Social Exclusion and Assertion of Identity in North East India: A Sociological Understanding

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There is no doubt that the last few decades of economic restructuring, heightened migration and global capital mobility whichhave made a predictable collectivity shared life-course, that is less sustainable, eliminated earlier expected career ladder, and made some labour and regions economically expandable. Global integration is accompanied by local exclusion which is observed among various communities today. Regions having trouble adapting to rapid social change lack the necessary networks and social relations to participate actively in larger markets. This article attempts to analyse the forms of exclusion found in Zeliangrong movement of Nagaland and how it operates to exclude those who might threaten the status quo without conscious decisions being taken by those who represent that status quo, or indeed any awareness on their part that they are under threat. This paper explores North East India's contradictory processes of ethno-regional fragmentation and a centralizing nation-building agenda. Ethnic mobilisation remains resilient in the face of repeated efforts at political engineering and nation-building, which is a key issue discussed in this paper.

Key words: Social Exclusion, Identity Assertion, relative deprivation, Emergent socialforce, Infiltration, Terrorism

Introduction

Formulating the background

The process of social exclusion and inclusion is inherently dynamic, taking temporal matters into account. At any time, people may be situated on a multidimensional continuum, moving towards a state of comprehensive, cumulative social rupture. To be sure, at any moment, we can identify individuals or groups that more or less remain in an excluded condition or state reflecting the outcome of a process. As with the poor, the point-in-time excluded are most likely to be those in the idle of a long spell of social exclusion and thus, to have cumulative difficulties, unlike the more numerous people who are touched by short periods of multiple disadvantages and soon rejoin the 'mainstream'. The relationship of exclusion and inclusion in the classic case of 'sociological ambivalence' could be defined in terms of stranger. As Simmel (1950) notes strangers are at once within and outside society. For this reason, social exclusion overlaps with the notion of 'adverse incorporation' or 'differential inclusion'. In a Simmelian 'social distance' perspective, excluded

groups are marginal, not socially isolated. This gives rise to peculiar relations between mainstream and marginals, such as sharing confidences in the belief that outsiders are 'objective ' and that permanent strangers have no consequences for the insiders' social world. Similarly, the poor as social assistance recipients are excluded as a means of reinforcing work ethics among the majority. Thus, the terms of inclusion are adverse, disadvantageous and occasionally insurmountable, but there is some social interaction between groups, so that the social exclusion is nor absolute.

Simmel differentiates the stranger both from the "outsider" who has no specific relation to a group and from the "wanderer" who comes today and leaves tomorrow. The stranger, he says, comes today and stays tomorrow. The stranger is a member of the group in which he lives and participates and yet remains distant from other – "native" – members of the group. In comparison to other forms of social distance and difference (such as class, gender, and even ethnicity), the distance of the stranger has to do with his "origins." The stranger is perceived as extraneous to the group and even though he is in constant relation to other group members, his "distance" is more emphasized than his "nearness." As one subsequent interpreter of the concept puts it, the stranger is perceived as being in the group but not of the group. Simmel's principle of Sociological ambivalence of the stranger and the poor, the same individual may be included and excluded at once. Modern individualism – autonomy, liberty, and social separation rose hand in hand with citizenship and integration in nation-states. In this process, group identities fell by the wayside, excluded from state recognition and function, only to reassert them now during globalisation.

This exclusion, in many cases, leads to identity assertion which in turn causes conflict, sometimes violent, which in many form observed in North East India. Social exclusion leads to crisis at individual level, societal level, national level and international level. Individual self cannot be located within the community which is facing some level of identity crisis. Exclusion is linked to the recognition of social identities, resource allocations and power relations.

