NATIONALISM AND ETHNICITY : A CASE STUDY OF MIZORAM

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled 'NATIONALISM AND ETHNICITY : A CASE STUDY OF MIZORAM' submitted by INDRA MALLO to the CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS, SCHOOL OF SCIENCES (CSSS/SSS), JNU, NEW DELHI, is her original work and has not been submitted for an award of any degree to this or any other University. We recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation and consideration for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M.Phil) of this university

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nationalism and ethnicity are both modern phenomena affecting people with far reaching consequences. In India the relationship between the two is very important for understanding the development of Indian national society particularly with regard to the North-East region. On the face of it nationalism and ethnicity appear incompatible .While nationalism revolves around the singular idea of patriotism towards the nation-state above all other obligations in society, the ethos of ethnicity revolves around the particular, highlighting the various cultural distinctions that mark the group from the rest of the population. Thus for any nation-state, ethnicity is a phenomenon to beware of if we adhere to the clinical idea of the homogenous nation-state. But in case of India, the problem acquires unique dimensions. India is historically a civilisation which has witnessed 'melting pot' cultural processes across race, religion, language, and geography. But the process was not uniform throughout the length and breadth of the subcontinent. Rather, they followed the principle of a radiating circle of influence from the central seats of power of the various dynasties, more recently Mughal Delhi. Thus permutation and combination of ideas and forms have resulted in a

colourful mosaic of Indian culture. There are threads of unity combining the whole together to which authors like Bernard Cohn have referred to. Like, the network of pilgrimage centres throughout the sub-continent. Others like Mckim Marriott have analysed the cultural process of universalization and parochialization of cultural festivals which have integrated the sub-continent's society. But these theoretical contributions have failed to throw light on the history and nature of tribal societies in the remote hills of the North-East region. However, by all means it is clear that this region shared a tenuous link with mainstream Indian Civilisation; the last frontier of Hindu tradition in the North-East being represented by Assam. The region was more accurately a zone of transition between different civilisations i.e., the Indian and the South-East Asian. Historically the Kingdom of Manipur is the best example of this situation. While it's rulers embraced Hinduism and its attendant cultural forms, yet the population shared more commonality with it's South-East Asian neighbours in terms of race, language and custom and through inter-marriage. Besides culturally, economically too the region was a zone of transition. But this was not a developed commerce due to the physical barriers posed by the topography and climate, and the unfamiliar tribes that inhabited the hills. This region has historically been marginal to mainstream India, and the hill people of the region were at a very low level of

development at the time of independence. But since independence it has been rocked with insurgency movements against the Indian state. First the Nagas, then the Mizos, and Manipuris, and later the ULFA in Assam. I have specifically chosen Mizoram for this study as it has witnessed a long history, from insurgency to integration as part of the Indian nation- state. In other words, there are no more secessionist movements in Mizoram, and the people themselves have accepted the fact that they are a part of India.

The secondary data regarding Indian nationalism and ethnicity are available, but rarely one with in depth theoretical basis on ethnicity and nationalism in the North- East. Probably because this topic is recent to academic debate and accord in the region. After all, for any true progress in intellectual ideology the initiative must come from people of the region. The books available on Mizoram show that indigenous authors have contributed valuably to recording social events. Like, Lalchunghnunga's thesis on Mizo regionalism, and C. Nunthara's empirical analysis of the impact on Mizo society due to re- grouping of villages under the anti insurgency operations (1967-70). Besides presenting the indigenous view point sensitively, it is also guided by the need to orient research to social relevance. In his analysis of relations between the hill tribals of North East with the non tribal population , Nunthara uses

categories of in-group, out -group, and the concept of boundary maintenance of ethnic groups as enunciated by F. Barth. Racial characteristics as well as spontaneous or organised enmity mark the features of boundary maintenance of ethnic groups. I agree with Nunthara that this concept that Barth developed in due course of his field study of Pathans, is applicable in case of the hill tribes of North East including Mizoram. The ethnic feeling is acute in the tribal life and may be politicised too. On the other hand, this is what Roy Burman calls the closed nature of tribal group ethnicity. The efforts to resist assimilation by the tribals in the North- East particularly by those who have embraced Christianity are often regarded with disfavour by the majority group. Therefore, sensitivity to cultural context is essential to strengthen our pledge to a plural society in India. Regarding the relation of the North-East region vis a vis the centre, most authors adopt the centre-periphery model which is also condemned at times as unequal in nature. For an effective centre-periphery network, structural linkages like increased participation are essential. These foster the growth of a moral community or a nation society, so essential for the viability of any nation - state. In case of perceived ineffectiveness of such processes, and the acute awareness of ethnicity stressing on differences, there is a widespread feeling of proto- nationalism in the region i.e.., that they are a

different people who should have a nation-state of their own but who haven't achieved it yet. Besides this, there is also 'infra-nationalism' i.e.., mobilisation spearheaded by local intelligentsia to promote group interest as a whole in the national polity. With the consolidation of the territorial integrity of India, 'infra- nationalism' or sub-nationalism, or regionalism has mostly taken over from proto-nationalism as such.

