

YOUTH  
MOVEMENT  
IN  
NORTH-EAST  
INDIA

A. C. Sinha (Ed.)

# Youth Movements in North-East India



*Edited by*  
A.C. SINHA



HAR-ANAND PUBLICATIONS

# Preface

The problems of the Youth and the Youth Movements in North-East Region is based on a seminar held at the North Eastern Hill University Shillong on March 27-28, 1978. It was sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi and was to be followed up at various micro-level locations in the region. The participants in the seminar were predominantly youth activists and social scientists. Some way or other, the ICSSR seems to have abandoned the idea of following up the recommendations of its experts participating in the seminar. We on our part, got caught in a series of youth and students upheavals in the region that we felt not to pursue the matter any further. But score of inquisitive persons approached us almost every year to consult the files on the proceedings of the seminar. That provided enough justification for this publication.

It so happened that Dr. Partha S. Dutta, Deputy Director, North Eastern Regional Centre of the ICSSR, Shillong, who had been directing the proceeding seekers to us, made a suggestion to publish the proceedings. The idea did not impress us to begin with, but on a second thought, we read through the drafts tentatively. Then a number of justifications for the publication seemed logical. Firstly, this was the first regional seminar held as a part of an All India perspective on the youth and it has its historical significance. Secondly, these proceedings represent in a way the base line to the vigorous and militant youth movements such as A.A.S.U., K.S.U., A.A.P.S.U., etc. which stole the thunder all the 1980's for the region. Thirdly, the proceedings also report on the present location of the yesterday's youth leaders and display that out of two dozen young participants, one became a Member of the Parliament (M.P.), another one Controller of

Examinations in a University, one an I.P.S. Officer, a Deputy Director of Sports, a businessman, a member of the District Council (M.D.C.), two advocates and 12 College and University teachers, besides those whose whereabouts are not known to us. In this way, we feel that the proceedings might be significant sources of information on which we had no moral rights to seat at.

With a view to filling the gap between 1978 and 1992 we tried to catch up with three additions to the original papers. In this way we have Prof. A.K. Barua's on Assam, Dr. N. Kumar and A.K. Nongkynrih's on K.S.U. and Father S. Karotemporel's presentations. We profusely thank all our authors for their write-ups. Some of them may find their presentations edited in terms of language, but we have entirely left the ideas intact. The entire credit for the publication goes to Dr. P.S. Dutta, Mr. A. Dkhar typed the final manuscript and Har-Anand Publications were nice enough to publish the book. We thank them all. In case the proceedings generate interests among the youths, policy makers, social scientists and social activists, we shall feel our efforts have been duly rewarded.

A.C. SINHA

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# Background to the Youth and Youth Movements

*A.C. Sinha*

Our earlier drive was to get the politically active youth together and identify their expectations and aspirations. Meanwhile the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi (I.C.S.S.R.) invited us to organise the regional seminar on the youth in the North-Eastern India on their overall pattern of having half a dozen seminars at Chandigarh, Bombay, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Patna and Shillong. We agreed to act as the regional organisers and suggested our own ideas for the same. Along with the suggested themes of the *youth unemployment, generation gap, alienation*, we decided that *problem of women and uneducated youth* to be included. Keeping in view the nature of the problem and the youthful participants, we suggested an alternative way for conducting the seminar in the following way: Youth speak, social scientists reflect and the encounter between the two. Our suggestion found acceptance among the social scientists organizing the All India Seminars on the youth as an alternative way and the seminar was held on March 27-28, 1978.

## Nature of the Seminar

We had about a dozen leading social scientists of India with us in this seminar, who had been concerned with the youth dynamics. However, we hasten to say that this was unlike the normal academic seminars. After the inaugural session, we had two key papers by the directors of the seminar. Prof.

G.S. Aurora reported on over-all regional perspective and the specific problems of the youth of the region as well as general problems of the youth. Dr. A.C. Sinha briefly provided the organisational set-up of the North-Eastern youth. We proposed that formal reading of the papers should not be avoided as much as possible. Various authors might talk about their papers within the allotted time to them by their respective Chairman. There was no formal discussions on the individual papers. However, with the permission of the respective Chairman, points of clarification and information might be raised and the authors might respond to them.

