the repressive state, but their role and functions are still derided by partisan columnists of the national media, as well as the security forces who taunt them as 'Petticoat soldiers'. The resurgence of women are always a fact of Manipuri society's history, but the nature and direction of their struggle, the retrieval of their ancient civilizational heritage, and re-empowerment of their being in tune with current challenges

to be faced are all imperatives for a whole generation of Manipuris to understand and acknowledge. The tragedy of Irom Sharmila reflects the general political apathy of the Manipuri people, the indifference to the sanctity of Manipuri women, and relentless insensitivity to their cause, whose predicament now reflect the depth of degeneration and decline of contemporary Manipuri culture and civilization. We Manipuris are not ourselves, we are others!

The re-opening of the Eastern Door should be challenged by the Manipuris, not in terms of simple acceptance of global processes which shall ride roughshod over the weak, indolent, and non-productive citizens, but as natural, empowered partners in the re-discovery and use of hitherto suppressed civilizational energy, now unleashed by contemporary challenger civilizations of East and Southeast Asia. The Mongoloid countries of East and Southeast Asia had now thrown up vital challenges to the economy and culture of other peoples, and other nations by the new discovery of their own tradition and heritage, their collective values, and their new Asian Affirmation (Huntington 1996). They have now emphasized that the nation should precede over the (ethnic) community and society over self; that Family should be the basic unit of society, that there should be Regard and Community Support for the Individual; that Consensus should be sought instead of contention; and that there should be Racial tolerance and religious harmony (White Paper of Singapore - President Wee Kim Wee 1991). What the East and South East Asian had emphasized in the context of globalisation is what is now termed as the 'Re-Asianization of Asia' (Arataalsozaki, 1992; Naff, 1984) as a post-imperial project. Taking similar queue from these cultural affines, the Manipuris should seriously undertake the project of 'Re-Manipurinization of Manipur' in the new era of globalisation.

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