In trying to understand the relation between ethnicity and nationalism, I have tried to outline certain broad processes but these appear inadequate without a phenomenological perspective, or a field study. This is particularly with regard to change in kinship practices brought about by Christianity among the Mizos, and the actual play out of inter ethnic relations between Mizos and non-Mizos. As for gaining a valid picture of Mizo society, I have used other social institutions like the village, and changes witnessed in it under the impact of insurgency. The village is a valid unit of study to understand rural and therefore the majority of Mizo society as in rest of India. However this itself doesn't give the whole picture. Urban Mizoram is a fast growing social fact where kinship, religion, and other utilitarian values based on a materialistic world view have increasingly caught hold of popular imagination. For a comprehensive understanding, both rural and urban sectors have to be

incorporated in the study. As regards the Mizo identity and it's relationship with village as a unit, more than the village itself, it is the consciousness of kind of being a Mizo i.e.., sharing a history of their migration, tracing common ancestry, language, kinship, and social norms, that is more significant for determining who is a Mizo. However despite such ground facts, the carving out of Mizoram and the exclusion of the other Mizos in Burma, etc., is due to the historical process of assimilation under the Sailo chiefs, and later, the annexation of the Mizo hills by British colonial authorities. The frameworks on nationalism emphasise it's artificial nature i.e.., constructed, like B. Anderson's concept of imagined communities, or, Y. Singh's reference to Zeldin's thesis on French nationalism, how it was found in a nation wide survey that the majority at that point did not know whether they were French or not. Thus, though we may have a state, we need to make citizens to substantiate it. So far in India we have achieved it though writers about the North- East have often pointed to the lack of 'emotional integration' with the country. In other words, a moral community feeling. This as one indigenous author from the region, B. Pakem, has said will be if only the people of the North- East feel that the centre is convincingly for them in all spheres of life. Apparently such is not the situation due to a host of reasons. The debate on nationalism in the North-East is also a

debate on the search for identity rooted in tradition or antiquity. Catapulted into the modern age through contact with colonialism, the tribal unrest in the region is an attempt to produce an ideology, a tradition of themselves which will, fit the modernisation programme of material development, individual mobility, instrumental rationality and impersonal relationships of systems. And ethnicity is the most primary experience for the majority, both while interacting with other people, and while conducting themselves within their own social customs patterned along lineage, moiety, or clan memberships of kin groups. Ethnicity acts to hold them together yet at the same time reap benefits on the modernisation front through control over resources and access to economic opportunities of higher income. Undoubtedly, government policies like positive discrimination have heightened the sense of tribal distinctions and therefore encouraged ethnicity. But such ethnicity has also been the response to encroachment on traditional land and resources, and the perceived threat of cultural assimilation by the dominant majority. Hence to dismiss ethnicity in the North-East as a middle class phenomenon for vested interests alone is an insensitive position. When contrasted with mainland India, the accent is mostly on collective identity based on ethnicity even though within the various tribal groups, vested interests and corruption play a major role.

In considering the situation of North-East, we also need to understand the differences between jati or caste society, and the tribal society. Authors like Mandelbaum have focussed on the nature of inter personal relationships to highlight the differences and similarities between jati and tribal society. Kinship rules order relationships in tribal society. They encompass an ethos of equality among members based on kin relationship. Hence subordination is minimised unlike in caste society where an organic system of interdependence marks the system. Like, the jajmani system of patrons and service giving castes across different levels of the varna system. Values of the two social structures also differ. For instance, in case of accumulating wealth, it does not hold a high priority in tribe society unlike in jati society. This is related to psychological factors like more inclination on the part of the tribe to engage in immediate gratification of wants and desires, not necessarily sexual, with the philosophy of enjoying life rather than resorting to self discipline for long term ends. This psychological factor has been connected with religious values. While jati society has clear transcendental values laid out for the twice- born caste, these transcendental values are not the primary concern among the tribes. Life on earth is more important than life after death. It might not be coincidental that animistic belief often does not have a Heaven or Hell for the soul to go to, but only a land or village of the dead where life

after death continues as in this world. Further, while tribal society expects a homogenous character of society, jati society expect villages to be culturally heterogeneous. However, both types of society expect each entity to be endogamous. Our discussion so far has been limited to certain broad generalisations only which may be simplistic and hence of not much help. Nevertheless, such observations are important as in practical terms these tend towards a lack of intersubjectivity and hence mistrust and lack of understanding which more often than not leads to hostility or conflict in inter-group relations.

Ethnicity and nationalism in the North-East, Mizoram included, deals with issues of hegemony in civil society in the Gramscian sense. Gramsci distinguishes between hegemony due to coercion marked by a system of rewards and punishment, and a hegemony exercised through intellectual leadership permeating social norms and colouring the world view of people. While we can equate hegemony by virtue of coercion with the state, the hegemony exercise over society is the more important issue from the point of view of emancipation. For the North-East, the second kind of hegemony is significant. Rather than rejecting the dominant Hindu tradition the movement towards a new world view or 'hegemony' discernible among the tribes is the expression of their quest for identity. There are many examples from outside the North-East region too, of this movement, like "Santhalisation" i.e. freedom from

caste system and an independent ethnic status(Gautam, quoted in Roy Burman, Tribes in Perspective,1994;pp.67). Even the Dalit movement in India may be regarded as attempts to carve out an independent ideology from the caste system by the erstwhile depressed caste. But such ethic identity movements in the North-East tribal region acquire a qualitative difference due to historical reasons—geographical isolation, non-land alienation unlike in Central India, negligible influence of caste system and subsequent conversion to Christianity. Besides differences in the social structure of the tribes from mainland India have contributed to the growth of an acute awareness of their own ethnicity.

There are three main chapters in this study. In the first chapter we will concentrate upon theories of nationalism, the legal and constitutional integration of the North-East, and it's implications for Indian nationalism. From here our next chapter will focus on Mizoram, it's history and social structure to gain a close to empirical understanding. And the third chapter will focus on ethnicity and nationalism, and Mizo insurgency and it's relation with ethnicity. The last chapter is the conclusion from this study.