Since independence, India witnessed the emergence of number of movements which mobilized the people on ethnic lines. For instance, Naga movement can be seen in the context of crisis of Naga identity and the Mizo movement was the outcome of the neglect of Central and state governments during the famine. Though India adopted liberal democracy with inherent institutional safeguards for the protection of the interest of various communities and groups, extremist tendencies based on ethnicity is taking roots in recent past. In this context, it is pertinent to ask the question as to why extremist trends are developing in a liberal democracy. It is argued that "social exclusion is about the inability of our society to keep all groups and individuals within reach of what we expect as a society . . . or to release their full potentials" (Power and Wilson 2000: 27). The socially excluded is deprived of social recognition, self-respect and social values. The basis of exclusion can be race, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, region, or caste. Each form of exclusion has its nature and manifestation.

Exclusion and identity assertion in North East India:

The literature on ethnicity and exclusion notes that ethnic differences can result in reduced access to and accumulation of assets and goods, and that exclusion can affect the return on those assets in the labour market. This can have important implications for poverty and well-being. Ethnic (as well as racial) exclusion can result from discriminatory institutional rules, as well as social attitudes and practices. This discrimination is particularly problematic when it occurs in public sector organisations, which are responsible for public service provisioning. Creating genuine structures of social inclusion in such contexts is particularly challenging. Cultural and status inequalities arise when certain groups, cultural norms, practices and symbols are given differential treatment or recognition. There are three main aspects of cultural inequality that could be defined as i) recognition of religious practices and observances; ii) language rights and language recognition; and iii) recognition of ethno-cultural practices. Cultural and status inequalities are particularly prone to group mobilisation and violence because of their inherent link with group identity.

Northeast India is marked by ethnicity and extremism for a long time. The assertion of various ethnic identities and the attitude of the state in containing ethnic extremism make the region distinct from the rest of India. It is argued that "Zeliangrong movement claims to ethno-nationalism of the Zeliangs can be interpreted as closely intertwined with issues of institutional and social exclusion based on identity politics" (Saikia 2011: 60). Though after independence the Indian state tried to integrate and assimilate various ethnic communities in the mainstream national identity, the development process generated a feeling of alienation among them. Moreover, development led to unequal distribution of resources across the communities and regions. Thus, both non-economic (subjective consciousness) and economic (material) factors created a sense of exclusion among some of the ethnic communities. It has been argued that rise of ethnicity is influenced by some *necessary* conditions and supplemented by other *sufficient* conditions. Ethnicity cannot easily be evoked if only necessary conditions prevail. The presence of sufficient conditions induces qualitative change in the nature of group mobilisation (Ghosh 2015: 62).

Zeliangrong movement requires acknowledgement of the groups of Zeliangrong within the larger Naga identity and the Naga movement. This requires recollecting the shared beliefs of the Zeliangrong and the Naga at large on common origin. The subscription of Zeliangrong to Naga identity and to Zeliangrong identity in particular is a fact that has impact on the Naga movement and the Zeliangrong homeland movement. Zeliangrong movement for homeland needs to be understood with the movement under the leadership of Jadonang as a background. Various interpretations were given based on strategies employed in the movement under the leadership of Jadonang. However, despite all the varying interpretations, Asoso Yonuo (1982) calling the movement under the leadership of Jadonang as 'Nagas Struggle against the British rule', seems to have wider acceptance which is based on 'identity politics'. This necessitates the understanding of the identity debacles of the Nagas and the Zeliangrong in particular. There is a propensity among writers to give the period from 1927 to 1932 as the time span of Zeliangrong movement.

This period is very crucial in the study of the historical background of Zeliangrong movement. This is so because it saw the beginning of the movement under the leadership of Jadonang and the death of Jadonang in 1931. Several activities of preparations and propaganda against the British were also spread during this period. Repression from the side of the British was also carried out ferociously in this period. However, it must be borne in mind that the movement did not die with the death of the first leader in 1931. The movement that aspired freedom for the Makam or Nagas continued against the British vigorously under the leadership of a young girl, Gaidinliu. The leaders of the movement religiously endeavoured for unity emphasising on the belief of common origin of the Nagas.