Second business session was on the presentation of the papers by the youth. For this session, we had chosen about a dozen papers by the young participants. Those were of general character covering either various issues of the youth or the problems of the youth in some of other state of the region. In this way, in this session we had about a dozen papers: V. Zathang, A. Patton, K. Yadev, Y. Vayie, S. Sema, T.C. Kapmawia, I.L. Aier, S. Mulieh, R. Kar, L.R. Fanai and others. Third session once more was devoted to reporting by the regional youth on their organisations and communities. These, over a dozen papers, were special papers around certain issues exercised in the minds of the youth. The pattern was the same in the following session in which the youth spoke about their own papers. Thus, we had papers of M/s R. Burgohain, E. Nongthy, D.N.M. Ao, L.S. Gassah, S. Saikia, P.S. Mishra, N. Gopalkrishnan, A.H. Khound, S. Laskar, V. Chunga, D. Arandhara, N.I. Singh, I.L. Aier.

Fourth session was devoted to the theme papers presented by the distinguished social scientists. Here we had two papers specially prepared for this session. Thus, Prof. Amar Kr. Singh presented his views on "Identity and Alienation in Indian Youth", and Prof. J. Pandey on "Problem of Identity, A Socio-Psychological Perspective". Besides we had among ourselves, Prof. S. Swaroop (Chandigarh), Dr. (Mrs.) Leela Dube (New Delhi), Prof. Sachchidenanda



(ANSISS, Patna). Dr. Bela Datta Gupta (Calcutta), Dr. M. Horam (Imphal) and Dr. P.D. Saikia (Jorhat). Many of them took part in the seminar on behalf of the Central Organizing Committee of the ICSSR for this set of seminars. We proposed that the social scientists on the basis of their research experiences should reflect on the problems posed to them by the youth in the previous two sessions.

Fifth and the concluding session was termed as the 'Encounter': Here the youth and the social scientists put their mind together and deliberated on the problems of the youth organisations and movements in general and specific issues relevant to our region in particular. We believed that the encounter might powerfully bring about the concern of the experts to identify the problems. We expected the seminar to pinpoint the aspects of the youth movements for development orientation, extension programmes and research activities. These exercised might interest the policy makers to formulate the programmes to channellise the youth for a meaningful life. This dialogue examined the possibilities to hold grass root level seminars at the regional centres such as, Kohima, Imphal, Agartala, Itanagar, Dibrugarh or Tura. The seminar was also expected to make some policy recommendations as well. In the evening there was a cultural get-together in which the young participants displayed their colourful cultural tradition of songs, music and folk dances.

### **Organisation of the Seminar**

It was felt at the outset that about 40 youths and social scientists might be invited for the Seminar. Thus we, invited the known scholars in the field of youth affairs from all over the seven units of the region—Arunachal, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and Nagaland. Not only that we invited the youth of Sikkim to participate in the deliberations of the seminar. It was expected of the youth to be some office bearers of their forums. The participants were requested to write on their organizations communities, its

policy, membership, problems and expected resolutions. We invited some teachers from the colleges/schools, who were known for studying the problems of the youth. We tried to get in touch with the youth and their forums repeatedly, but the response was not as desired. We had a handicap: we, the faculty of the North-Eastern Hill University, were identified as part of the Indian Union establishment and, thus, a section of youth did not respond to our invitation. Another possible reason was ineffective communication network in the region. These are some of the reasons that our reports on Tripura, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh lacked substance. At the same time, we shall like to add our reports on the activities of the youth forums in Manipur, Meghalaya and Nagaland were quite satisfactory.

### **Issues Identified as Problems Areas and their Possible Resolutions**

We found that the organisations were involved in a number of activities. At times the same set of youth were engaged in a number of organisations. We prepared a long list of the youth organisations running in more than five dozen from the region. These organisations may be divided into six from the point of view of their stability, programmes, structure and objectives. These organisations may be identified as: (i) Students, (ii) Welfare oriented, (iii) religious, (iv) Political, (v) Sports and entertainments, and (vi) Commercial. We received 32 papers for the seminar, among which two were the background papers prepared by the organisers and another two were contributed by two leading psychologists of the country. Prof. G.S. Aurora portrayed the regional dimensions of various students, youth and community problems. Dr. A.C. Sinha provided a structural analysis of the regional youth organisations and introduced the strategy of the seminar to the participants. Prof. Amar K. Singh (Ranchi) and Prof. Janak Pandey (Allahabad) analysed the issues of youth alienation and identity crisis respectively.