CHAPTER II

NATIONALISM

The subject of nations and nationalism has engaged both scholars and lay persons alike. It's continuing hold on people's attention rests on the fact that ultimately it is a question of self and identify. The nation state rests on the basic state structure. But it's loyalty is derived through shared culture . In other words, the social identity of the individual and the group. For multicultural India such negotiation of national identity is a continuous attempt at a balance between the primordial loyalties of caste, tribe, and region, and the impulse, towards building a nation through citizenship.[1]

In this chapter, we will discuss theories of nationalism, particularly Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and Eric Hobsbaum. We will also discuss the nature of Indian nationalism briefly, before charting out the integration process (legal and constitutional) of the North- East region with mainland India. Finally, we may draw some conclusion about nationalism in the context of the North East region and Mizoram in particular .

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[1] Clifford Geertz : Old Societies and New States. The Free Press, Glencoe, 1963.

Nations and nationalism are forged identities. They build on raw materials like shared historical experiences, common language, etc., within the given political boundaries of the state. Historically, the central force of nationalism is the idea of emancipation or freedom.[2] For eighteenth century Europe, it signalled the end of monarchy and the feudal order. More significantly it introduced the revolutionary idea that wielders of political authority are not above the common man. It introduced the concept of people's sovereignty and hence, the accountability of those in power to the people at large. In the areas under colonial subjugation, nationalism was emancipatory in the context of anti-imperialist freedom movement, and the vision of a socially just future, like in India's freedom struggle.

THEORIES OF NATIONALISM :

1. *Ernest Gellner* : According to Gellner, nationalism is a political principle based on congruence between culture and power[3]. It is a theory of political legitimacy which requires that cultural boundaries coincide with political boundary. For Gellner nations and nationalism are modern constructs which can be discussed only in the context of the industrial age marked by rationality,

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[2]Hobsbaum, E. J. : Nations and Nationalism Since 1780. Cambridge University Press, 1990

[3] Gellner, E. : Nations and Nationalism, Basil Blackwell, 1983.

efficiency, and the spirit of analysis. Gellner describes the features of a nation as, (i) shared culture in the sense of a system of ideas, signs, and associations and ways of behaving and communicating, ii)recognizing each other as belonging to the same nation. The nation is maintained by the state which alone has the monopoly of coercion over the people.

For Gellner, the critical absence of a 'high culture' is the reason for non-emergence of nationalism in 'pre-modern' traditions like that of Islam and the Confucian tradition. This high culture consists of 'the employability, dignity, security, self respect of the individual based on their education within the limits of a culture sanctioned by the state. This extensive educational structure can only be maintained by the state. Thus, there is an imperative overlap between education, culture, and the state. This in turn engenders nationalism as men are politically united only with those with whom they share a common culture. Social conditions in turn ensure that this is the only nation they identify with. The state's policy is to popularise this standardisation of education or culture. This engenders citizens and nationalism.

Three things crucial to Gellner's nationalism are, access to power, education, and ethnic division. Their various combinations are listed as four possible nations. (i)Power holders only have access to

education and high culture, (ii) classical liberal western nationalism both power holders and laymen have access to education, (iii) only non power-holders have access to high culture. For eg., diaspora nationalism of Jewish variety, (iv) where neither group enjoys access leading to rural life (v) agrarian society - where power holders alone have access to education or high culture. Gellner's own concept of nationalism subscribes to the second possibility i.e. classical liberal Western nationalism . Gellner's critics point out that he doesn't give any precise time when the transition from agrarian to industrial age took place[4]. Secondly, Asian forms of nationalism are projected as a kind of delayed repetition of western nationalism[5]. According to Partha Chatterjee, Gellner is advocating a historical determinism which undermines any autonomous and creative anti-colonial Third World ideology, which are context and culture specific. Like the nationalist ideologies of Mahatma Gandhi, J. Nehru, and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhya[6].

Benedict Anderson criticises Gellner's assumption that there are true communities which can be contrasted to fabricated ones, like the nation. Rather, Anderson believes that no community exists beyond the face to face interaction. All communities bigger

[4] Tonnesson, S. & Antlov :Asian Forms Of The Nation, Curzon Press, 1996.
[5] Ibid.., pp.5.
[6] Chatterjee, P. : Nationalist Thought & The Colonial World . OUP, 1986.

than that are imagined[7]. Both Partha Chatterjee and Tonneson and Antlov point out that Gellner has overlooked the impact of colonialism on Asian and African nationalism. The latter also point out that Gellner's identification of education with industrial society makes him unable to account for the influence of Western style teaching on a largely un-industrialised country like India under the colonial rule, and the subsequent rise of native nationalism. Having discussed Gellner's concept of nationalism we now discuss Benedict Anderson's idea of nation and nationalism.

2. *Benedict Anderson*[8] : According to him nationalism is a cultural artefact created towards the end of the eighteenth century in Europe. Once created these became' modular' in character i.e., capable of being 'transformed, transplanted' and merged with different combination of ideologies. The nation is an imagined political community. It is imagined as limited and sovereign. It is a deep horizontal comradeship cutting across all divisions. This consciousness was preceded by change in the concepts of time and space. Like, the dominance of linear history over cosmology, advances in logical scientific thought and technology, and print capitalism. These

[7] Anderson, B. : Imagined Communities, Verso. 1991

[8] Ibid..,

developments introduced simultaneity of events. More importantly they helped build solidarities through shared communication.

Anderson distinguishes three kinds of nationalism - (i) Creole - in the Americas, (ii) linguistic or Vernacular - Europe and (iii) official nationalism. In the context of ex-colonial countries, Anderson feels that the native intelligentsia played a crucial role in spreading nationalist consciousness. Their bilingualism, and access to western model of nationalism, according to Anderson facilitated their efforts in mobilising nationalism.

Anderson feels that the deep sentiments attached to nationalism give it an imperative force. This is because, like the family, the nation is also interest- less i.e., they appear as non-instrumental entities vis a vis the individual. They are also natural i.e. beyond choice and hence primordial.