Unity was perceived as a crucial element in strengthening the fractured bond of relation among the Nagas affected by headhunting. Thus, as pointed out by T.K.Oommen (2010), dissatisfaction followed by deprivation was the condition for the engendering of a movement. It is not rare to find causes of social tensions within the society (Wilson 1973). The movement under Jadonang had several opponents. The Kukis and the British were often presented as the main enemies. Namthiubuiyang Pamei stated that "Zeliangrong people…suffered the most in the hands of the British imperialist, the Meitei *rajas* and later, in the hands of the Kukis who connived with the colonial powers. They were even harassed by their Naga brothers" (2006: 23). Analysis of the social conditions even before the arrival of the Kukis and the British also shows that there were several social problems within Zeliangrong society and the Nagas at large. There is a long history of incursion of outsiders, emigration and resettlement in North East. Asoso Yonuo (1982) talked about the migration of the Kukis and settlement in lands already settled by other groups. He termed the migration of the Kukis as barbarous migration. The Kukis occupied the land by indiscriminately killing the Zeliangrong people with the help of the British and the Meitei kings and thereby excluding them from their land and forest resources. Kukis and Nepalese were settled by the Meitei kings "to form a human settlement buffer against raids by various Naga hill tribes" (Patel 1994: 1331). The invasion by the Kukis led seize of "well permanently settled villages" of the Nagas (Zehol 1998: 70). According to Gangmumei Kamei (2004), the loss of land due to Kuki annexation of Zeliangrong lands was the real cause of the Kuki-Zeliangrong tension.

The Zeliangrong people were also aggrieved by the act of the British and the Meitei King, Gambhir Singh,(Raja Gambhir Singh, was a ruler of the Manipur Kingdom. He was a son of Chingthang Khomba) who in 1833 exhibited Meitei oppressive colonial attitude by bifurcating 'the land of the Nagas' between Manipur and Assam with 'River Jiri' as the boundary (Pamei 2006). Namthiubuiyang Pamei further stated that "this action infused collective resistance against the intruders" (Pamei 2006: 23) who were the Meitei and the British. This also points out that the Zeliangrong people never considered the Meitei Kings as their rulers as they were viewed as 'intruders'. Moreover, Jadonang's statement clearly pointed out who were the foreigners and not the rulers of Zeliangrong. The causal analysis of movement under Jadonang would need covering several factors. Ranging from chaos in the earlier society represented by belief systems that later came to be recognised as superstitions, the Zeliangrong people were dissatisfied with their state of existence. In fact, not just the Zeliangrong, but the Makam or Nagas as a whole lived in tense relation with other villagers

which Sanjib Baruah called "an institutionalized form of inter village warfare" (2010: 247) that did not give their interaction a characteristic of a modern state or even a kingdom as experienced in the valley in those days. The pang of social pressures resulting from their belief systems marked by elaborate and expensive rituals was aggravated when they faced oppressive forces of the British, the Kukis and the missionaries who deprived them of their right of self-determination over their land, resources and culture. This paved the way for a collective action primarily against the intangible force of baseless beliefs and then visible forces, the British and the Kukis.

Although exclusion is multidimensional, the causal relations among dimensions of disadvantage may run in any directions, reinforcing or cushioning the impact of one another. Excluded from land and resources, enduring poverty can give rise to dissatisfaction: in turn, this can interrupt social relations. These may give rise to, or be caused by poverty, ill health, minority group status, or residence in an isolated area. Moreover, social exclusion and inclusion are polysemic terms whose definitions and connotations are context dependent. Social and cultural cleavages obviously vary across countries. Not only do dominant cultures and institutions give rise to socially enforced boundaries that distinguish amongst insider and outsider groups and individuals, but they also impart different meanings to isolation and belonging. For example, living alone may be construed as a disadvantage in societies where family solidarity is socially, culturally, and economically important, but an indicator of independence, self-sufficiency, and privilege in individualistic societies. Thus, social exclusion is a structural process of social isolation, of stripping away multiple dimensions of social involvement as it was observed in case of Zeliangrong movement.