The Seminar was inaugurated by the General Secretary, Students Union, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong. The proceedings of the seminar were divided into four seatings presided by M/s. Anthony Patton. C. Nunthara, Prof. A.K. Singh and Prof. Leela Dube. There were 23 papers under the title, the 'Youth Speak': The copies of these papers were made available to the participants before hand. The speakers were requested to elaborate briefly on various points raised in their papers and the audience were to raise supplementary questions and ask for factual elaborations. In this way there was no separate discussion on individual papers. Still some papers generated a lot of interest and the quest participants took active interest in the discussion. In case the subject matter and the issues in the essays are to be considered, the seminar was concentrated on the following themes: (i) Identity, Alienation and favouritism, (ii) Dimension of Re-awakening, (iii) Nature of Exploitation and its effects, (iv) Elite and local leadership, (v) Issues of the urban youth and (vi) Study of the regional dialects and languages. Prof. Leela Dube, Director, I.C.S.S.R, New Delhi presided over the concluding session of the seminar on the 'Encounter between the youth and the social scientists'. This session generated a lot of interest in the local youth and they were present in a large body. Youth from Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur were eager to see the way in which the consensus arrived in the seminar was to be implemented. The youth desired that the organisers of the seminar must inform the proceedings of the seminar to the Cental Government in New Delhi, who were ultimately responsible for the over-all welfare of the region. A consensus was developed in the seminar on the following themes, which were proposed to the authorities as the suggestions.

Firstly, efforts should be made to organise state level seminars at various capitals in the region with a view to continue the dialogue between the youth and the social scientists. Such meetings may be organized at Aizawl.

Dibrugarh, Imphal, Itanagar, Kohima, Agartala etc. and efforts should be made that a responsible senior authority of the Home Ministry, Government of India should participate in the deliberation. Secondly, it was felt that one of the reasons for our relation between the Central Government and the local communities in Nagaland, Mizoram and Tripura is the location of the armed forces. It was suggested that such forces should be stationed away from the habitations, educational institutions in the region. It was recommended that the vocational institutions such as medical, engineering, technical, managerial etc. are started in the region so that economic exploitation of the region be stopped in future. Fourthly, it was reported that even in the smaller tribal areas a number of non-tribals have come as the experts. There have been examples that even for the post of peons, outsiders were appointed ignoring the local tribal contenders. Such happenings encourage disappointment and distrust among the tribal youth. It should be the duty of the Central Government to stop such occurrences in future. Lastly, it was realised that the Central Government must evolve as efficient transportation system for topographically difficult and geographically isolated North-East Frontier Region. For that matter management of the roadways and railways need to be reoriented.

# Social Problems of Youth in the North-East India

*G.S. Aurora*

## I. Introductory Remarks

In this chapter, we would like to place the problems of youth in North-Eastern India in broader regional, cultural and historical perspectives.

The Seminar papers received from the young people from the North-Eastern region very clearly bring out the close interconnection between the immediate socio-political and economic environment and the problems of youth as perceived by the young participants. The participants, who have contributed their papers to this Seminar, belong to the different communities of this region. The nature of their immediate social locale also varies considerably. There are a number of students from Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Assam whose papers are in this anthology. There are also leaders of youth organizations and academics, who have been engaged in organizing youth activities. Probably, the poorest segment of the youth working in rural and urban areas are not represented in the list of participants. These are the least articulate segment of youth and we hoped that though not represented physically their problems would not go unrepresented in the proceedings. It is this segment of youth which in fact, requires our greatest attention. Let me, in the following sections, of this paper, go over one by one, an analysis of the various contexts within which the problems of youth must be placed in order that we may understand them (the problems of youth) in their proper perspectives. These contexts are (i) The regional; (ii) The historical; and (iii) The context of social change since Independence.