Anderson can be criticized on the same ground as Gellner, that he ignores the impact of local culture on non-European nationalism. He also explicitly lays down that other (than Western) nationalism are only a replay of the original model of western nationalism. However, as Prof. Y. Singh[9] has pointed out, in all conceptions about nationalism, the assumption of modernization is implicit. But this cannot be logically stretched to mean western

[9] Singh ,Y. : 'Social Processes and Dimensions of Indian Nationalism ' , I. . P .Desai Memorial Lecture :3, Centre for Social Studies , Surat , 1988 .

nationalism as it goes against the grain of national self determination in the non-Western world.

Gellner's thesis of high culture and subsequent state efforts to standardise and popularise it goes along with his Euro-centric model of nation-state as one culture, one state. This is close to the heart of those who espouse the policy of assimilation in the nation building process in India. On the other hand at the international level too Gellner asserts that homogenisation or standardisation shall take place owing to the spread of a common economic capitalism. However, these uniform meaning categories will be negotiated through different cultural forms. My point is that, that which Gellner postulates for the international level might well be suited for India at the national level. Since India is a multicultural society but united by a single state nation building efforts must aim at developing common fundamentals of the economy while promoting regional cultural identities. We will now consider Eric Hobsbaum's views on nationalism.

3. Eric J. Hobsbaum[10]: his idea of nation and nationalism may be summed up in his statement that 'Nationalism comes before nations'. According to him both subjective and objective factors defining nationalism like language, religion, culture or region, are misleading. Rather, nation is any sufficiently large body of people

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[10] Hobsbaum .E .J . : Nations & Nationalism Since 1780 ,Cambridge University Press , 1990 .

whose members regard themselves as members of eviction will be treated as such. Nationalism operates at two levels, official and at individual or common man's level. There is always a difference between official notion of nationalism and the individual perception because we cannot assume that for most people, national identity excludes or is superior to the remainder set of identities which constitute the social being.

He lists some universal elements of a nation, citizenship and participation or choice But while revolutionary ideas of nation revolve around the central concept of sovereign people equal to nation equation, the official version of nationalism revolves around the equation of state equal to nation which is equal to the people. Thus in the second instance the state is the distinguishing feature of the community versus the rest of humanity.

According to Hobsbaum, in theory proto-national sentiments could be classed as nations, but in practise there are only three classes of nations. (i) Historic association with a current state. E.g. England, (ii) existence of a long cultural elite with a written national literacy and administrative vernacular E.g. : Italian nationalism, (iii) Proven capacity for conquest.

Hobsbaum pursues the question as to why is it that proto-national sentiments (which are largely cultural) are not enough to form

a nation state.   First, proto-nationalism is defined as feelings of

collective belonging which already exists and which would potentially

act on macro-political scale as a nation-state. These feelings could

be of two types a supra-local form like religion as in Poland and

Ireland, or political bonds and vocabularies of select group more

directly linked to status and institutions which can be extended and

popularised. E.g. language and ethnicity. But neither language nor

ethnicity form the basis of nationalism. National languages are

almost   always artificial creations like Hebrew. And ethnicity is used

to distinguish ourselves from others rather than define and

understand one's own society autonomously. Hobsbaum considers

the historical nation as the strongest proto-national element as it

is the consciousness of having belonged to a lasting political entity.

More than proto- national sentiments, it is the setting up of the state

that results in the formation of nations. Like, the U.S.A. But

Hobsbaum goes further and points out that state by \itself is also not

enough. It faces two political problems in it's efforts   consolidate

it's position. (i) Technical   and administrative questions of the best

way of implementing new forms of government, in which every

member is directly linked to the state government,(ii) citizen loyalty

to and identification with the ruling system and the state. These

imperatives arise for the state because electoral politics has turned the

citizen into subjects with political rights or claims. To ensure their loyalty, the state needs a civic religion or patriotism. In this situation while ethnicity becomes irrelevant by and by, linguistic standardisation acquires importance, in practical terms. Hobsbaum considers linguistic nationalism in the regions of India as basically a modern, urban phenomenon linked to public education and employment opportunities. Problems of power, status and politics lie at the root of linguistic nationalism, not communication or culture.

According to Hobsbaum, the second half of the twentieth century is witnessing an increase in nationalism due to increasing geographical migration, and the theoretical transformation of the concept of race. Race is no longer a simple division of people according to colour of skin, but is now used to distinguish people of approximately the same colour. Like Aryans, and Semites. Here ethnicity and language become useful as markers where linguistic purify is often equated to racial purity.

As for third world nationalism per se, Hobsbaum accounts for it in the urge for social transformation embedded in the ideology of nationalism. Hence anti-imperialist movements are emancipatory in nature. But the case of partition of India, and later of Bangladesh highlight the dual nature of nationalism at the official level, and people's idea of their nation. Hobsbaum feels that

nationalism will not play any major role in history now, since it has lost sight of it's original demand i.e. a national economy. The extensive influence that international organisations like the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank exercise on needy countries like India, substantiate Hobsbaum's contention. However I would like to point out that such developments contain inner contradictions. Like, a unipolar world which bodes ill for humanity at large.

We have come to the end of our discussion on theories of nationalism. We saw that all three theorists have some common elements. They emphasise the role of the state most in engendering nations in the twentieth century. Though cultural elements like ethnicity and language are important, it is ultimately the native's identification with an abstract national identity fostered through state apparatus (like education and mass media) that nations are framed. In other worlds, citizenship builds nations. And even though proto-national sentiments can theoretically be called nations (like the different regions of India which have witnessed strong movements like the Dravidian movement), they are not successful nations because they haven't achieved statehood. *TH-7060*

Thus nationalism and the nation are political principles associated with the state and civic rights under citizenship. However,

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this does not mean a fading away of cultural or ethnic and linguistic ties. As pointed out by Hobsbaum, the duality of national identity is predominant to the exclusion of all other identities of social person. Hence the need to sustain and pressure cultural identities alongwith building a national citizenry.