Religion-related exclusion has witnessed in North East in two forms. The first is the denial of the right to practise one's religion freely or at least equally. We find these two factors as diverse interpretations of the movement under the leadership of Jadonang and Rani Gaidinliu. Identity and religion have been the two main elements that have been used to describe the movements under the two leaders. Taking into account the relation between spread of Christianity and the effort of Jadonang to protect the belief system of their forefathers, Lal Dena viewed the movement as "partly anti-Christian" (1988: 102). The reason offered by Lal Dena for calling it 'partly anti-Christian' was because attempts were made by "Jadonang and his followers" to revive their "traditional religion" that had been threatened by the coming of Christianity (1988: 102).

Writing about the 'Adivasi *Movements in the North-East'*, Robert Eric Frykenberg said that the Adivasis "had never been conquered or regularly controlled by military or political forces" (2010: 420). According to Kaka D. Iralu, the Nagas never intruded into Meitei territory to occupy their land. He further stated that there were instances where Meitei were defeated and their villages burnt by the Nagas. But that does not mean that the Meitei have been conquered and their territory became a part of the Nagas. Thus, in the context of Khonoma village being attacked and the villagers forced to leave the village while asking other Nagas to come and settle at Khonoma by the British (Mackenzie 2011), Sanjib Baruah stated that the refusal of other Nagas to settle in empty Khonoma village was to show solidarity to the Angamis of Khonoma (2010). The Nagas raided and took the spoils of wars, but not the lands of any other group. Lands were not

considered something to be occupied or owned. Speaking in the context of the Naga territories confiscated by the Meitei, Kaka D. Iralu said, 'It becomes a territory, a conquered territory when an administration is set up and a rule is imposed. This led to the second phase of exclusion of people from the wider legal, economic and political rights available more generally on the grounds of their religion or religious identity. An additional important dimension is the exclusion by a religious group of its own members from certain religious practices. In North-East India, cultural differences and incongruity sharpened the ethnic boundaries and generated cleavages along ethnic conceit, leading to inter-ethnic discord. Ethnic unrest in northeast is as old as the country's independence. Ghosh (2003) has shown that the North-Eastern tribes have a long tradition of protest and insurgency. The hilly terrain, international border, and the geographical concentration of the tribes and the tribal culture provided an easy base for the 'hit and run' policy followed in inter-tribal warfare. The Indian independence along with the partition, influx of émigrés, suspected fear of linguistic, cultural subjugation, economic negligence, and failure to value approaching political institutions variously infused in the minds of the ethnic communities a 'sense of narcissistic self-awareness'. The specter of social exclusion, minority syndrome and ethnic rivalry remained the driving force for protests demanding autonomy in the shape of homeland/ state/ or autonomous district council, within constitutional framework. Some of the movements followed the violent paths. While the former opted for constitutional path, the later sought an extra-constitutional / secessionist ideational path. Ever increasing evidences, however, now indicate that most of the militant outfits in North-East have now transformed themselves into terrorist entities, empty of their original objectives and ideology. Matthew Kamei (2015) stated that the early part of Zeliangrong movement may be termed as indigenous movement. However, considering the nature of the movement in the later part where homeland turned out to be the objective, the movement may be looked at as a tribal movement of identity.

Exclusion and relative deprivation:

The historic task of nation building has remained incomplete in case of India. There was no cultural cementation of the myriad of sub-nationalities and ethnic groups and tribes in India and instead of a structure growing from the grass root level, a mosaic was superimposed. In the euphoria of having attained political independence, these loopholes were temporarily repressed but gradually the hydra headed monster began to raise its head. As a result, neither a national culture was possible in reality, nor a 'cultural nationalism'. It resulted in discontent, dissention and disapproval among various groups, which taught them that the dominating 'center' was swallowing up their culture and tradition.