## II. The Regional Context

The North-Eastern Region of India has some very distinctive features which explain its specific individuality. Geographically it is, to some extent, located as a pocket somewhat apart from the main body of India. It has but one thin line of over-land communication which connects it with the "arteries" of the Nation. Its isolation from the rest of India is demonstrated by the fact that, normally, a letter written from and to a location within the region, takes nearly 4 (four) to 7 (seven) days to reach. Even when Bangladesh did not intervene as a separate political entity between West Bengal and Assam even when the hills of the Aracan ranges, the Indo-Tibetan Himalayan and the Khasi-Garo Hills, created a hiatus between the people of this region and their neighbours in the Indo-Gangetic Plains. Because of this specific geographical situation the population of the region has also come to have its own distinctive characteristics. In the 4 (four) out of 7 (seven) states of this region, the tribal populations constitute majorities. Even in Assam, Manipur and Tripura, almost one quarter of the people are tribals. The tribal regions and stages are, mainly, hilly while the non-tribal sub-regional are fertile valleys. Racially, the tribals belong to either Tibeto-Mongolian or Austro-Asiatic races. The languages spoken by the tribal communities contrast sharply with the Indo-European languages spoken by the people of the Brahmaputra, Imphal and Tripura valleys.

The tribals and the valley people are also contrasted in terms of religion. The tribals are either "animists", Buddhists or Christians. The term "animist" is used to denote the religious difference rather than ideological difference between Hindu and tribal religions. People of the valley are mostly Hindus and Muslims. There are only a very few tribals belonging to these religious groups and only a few Christians are found among the variety, but various denominations have made head way among them. Even those tribals who have not yet converted into one or the other variety of

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Christianity have been influenced by Christian ethos. The region is as varied in terms of its natural resources as it is in terms of race and culture. Large parts of the Assam valley as well as the hilly terrain, at one time, were covered by thick forests. Today the forests constitute less than 25% of the area of Assam and even in the hill states. The forests are being depleted at a rapid rate. However, forests still remain a very major natural resource of the people of the North-East.

In the upper reaches of the Assam valley oil had been struck in the early decades of this century. There is now a possibility of oil flourishing oil industry in the entire southern Brahmaputra and Barack valley. The region also contains large reservoirs of untapped minerals. Geological surveys are in progress and the rich potential of the region is gradually being revealed. Assam valley also contains many tea plantations. Tea planting is being encouraged in some of the other North-Eastern States as well. Spices, such as, cinnamon, black pepper, and cardamom can also be grown in this region. In fact, cinnamon is found in a wild state in abundance in parts of Nagaland.

The States of the regions are located on the borders of China, Bhutan, Burma and Bangladesh. The people living on the borders have ethnic, trading and cultural linkages with their neighbours across the political boundaries. While ethnicity has not recognized political boundaries, the modern states are based upon the myth of the cotermination of land and ethnicity. Where the centralized states insist on rigid political boundaries a certain degree of tension is bound to be generated on the borders of states. The modern states are specially jealous of the loyalties of their citizens. This is simply to point out the fact of the strategic importance of the region to the central authority which has its own concept of national boundaries as opposed to the concepts of national identities of the people living in these border States. Whereas, the people of the valley are integrated easily with the people inhabiting the rest of India the hill peoples remain,



traditionally without deep emotional linkages with it.

From the above description of the socio-ecological locus of the North-Eastern people we may surmise some of the important social & cultural facets of the life of the regions. Firstly, both emotionally and physically, the tribals are only tenuously linked with the rest of India. Secondly, because of its ecological position, the region has tended to remain what backward and unattended. Thirdly, the region has had immense but untapped resources. These resources are, since the last few decades, becoming a target for quick development and exploitation by the larger Indian economy and polity. Fourthly, this region has developed a great variety of sub-cultures which contrast with the cultures of the Indo-European people dominating the valleys.

### **III. The Context of History**

It is during the first part of the 19th century, that the first incursion of the British into the North-Eastern Region took place. Within a few years the whole of the Brahmaputra valley was over run by the British. The hilly part of the region, however, remained unadministered territories almost throughout the 19th century. Even until the Independence of India large parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland were so called "unadministered" territories. The British did, however, claim sovereignty over these lands and protected their borders from organized incursions from Tibet or Burma.