Now we can consider Indian nationalism and it's bearing on NE in the context of the integration of the new region with India (1947).

National and nationalism In India:

Most commentators on India do not put India Jon the same neat category of one nation one country as found in the West. Western concepts are found lacking in appropriate theoretical tools to understand forms of Asian nationalism. 'The study of nationalism in Asia requires a theory of the civilizational nation"[11]. Tonnesson and Antlov point to Gandhi's idea of nationalism in India. It was not for a nation, but was about a communal i.e. community moral order aimed at revitalising autonomous growth in the Indian civilisation. According to Prof. Y. Singh[12], in the Western social science, civilization is associated with breakdown in the bases of feudal social organisation, and the rise of ideas and institutions resulting in the evolution of a civic society... defined in secular rational terms. The

[11] Tonnesson & Antlov : Op .cit ., pp .29 .

[12] Singh . Y : Social Change In India , Crisis & Resilience . Har Anand Publications ,1993. PP .159 .

significance of civilization lies in the growth, upheavals and norms conducive to the development of a civic-industrial society. Further, it strengthens linkages between structures and institutions reinforcing societal unity... forges. broader unified system of social, political and economic organisations culminating in the formation of the nation-sate[13]. The usefulness of the civilizational nation concept lies in it being an alternate model to the original one-nation, one-sate model of nation-state. Thus, without disputing the historical origins of the nation state in Europe, we can at the same time highlight the originality of thought in the pre-modern worlds of Asia, Africa and Latin America in forging their own national identities.

The India that we know today is largely a product of British colonial policy. Though India as a sub-continental civilization existed since ancient times, the Indian state which has recently turned 50 years of age, is largely a British product in form. The content of Indian nationalism was provided by the Indian National Congress which gained dominance over other contesting nationalisms of the Dalits, tribals, etc. According to G. Aloysius[14], Nationalism is a movement for transfer of power from the alien ruler to preserve the pre-nation form of differential power realisation within society, in the subcontinent. And here lies the contradictory nature of Indian

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[13] Ibid ., pp. 160 .

[14] Aloysius , G. : Nationalism Without A Nation In India ,OUP ,1997 , pp . 109 .

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nationalism as while the nation state concept has legitimacy only in the notion of citizenship meaning a minimum homogenisation of power within culture, Aloysius feels that Indian nationalism was a movement of uneasy compromise between pre-modern forms and modern notion of social justice and equality. For instance, the debate on social reform vs. political transfer of power in nationalist ranks went in favour of the latter, confirming the reactionary nature of the nationalists. This point is debatable. However the point of significance for us is the basic idea of equitable distribution of power enshrined in the idea of the modern nation.

Thus the conclusion of sociologists like Aloysius is that nationalism in India is without a nation since nation means equity in power relations which the Indian state is yet to achieve. So what holds Indian nationalism together may be inferred to be the Indian state.

The sociological perspective on nationalism is a study of social change focused on movements of power and power positions within society affecting structure and culture. In the final analysis, the sociological interest in nationalism is an enquiry into equality of groups and communities in the nation-sate. According to Victor D' Souza [15], nationalism politically means unity at the political level

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[15] D'Souza : Nation- Building and Development Process A Sociological Perspective, article in L . R .Singh (ed .) : Nation-Building and Development Process, Rawat Publications , Jaipur & New Delhi , 1994 .

which however can be built only on an appropriate base of socio-cultural transformation. According to him social structure consists of three major types - hierarchical, which is based on class division and power; affiliational social structure based on religion or ethnicity for instance; and territorial bonds which especially assume significance when increasing spatial mobility occurs. When economic and political power are channelled through affiliational and territorial bonds, the social structure throws up problems of inequality. So, the question is, what is the appropriate form of social structure for a nation-state. Victor D'Souza prefers the 'heterogeneous model of integration' over the concept of plural society. According to him, plural society is where groups live together without much mixing. They are integrated only at the economic and political levels. Political unity is through domination by the powerful group. Thus the social integration in such societies is not based on willing co-operation and therefore they cannot be called nations.

But plural societies can be transformed into nations if the following conditions are met. (i) Reduced inequalities in economic resources and political power between different groupings in the social structure; (ii) improved opportunities for participation in

common institutional structures and ; (iii) indifference to empathetic understanding towards one another.

The 'heterogeneous model' rejects the presumption that to be national, a society should have the prerequisites of a common language, shared historical experience, racial homogeneity or a common religious tradition.

Thus, sociological perspectives on nationalism and the nation emphasis social transformation from unequal social structure of pre-modern forms to a society based on equality in terms of civil rights and access to resources. However, regional sentiments in India, particularly in the North-East region have strong affiliational and territorial bonds which make the symbolic content of it's culture very important from an civic viewpoint. This aspect has been downplayed by various authors who have written on the topic regarding the region. The emphasis on economic development alone appears like an exercise in reduction of the consciousness of the people in the North-East region.

Political Scientists like Sunil Khilhani[16] also agree to the civilisational base of the Indian nation. According to S. Khilnani, Indian identity is more complex than the state engendered identity within a theoretically bounded map of India. Civilisational links have engaged Indians across natural frontiers and within the sub continent

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[16] Khilnani ,S : The Idea Of India ,Hamish Hamilton Ltd ., England, 1997 .

there has been a continuity in cultural terms. Politically, the continuity was fostered by ancient empires. Mahatma Gandhi according to Khilnani, substituted this historical base with a new religious morality. But Gandhi's ideas were form wiped out and replaced by Nehruvian Pluralism within the Indian state. Incidentally both political scientists, Partha Chatterjee and Khilnanai attribute Nehru the responsibility for shaping modern India. Nehru's idea of India was situated within a larger world movement of history by participating in the benefits of modern industrial progress. The pluralist policy regarding the language issue, notes Khilnani, had a positive effect i.e. the compromise formula between the national language (Hindi) and regional languages with English included ensured that Indian identity was not tied down to any single trait alone. Further, single citizenship, linguistic and cultural communities are explicitly recognised and enshrined in the Constitution.