Apart from freeing the people from the darkness of superstition, internal reformations within the Zeliangrong, they were also to counter the attack of the Christians on their belief systems. Speaking of Zeliangrong community before the coming of Christianity, Ramkhun Pamei stated that they were "bounded and blinded by all kinds of superstitions and practices" (1996: 43). Headhunting and conflict within Naga groups also influenced Jadonang to mobilise for collective action by the Nagas. The conflict between the Angamis and the Zeliangrong was severe. It is said

that "the warlike Angami Nagas, who had come to power since the Naga migration, raided the Zemi constantly and exacted tribute" (Bower 1950: 44). Rev. Namnethon Palmei (2001) of Tamenglong also stated that a Zeme village, Phaolong, under Taosem sub-division of Tamenglong district was once occupied by the Angami. However, the brave men killed some of the Angamis and while some fled. According to one of the Angami interviewees, the arrogance of Khonoma was the origin of the conflict between the Angamis and the Zeliangrong. It was not for protection of Angami people or villages. The attack by the Angamis against the Zeme was termed by the interviewee as 'intrusion'.

Ethnicity in North East India entails a subjective belief in common ancestry. A nation may continue to be in its ancestral or adopted homeland and yet it may be ethnified by the colonising or native dominant collectivity. That is, the link between territory and culture should not be viewed merely as a physical phenomenon. Ethnification also occurs when a state attempts to 'integrate' and homogenise the different nations in its territory into a common people. If those who migrate to alien lands are denied basic human and citizenship rights even when they become eligible for them, they are ethnified in that they are treated as strangers and outsiders. Social exclusion, in many cases, leads to identity assertion which in turn causes conflict, sometimes violent. Identity crisis, in turn, problematised political boundary and national imagination of the nation state. It is viewed that "ethnicity or ethnic identity also involves, in addition to subjective self-consciousness, a claim to status and recognition, either as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups" (Brass 1991: 19). The civic nationalism championed by modern nation state has bearing on the emergence of ethnic cleavages in a multicultural society. It is argued that "although not always as conflict prone as ethnic nationalism, civic nationalism may be discriminatory as well, if only in the sense that it does not acknowledge ethnic differences and thus potentially deprives members of ethnic communities other than a country's dominant group from opportunities to preserve, express, and develop their distinct identities" (Wolf 2006: 32).

The availability and access to social forces can be a crucial influence on the economic entitlements that people are particularly able to secure. Lack of basic necessities should be the focal point of analysis, rather than the processes that lead to exclusion from access. A similar point applies to analysis of relative poverty: though the poverty line is defined depending on the context of a particular society, analyses of relative poverty do not focus on the social processes responsible for deprivation.

Of course, most poverty analyses do not only count the poor, but studies the 'correlates' of poverty: characteristics like education, labour market status, gender, location etc. that are correlated with poverty status. This brings us closer to a multidimensional notion of social exclusion, though an essential difference remains in terms of the central unit of poverty. This shows light on whether situation of exclusion are permanent, often showing ore mobility than usually expected but like other poverty assessment is rooted in what (Silver 1994) describes as the liberal specialization paradigm.