The extension of the administrative frontier during the 18th and the 19th centuries was often preceded by the extension of religion-cultural frontier. The missionaries entered the villages of the head-hunting Mizo and Naga Tribes as well as the relatively more advanced communities of present day Meghalaya. Unlike most of the continental India, where the cultural frontier was extended by a process of the diffusion of Hindu culture traits in the North-Eastern States, barring the Indo-Tibetan sub-region, the cultural frontier was extended by the process of the infusion of western

Christianity. As the tribal peoples of these sub-regions were put on the road abandoning their traditional cultures, they were cajoled and pressed to accept a form of Christianity largely puritanical and fundamentalist. The exclusive tribal loyalties, thus, gave place to exclusive fundamentalist Christian faiths. Together with Christianity, came modernisation in the styles of life through Christian run hospitals and educational institutions run by the various missionary orders.

In the Brahmaputra valley, Manipur and Tripura, different forms of Hinduism had spread over the last two centuries. Christianity could not make very serious inroads in these communities. However, the economic and administrative institutions of the British variety had been extended by the British in these valley sub-regions much more completely than in the tribal sub-regions. Thus, while we have the rapid administrative and economic modernisation advancing in the valleys during the British regime, the tribal areas became culturally, educationally and religiously closer to the western model of modernisation even though economically and administratively traditionalism prevailed supreme in the tribal parts.

Let us now shift our attention to the developments taking place in this region after the partition and independence of the sub-continent of India. As already mentioned earlier, the penetration of the British administration into the sub-region had remained somewhat partial. In fact, the traditional tribal leaderships were controlled and even boosted by the British, so that the tribal people did not engage in random deprivations of the valley people whose economies were the main source of revenue for the British administration. After Independence, the Government of India inherited the sovereignty over the tribal regions even though some of these had, in fact, been only partially administered by the British. The ideology of Indian nationalism had advanced the concept of *Mother India*, which include all parts of British

India and the varieties of its peoples. The only exception agreed to by the Indian nationalities being the Islamic state of Pakistan, which was allowed to be carved out of the Mother India's Eastern and Western Muslim majority provinces. This concept resulted in the vigorous extension of the administrative frontier into the previously non-or-partially administered tribal and frontier sub-regions soon after the independence. This extension of the administrative frontier took place at the same time as there was a growing sense of sub-national consciousness among many of the tribal communities in this region. The reason for the emergence of the sub-nationalist movements in this region was to be located in the following types of processes:

1. The emergence amongst the tribals of educated westernised middle classes, which had become conscious of the new power syndromes emerging in the sub-continent.
2. The increasing realization on the part of the educated tribals that the increasing economic incursions of the communities of the plains are going to extend into the hill regions, thus, destroying the ethnic niches of the tribal communities.

The process of the gradual penetration of the farmer of the plains to take over fertile lands in the tribal areas has been noticed for a long time. This has already included large parts of hilly India into the Hindu rural civilization, reducing the tribals, in this process, to a state of low-caste appendages of the caste-Hindu society. Already during the British period, certain trading communities and elements of the earlier administrative stratum had entered and settled in the urban and semi-urban localities in the tribal hinterlands of the North-East. Since Independence, the influx of not only the urbanized groups, but also of the rural communities Bengal and Nepal, gained momentum. The tribal elite was aware of this inexorable process and organised political forums to press for stemming the tide of immigration.

3. During the Second World War, the Chins and the Karens of Burma had raised a fairly successful revolt against the Japanese. After the War they continued their struggle against the Burmese authorities. Their ethnic brethren across the border in India received material and moral support from the Burmese tribals and, ultimately, went into revolt against the Central Indian forces in the 1950's and 1960's.

As already mentioned, Christianity had already cemented the traditionality hostile tribal groups speaking different languages. Common struggle against the non-Christian "Hindu" power further developed among the smaller tribes to fuse into larger tribal identities such as Nagas and Mizos.