Coming to the political sociology perspective, Prof. Dipankar Gaupta[17] criticises Benedict Anderson's thesis that colonial administrative boundaries with localised centres of higher learning provided a kind of ready made map for the newly emergent nations. The division of India into British India and the Princely states did not hold back the nation formation process in India. Also ethnic

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[17] Gupta , D : Ethnicity and Politics , article in ' Politics In India ' (ed .) Kaviraj ,S . Oxford In India Readings in Sociology and Social Anthropology , 1997 .

and cultural (linguistic) differences as the enduring bases of Indian politics negate the western concept of coterminous political and cultural boundaries of nation states. In independent India, we consider the linguistic movements, nativist movements for job reservation and regional politics of political parties as test cases of Indian national identity. Though articulated through group identities of ethnicity and language they never questioned political unity of the country, neither were they anti-federal in nature. Their hostility was towards neighbours and not antagonism against the state. Nativist movements like that of Assam, acknowledged that it was only through the centre that their grievances could be addressed to. The net result was the signing of the Assam Accord in 1984 between the All Assam student union, the Assam government, and the Central government.

Prof. D. Gupta ends his article with a significant observation that since all nation states are constructed though differently, some element of self consciousness is inevitable. In the context of India, the liability or sanctity of the Indian nation state depends on respect for such self conscious sentiment as exhibited by it's diverse cultural groups. However, this is not to say that cultural difference undermine the legitimacy of the Indian Union.

An enquiry into minority identities by Myron Weiner[18] shows that India's minorities demands can be grouped into (i) demand for a homeland as it is believed that political power is essential for access to resources (ii) linguistic recognition of vernacular in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution. This reduces pressures for linguistic assimilation and strengthens group identity and solidarity. (iii) Reservation sought as an alternative to statehood for dispersed minorities in legislative or administrative spheres. Such group demands are legitimated by the constitution based on the principle that membership in institutions, and employment should reflect the demographic division of the country; (iv) security demands, especially from the poor and dispersed scheduled caste. The point to note is that all these demands are claimed from the central government. This despite the fact that minorities' defining characteristics include lack of power and the symbol of authority, values propagated from the centre and the culture that emanates from the centre are viewed as not theirs by the minorities (M.Weiner). There are according to M. Weiner, four types of minorities in India - linguistic, religious, caste, and tribal. He attributes the increasing competition among India's social groups to three factors. Education , leading to high aspirations, economic growth leading to increasing economic

[18] Weiner ,M : Minorit y Identities ,article in Kaviraj (ed .), op . cit .,

opportunities, and political democracy leading to increasing politicisation. But he further notes that for societies historically divided along ethnic lines, group consciousness is likely to prevail over class consciousness which can be meant as secular, individual ideology. In such a situation substantive administrative decentralisation, and a policy of multiculturalism are all seen as means to accommodate and manage conflict of social groups in India at the central and state level.

We have considered the nature of Indian nationalism from a sociological and political viewpoint. And we can conclude definitely that to understand India, a civilisational framework is essential which accommodates the various cultural groups in the country. However, we also saw that the state is the central agency which has enabled modern articulation of Indian nation state. Though India is a civilizational entity, it's new form of a nation state could come about only due to the state structure. Besides, we also considered how to a nation is actually an ideal towards greater equality in power distribution within society. In other words, the national citizen who is guaranteed certain rights and obligation. And India is caught in the cross current between this ideal of the nation and other social facts of hierarchy and unequal distribution of power in society, like the caste system. Indian nationalism has 'sacralized' the

territorial map of India, particularly after partition in 1947. While partition threw up threats about displacement, and loss of identity and culture, the continuing 'inability of the Indian state' as S. Khilnani puts it is in the territorial integrity of India. Hence the politics of regionalism and sub national movements (some even avoid the use of this turn) are often viewed with distrust by the centre. This is particularly trace of the North East region which is also a sensitive border zone for India internationally. From our discussion till now, we can safely conclude that Indian nationalism has been engendered by the Indian State since independence. Prior to that the national movement played a great role in awakening national consciousness. But this was not uniformly spread. In the context of the North East especially the hill areas, this fact acquires significance in the nation building process. The legal and constitutional integration of the North east region with mainland India can throw some initial light in understanding the Indian nation in the North east, like Mizoram. Also, Indian nationalism is engendered in the growth and development of the middle class as seen in the social movements based on demands for employment, reservation, etc. The middle class phenomenon is one of the critical agents of fostering nationalism due to its access to education and to power through social mobility. For the North east too, this class of people is important for integration with

the mainstream i.e., middle class share basic economic factors like income, life style and aspirations which can minimise the negative effects of primordial ties like ethnicity. We now consider the legal and constitutional integration of north east with mainland India and the implications for nationalism in the north East region.