The notion of 'relative deprivation' is more closely related to a concept of social exclusion, and it is often noted that rising inequality in various countries has contributed to the popularity of the notion of social exclusion. Inequality again can be measured in terms of constraints on individual choice. There might be unwanted exclusion due to lack of affordability or to non-financial obstacles, such as poor transport, fear of crime, child care needs, tie stress, physical barriers, or cultural inappropriateness. Again, inclusion requires more than just access to the labour market. Work is not enough to explain inclusion, for immigrants to be included success-fully into society, they need to feel secure, and to feel that their contribution over time is valued (Sen 2000). We often observe that the concept inclusion in most often discussed in terms of inclusion in labour market and civic citizenship, but it neglects cultural integration and political participation. We often analyse 'inclusion' with a thin definition of citizenship (legal formalities like the existence of laws and policies) more than a thick or substantive conception, assessing whether those policies are effective in prodding communities to include and accept immigrants in social life. Welfare states helped to institutionalize a common life-course among citizens of the same country, regimenting school, work, family formation, retirement and other social activities into a common normative sequence. This process also led to social exclusion of those whose lives did not conform to expectation. Single mothers and early retirees appear to be 'out of sync'. However as new social risks arise, the life course may change too. It is increasingly unconvincing to assume that Indians have a single trajectory in family life, as individuals move through any families and household formations or live alone over tie. As generations replace one another, period or cohort effects on life courses are evident. Today workers may change careers in mid-life more frequently moving across firms and occupations. As households and work change, welfare states come under pressure to adapt more flexibly to disparate individual lifer life course, using citizenship rather than employment as a basis for social rights. In the north east, one also notices a lot of turbulence centering round the question of language. There is a cultural political behind most language policies and state languages are imposed, instead of being adopted through a mutual agreement. A language cannot be imposed as a state language, doing away with all other languages especially in an era where people from other linguistic communities reside. A cultural atmosphere needs to be generated whereby people from other linguistic groups feel a natural urge to learn the state language for all practical purposes. Imposition is no substitute for a cultural groundwork and hence cannot be equated with a sense of victory. The various conflicts and contradictions which are inherent in the Constitution of India as a nation, has rendered it extremely problematic to have anything as national culture. In 1972 the Bodo led Plains Tribes Council of Assam (PTCA) complained that the tribes of plains have been 'uprooted in a systematic and planned way from their own soil 'and that the 'step motherly' treatment of the administration, dominated by the Assamese Speaking people has reduced them as 'second class citizens'• of the state. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha (established in 1952) and PTCA however, ultimately succeeded in making the Bodo Language the medium of instruction (up to the secondary level).

The Zeliangrong movement grew as a religious-cultural movement, originally against the spread of Christianity, but it assumed as an anti-colonial political overtone. It actually came out to be the only tribal movement of northeast which maintained links with the national freedom struggle (Das 1989). The Zeliangrong People's Conference (ZPC), demanded the recognition of ethnic nomenclature 'Zeliangrong', an acronym (Ze-Liang- Rong), who are spread in contiguous areas of Manipur, Nagaland and Assam. In 1905, when the spread of the Christianity was widely felt in Meghalaya, the Seng Khasi organization took upon itself the responsibility of defending the Khasi religion. The members of the association called themselves the 'Khasi Khasis' in order to distinguish themselves from those 'Khasis' who had adopted Christianity. Having initiated the process of revivalism and reformation of the Khasi religion, the Seng Khasi encouraged the people to abide by the matrilineal system of descent, to respect the kith and kin on the maternal and paternal side, to believe in God, and to serve God through service of humankind.

On the eve of independence of India, several ethnic groups had variously made effective use of the factors of ethnicity and regionalism as basis of ethnic rage, and democratic struggle for self-rule, greater autonomy and militant actions. Other factors such as frontier location, development process, rise of Christianity and democratic process, partition of country, influx of 'infiltrators' and minority syndrome variously led to claims of separatism among the communities. The more assertive tribes who consistently rebelled against their incorporation within the new Indian nation-state such as the Nagas and Mizos ultimately succeeded in attaining status of 'statehood' and greater autonomy. Thereby, they also succeeded in changing their minority status to that of a majority status in respective hilly states. Even after the formation of Nagaland, however, the Naga movement had not died, as A.Z Phizo, who had originally given the call for a ' long Naga struggle' in 1953, continued to occupy centre-stage later also (Das 1982, 1994, 2004, 2007). The Naga movement, in which both 'ethnicity' and 'extreme nationalism' were used as operational strategies, is regarded as the mother of all movements in northeast India. Most of the movements were non-violent in earlier stages, but gradually assumed severe militant nature. In the seven states of the North-East India reportedly more than 30 'insurgent' groups operated, carrying on protracted armed-struggle. Among them the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM, NSCN-K) and the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) remained prominent ones. Even though some scholars have tried to apply typology of class-formation to describe the ethnic conflict in the region, it may be argued that there are innumerable ethnic regional factors but-tressed by typical tribal features, which seem to influence the escalation of unrest.