In the Brahmaputra valley, another types of inter-communal tension began to grow after Independence. Since other valleys had come under the British influence much later than Bengal, when the British conquered Ahom land they brought in Bengali clerks and lower level administrators and professionals to help them in their imperial aims. Over a period of time the Bengali population of Assam came into direct competition with the growing urban middle-class amongst the Assamese. Assam valley itself did not remains ethnically uniform. Besides Bangalese, Assam also received a large incursion of Santhal, Munda and Nepalis, who were employed in the tea estates largely created and owned by the British entrepreneurs. In the valleys, the inter-community tensions did not generate serious separatist movements. This can be seen in terms of certain ethnic and class linkages cutting across communities. These cultural linkages were absent between the tribal and non-tribal segments of the nation. How were these tensions sought to be countered? This is the major problem discussed in the next section.

#### **IV. Policy of National Integration**

Let us look at the policy thrust of various segments of Indian

ultimately the main backbone of these movements were the tribal youth. As these movements have seen long drawn confrontation with the power of the centre, their leaderships have tended to grow older and over a period of time somewhat more amenable to compromise with the Central authorities. At the same time, the militancy of the youth has remained, by and large, unabated. This situation has created problems of confrontation between the Central authorities and the youth movements.

As educational institutions bring tribal youths from different communities together, there is a rapid emergence of a common tribal identity cutting across not only culturally contiguous tribal communities, such as Nagas, but also heterogeneous tribal Communities, such as Nagas, Mizos, Khasis and Garos. What seems to bind them together is the consciousness of being in historical confrontation with the technologically superior and numerically preponderant peoples of the heartland India.

## **VI. The Non-Tribal Youth and the Identity Question**

While we talk of the emerging identities of tribal youth, the non-tribal youth of this region face another type of identity problem. Many of the non-tribal families have lived in the urban areas in the region for many decades. Their younger members know no other region as their home-land since they and their families have spent best part of their lives in these parts. Because of political authority being centered in the hands of the tribal elite, the non-tribal middle classes and their young men feel themselves discriminated against. This discrimination is, of course, legitimised by the law itself. For these young people, there is an acute sense of insecurity. They ask their elders— "Who are they ? Where are they to go" ?

In the earlier sections, we have mentioned the role of education in creating urban middle-classes among the tribals. For a large number of tribal youth, education has been

presented, by their parent generations, as the only road to economic and social advancement and emancipation. Through education, many of the tribal youth were able to join the ranks of administrators and professionals. Since Independence, the creation of democratically elected Governments and District Councils have opened another avenue of advancement for the middle-class youth, i.e., politics.

The missionary schools were, and still are, by and large, institutions for general education. The vocational and professional education has not been developed in the tribal areas. Primary and Secondary educational institutions are rarely able to provide basic training in sciences and mathematics so that some of the students may go on to obtain professional degrees and positions. Since Independence, educational institutions have grown in numbers and spread to practically all corners of the tribal states of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram. However, the very rapidity of increase in the educational institutions has resulted in the dilution of academic standards. Incidentally, this state of affairs also prevails to a great extent, even in the plains of North-Eastern India. Poor primary middle and secondary educational base has resulted in a very drastic decay of educational standards not only at these levels, but also at the higher levels. The teachers themselves are very often not very well acquainted with modern trends in their own subjects. The intelligent student, therefore, feels unfulfilled and the average student is simply unable to cope with the demands of the higher educational system, since he very often gets little encouragement or help from the teachers.

Since education is seen by a vast majority of students as the only road to economic progress the irrelevance of education system is seen by many of the students as a serious problems. While in the college a student aspires to an executive position, he very often knows that he may have to contend with clerical or even manual position in offices. The problem of

educated unemployed youth is special serious in the valley sub-regions. Even in the hills, the tribal young men are beginning to realise that they may be facing long periods of unemployment sooner than they visualise, because of the rapid increase in the number of tribal graduates coming out of colleges.