THE NORTH-EAST REGION OF INDIA:

Assam, which is the gateway to the region was taken over by the British only in 1826 with the motive to secure its frontier. Initially the British had no intention of permanent occupation of Assam. But the discovery of tea, coal, petroleum and other minerals changed their opinion. Assam was finally annexed to the British empire in India in 1838. The period 1826 to 1974 marks the spread of British authority over the hills around Assam and the Barak valley[19]. The first hill area to come under the British non the Khasi states (1829-33) where determined Khasi resistance was finally overcome. Next, the Jaintia Raj was annexed In 1856 Garo hills came under British rule, and Naga hills District too got a British officer in Chumukedima the Samaguting. In 1874, these hill districts i.e. Khasi states, Jaintia, Garo, and Naga hills together with Goalpara

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[19] Datta Ray and Agrawal : Reorganisation Of North-East India Since 1947. Concept Publishing Co., New Delhi , 1996 .

and Sylhet were united to form Assam province, administrated by a Chief Commissioner under the Governor General-in-council.

British Tribal policy and administration in North East India were governed by the following[20][21] (i) Inner line Regulation on 1873 under which British subjects needed commissioner's permission to enter the hill areas. The visitors could be asked to leave if the administration felt it would disturb the conditions there. The regulation was viewed to a large extent as the stumbling block to political integration of India during the national movement for freedom from colonial rule.(ii) Scheduled Districts Act, 1874,(iii) Government of India Act, 1919, and(iv) Government of India Act, 1935. Under this Act hill areas in Assam province were classified into excluded and partially excluded areas. In the excluded areas the Governor administered fully without any ministerial advice. In the partially excluded area, provincial ministers administered but along with the Governor of Assam who had a special responsibility towards these areas.

In 1950, the North- East tribal areas were divided into parts A & B in the Table appended to the 6th Schedule of the Constitution. Part A areas like Khasi and Jaintia Hills district had autonomous district

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[20] Op., cit.
[21].

council by 1952 under the government of Assam except for the Naga hills district. The part B areas were at first put under jurisdiction of the Governor of Assam as the agent of the President of India. In 1954, the North East Frontier Tracts and the Abor and Mishmi Hills were united and brought under the Ministry of External Affairs. These tracts came under British suzerainty in 1913-14 when the McMohan line was delineated as the border with Tibet in the conference held at Simla.

Other constitutional and administrative developments in the region saw the carving of Lushai Hills district, now Mizroram in 1954, 1963- State of Nagaland, and in 1972 Meghalaya too got statehood. In the same year (1972) the NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh) and Mizoram were declared Union Territories which ended the control of the Assam Governor over them. Thus ended the dream of greater Assam. Manipur and Trripura are former princely states in the North East which joined the Indian Union through the Instrument of Accession.

The frontier, organised as district territorial units constitutionally under Assam were never administratively integrated[22]. Rather, the acts and regulations highlighted the distinction between the hill areas and the plains (partially excluded and excluded areas

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[22] Op., cit ,pp. 20 .

under GOI Act '35). This effectively insulated the hill areas from political consciousness developments. In 1928, the Naga Club demanded the Simon commission to exclude Naga hills from constitutional reforms. This was also the view of the then Assam government. John Hutton, particularly advocated the separation of hills districts from Assam based on arguments about cultural and social differences between the peoples of the region, and the different administrative regimes in the hill areas and the plains. In fact on the eve of the end of British rule in India, number of proposals were seriously discussed among British authorities about the future of the hill tracts of the region.

Sir Robert Neil Reid, Governor of Assam, 1941, built on the ideas of Parry & Hutton (Commissioners in the region) and suggested to the government (British) to separate the hill areas of North East India, and North West Burma from respective dominions and bring them under an appropriate department at White Hall[23]. If implemented, these tracts would not become independent but have status of High Commission territories i.e., directly under the British crown's representative, until it is time to transfer the areas to an Indian government after consultation with the people of the region (like a referendum). It appears that there was no doubt about to whom

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[23] Ibid ., pp .33.

these tracts would go to finally (India). This point had substantive

value because the British authorities felt that the Assam hill areas had

no future by separating from the plains. This opinion is based on the

poor economic condition of the hills at the time of independence,

which the British authorities were acutely aware of, given their basic

imperial and colonial nature of stay in India.

Syiemlieh[24] observes that there was no referendum or plebiscite

given to the hill people to decide their own future. Neither were

tribal leaders of the former 'unadministered' areas brought to the

negotiating table. In fact, their future was decided not by themselves

but by Delhi and Assam, and herein lay the seeds of discontent.

Besides the discontent embedded in the transfer of power from

Britain to India (which has been largely the force used by Naga

insurgency movement), other factors which play an important role in

outlining the relation of North East region with mainland India are,

(i) geographical isolation. This has been heightened by the writing

off of traditional trade routes to Bangladesh on the West and Burma in

the east.

(ii) Low level of economic development, creating a feeling of

neglect of the region by the centre.

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[24] Syiemlieh , D. R : The Future of the Hills of North-East India ,article in Datta Ray & Agrawal , op., cit .chapter 2