In reality there is strong cultural resistance to the domination of a perceived 'Indian Culture', which in its dominant construction is an accommodative and synthesizing cultural space comprising of varieties. It fails to assure minorities and smaller marginal cultural group a safe and fair treatment. Moreover in the perception of such small cultural groups of North East India, the space of 'Indian culture' does not provide accommodation to their distinct cultural identities; rather it poses a homogenized space with dominant-value systems. This penetrates deep down

into the psyche of the small and marginal cultural groups who exhibit reluctance and withdrawal from such an accommodation which they perceive to be a process of disorientation. The images projected in the dominant media constitute a brand of popular culture, which does not have any root in social realities, the community life of various cultural groups. Construction of such a refined cultural space accompanied with propagation of symbol of dominant cultural groups has led to marginalisation of smaller groups and they have become 'resistant' to such cultural domi-nation. But such resistances are articulated through a certain mode of aversion and substitution

Exclusion and emerging social forces:

In the context of North Eastern society, the sense of social exclusion was articulated with the emergence of new social forces, educated elite, students and youth groups, etc. The reasons for the emergence of social forces in the northeast include: the impact of Christianity on the socio-cultural life of the people, spread of education, etc. Oommen identified three major agents of change among the tribes of northeast India, the state, the civil society (of which the Church is the major element) and the market forces (Oommen 2009: 10). While endorsing this view in a different context, Stefan Wolf states that neither ethnicity nor nationalism in itself causes ethnic conflict and, however, when state or government ignore the legitimate political, social, and economic grievances of disadvantaged ethnic groups contribute to ethnic conflict (Wolf 2006: 5). In some states in the region, the interests of tribal communities are protected by invoking Inner Line Permit (for instance, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram) and special provisions. The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution gives special status to the traditional institutions and makes provisions for the creation of autonomous district coun-cils. In spite of all these accommodations, the tribal communities are confronting with multiple kinds of exclusion. Moreover, all these institutional mechanisms proved to be futile when the State and its institutions indulge in human rights violations. The Naga movement first began in 1947 as a peaceful movement; and when the Indian state undertook counter insurgency activi-ties, it took a violent turn affecting the life and property of the individual. When the state with its all powerful authority constructs nation and wider national identity it often meets with a problem. It is argued that "the governmental machinery created only a top down administra-tion within which the local self-governance and traditional institutions of various tribes could retain a nominal presence. Rather it gave rise to intense conflict between traditional institu-tions and state government leading to an unaccountable condition of development" (Ahmed and Biswas 2004: 5).

The large inventory provided above highlights the severity of the ethnic dissent prevalent in the region. Amongst the above-mentioned outfits, some are non-operational; some are actually active, and some are no more as active as they used to be. It is amazing to note that at one point, more than 120 militant groups operated in India's northeast. Their demands ranged from autonomy to outright secession. In recent years, the Indian state has had considerable success in achieving stability in the region, using tactics from negotiations to military operations to root out militants.

Conclusion:

In North East India, social exclusion and ethnicity reinforce each other in many contexts. The prevailing exclusionary tendencies show that most of the institutional means of accommodation such as granting autonomy to particular ethnic groups in a particular region and even the formation of separate state for some communities would not yield desired results. The exclusionary tendencies created by both the state and the dominant community lead to the ethnic assertion of specific ethnic communities. However, such exclusionary practices cannot be tackled by mobilization of the ethnic community.

Further, the creation of smaller territorial units acceding to the demands of the dominant ethnic community in a region often threaten the existence and survival of numerically less ethnic communities as the positions and jobs and resources were monopolized the dominant ethnic group. The Hmar problem in Mizoram and the Garos disadvantageous positions in accessing resources and positions in Meghalaya are such examples forcing them to arouse ethnic feeling and violent mobilization.

Thus, exclusion is multi-dimensional. However, which dimensions are relevant and how they are related vary across time and space. Most frequently, as discussed above, the dimensions include both economic and social aspects of disadvantages. But the economic dimensions need not refer only to monetary poverty or insufficient income: we have to also consider exclusion from land, credit, and other assets, food and other consumption goods, and of course, the labour market. It should also incorporate regional, gender, and ethnic/cultural variation, and take notice of the spatial setting.

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