One of the consequences of slower development in the earlier decades before Independence has been the necessity felt by many of the tribal families to send their children to universities and colleges outside their own sub-regions. This has been done often at tremendous personal sacrifices. The tribal Students in educational towns, such as, Shillong, Guwahati and Dibrugarh face serious problems of accommodation and expensive living, while they do make friends with people from other towns and villages and sometimes regions; this only partially compensates for the economic problems faced by them. The State Governments are, these days, generous enough to give maintenance scholarships to many of the students. These scholarships are, however, not sufficient to support a poor student who may not be able to get much help from his family. Under these circumstances, a poor student may have to seek part-time or full-time employment in any of the institutions.

The content of courses is often seen by the students of little relevance to the needs of the job market. This increases a sense of alienation of the student from his work as a student. Under these circumstances, it is easy for a student to loose interest in his studies and engage in extra-curricular activities detrimental to his objectives and future.

### **VIII. Consumer Cultural and Semi-Colonial Structure of Economic Development**

Modernization in the tribal hinterland has come first in the shape of changing styles of life from "the tribal" modes to the western. This means that a tribal aims to introduce in his house, such consumer items as, sofa-sets arm-chairs, tables,

kerosine stoves, bicycles, motor cycles, radios (of late the Maruti cars) etc. By and large, the tribal families have, in many villages almost completely given up wearing their traditional tribal dresses. The young people wear dresses as modes as one may find in Bombay or Delhi. This type of westernisation has partially been diffused through the touch with Christian missionaries, but has also come into the region through many channels of communications, such as, magazines, cinemas. The material base for this type of cultural development is the spread of money economy. Money comes to tribal families, usually, through various types of Government expenditure both normal revenue and law and order wings of the Government and developmental projects. It is the tribal elite who, having joined the governmental machinery, is the first recipient of the money spent by the Central Government. It is interesting to note here that the major culturally conservative generation of the tribal elite are not sufficiently rooted in the western culture to be able to quickly discern between different western cultural elements perculating down to their younger generation. Their control over their young ones is also decreasing owing to the following two factors; which have been referred to in another context: (a) The young get money grants from the states to carry out their studies; and (b) The older generation is often not able to resist the temptation to give their sons and daughters enough money once they go outside their towns for higher education. When away from the controlling influence of their parents, some of the younger generation fall into anti-social and self-destroying habits, such as drug taking and alcoholism.

Let us now discuss some of the problems arising from rapid cultural change and urbanization in the regions. Some of these problems are being specially felt by the youth of the working class. Increasing pressure of population on land and rapid deterioration of soil conditions in some of the regions of North-Eastern India, has resulted in large population movements. Often, this has resulted in the



migration of a part of the family to the rapidly growing towns within the region. The poor farmer immigrants come to towns to seek employments and are often forced to live under unhygienic slum conditions. Often both husband and wife are required to work in order to make both ends meet. The children of the family under these circumstances, are unable to get proper care and attention and very often fall under evil influences. Drug taking, sexual promiscuity and street violence are some of the evil consequences of unhappy conditions for migrant families.

The matrilineal societies seem to suffer much more from the evil effects of migrations. Because of great autonomy of women in matrilineal societies, such as, Khasi and Jaintias, when a nuclear unit breaks away from its joint family in the village and goes to reside in the town, the chances of the husband-wife unit breaking up are indeed very high. As yet our knowledge of this phenomenon is only superficial, but the empirical fact of larger broken families amongst the Khasis and Jaintias in the towns as compared to the families of other communities may not be disputed. The consequences of broken families is the growth of juvenile delinquencies and emotional disturbance amongst the youth of these families.

The life of the towns is itself so much more complex that it requires a considerable degree of maturity on the part of the parents to manage their families. These families when they are devoid of advice and support from their larger communities often prove incapable of not only training their own children in healthy social living, but in fact, themselves fall a prey to the evils of urban slum life. The attractions for non-productive and non-creative activities is indeed great in the towns. The fiercely competitive existence and constant infusion of delinquent ideas and elements do influence the young migrants. Probably, one of the main significant binding forces for migrant families is their religion. Those families which maintain linkages with their religious communities

are often able to get moral education and spiritual consolation for unhappy material conditions, from the collective ethos of their religious communities. Because of the high levels of aspirations of young people the spiritual solace is sometimes not a sufficient recompense. It is among these young people that one finds individuals who have gone astray.