(iii) Cultural and racial, social characteristics that distinguish the people of North-East India from rest of India (mainland).
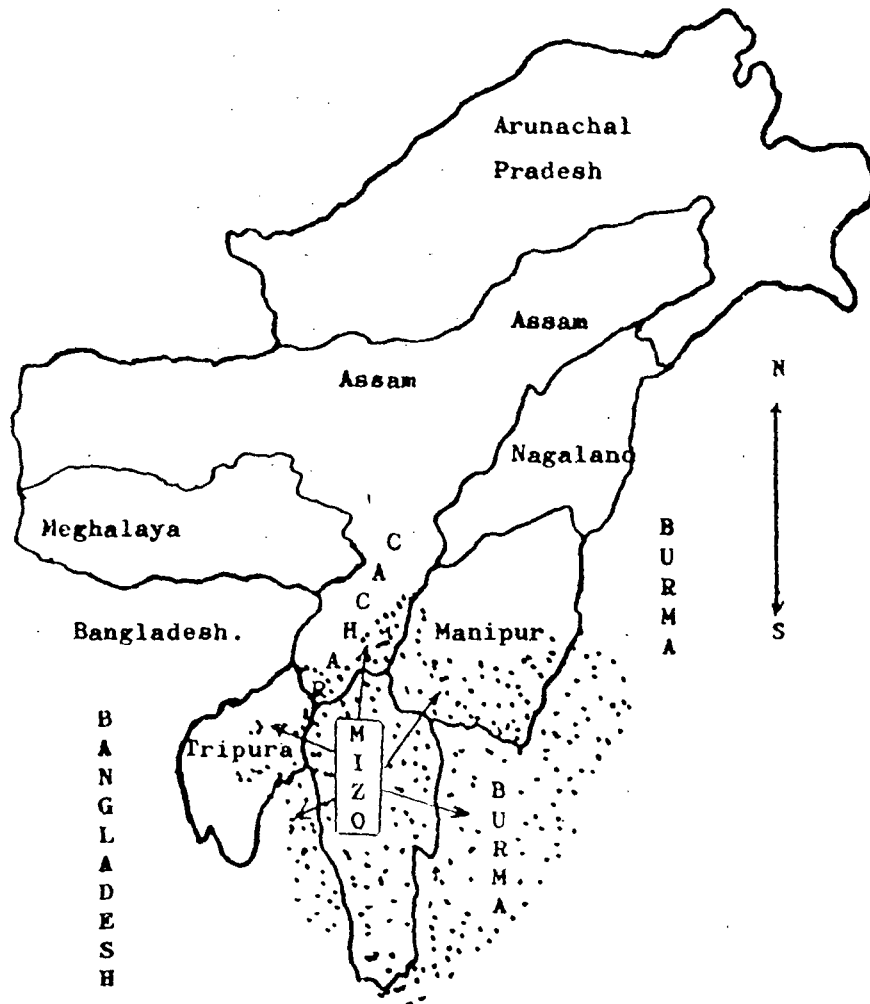
A majority of the hill (tribal) population of North East India are Christians. There are over 3 million Christians in the North East alone. So far this factor cannot be said to have played a major role in distinguishing the region from India as ethnicity rather than religion has been the governing identity of the hill folk. However, the emergence of Hindutva brigades whose exponents consider Islam and Christianity to be 'foreign' religions and attempts to re-convert people to Hindu or indigenous faith, indicate future patterns of confrontations in the subcontinent. It could add to the feeling of alienation, acute in the NE region, which is a negative symptom for Indian nationhood. The discussion on the integration (territorial and political) of the NE region shows that at various points, the region was sought to be administered independent of India. However, due to it's very backward nature of economy, it was concluded that the hill areas have no future without the plains. But the significant fact underlying it is that the decision about the future of the hills was decided by the powerful and mighty, be it the British colonial administration or later the Indian state. While previously these hill areas were relatively independent in their day to day activity, ideology and belief, with the coming of the British, and later with

more direct administration under the Indian state, a major psychological watershed occurred. This was besides the material changes that had transformed the lives of the hill people. Now, in actual fact, they had to consciously, and constantly take into consideration their integration into a larger framework of political authority, and a larger, complex framework of social values and categories of thought i.e., the mainland civilization. Neither did it help that since the hill tribes were new to the caste system, the social structure of mainland India was foreign to them. The situation was compounded due to large scale embracing of Christianity by the hill tribes, like the Mizos. There were many national leaders who viewed Christianity as a foreign religion. Thus, geography (the boundary), different religion, social structure, language, and not the least, race, made the process of integration difficult, to say the least. Besides the cultural factors, the fact that administratively the hill regions of the North East had never been fully administrated and the schedules which while protecting from migrations also denied them political exposure to the national movement, had far reaching consequences for the post-independence task of nation-building. However, in the final analysis, it was the state structure which decided the fate of these hills. Significantly, in this context, the Indian Independence Act 1947 states that the territory of India

includes 'those (territories) under British sovereignty, included in British India and not given to Pakistan.' The point is, nation-states are not natural things. They are man made, historically. Though the North - East region shares historical and cultural ties with Indian civilisation, yet it was never an active or significant player in the dynamics of this civilisation. However, British colonialism changed this situation. In the next chapter we will now discuss the issue of nationalism

MAP 1

North-East India Showing Mizoram and the Neighboring
Countries Where Mizo Tribes Live

Arunachal
Pradesh

Assam

Assam

N

Nagaland

Meghalaya

C
A
C

B
U
R
M
A

S

Bangladesh.

H

Manipur

A

B
A
N
G
L
A
D
E
S
H

Tripura

M
I
Z
O

B
U
R
M
A

CHAPTER III

MIZORAM : SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND CHANGE

Mizoram is the 23rd state of the Indian Union as passed by the 53rd constitution Amendment Bill of the Indian Parliament in 1987. It lies between the latitude 22°19' and 24°19' N and longitude 92°16' and 93°26' E. The people belong to the Mongoloid race and their language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. The Mizo hills are flanked by the Chittagong tracts (Bangladesh) on the West, the Arakan (Burma) in the South and on the east, and to the north they share boundary with the state of Tripura, the Cachar district of Assam, and the state of Manipur. In this chapter we will consider the Mizo identity, it's kinship organisation, it's village structure, certain traditional institutions like chieftainship, to try and gain an understanding of Mizo society.

Mizos came into contact with the British in 1800, and extensively during the first Burmese war of 1824-25. According to British sources, the British undertook to annex the Lushai hills to stop the raids by the Lushais since it affected British commercial interests in the region. The Lushais like other hillmen were portrayed as wild and barbarous who needed to be controlled. The British administration carried out indirect rule over the hills under various regulations. Like, the 1873 Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, the Chin Hills Regulation (1896), and the Scheduled Districts Act (1974). Later, under the Government of India Act 1919, the Lushai hills

were declared as Backward tract, thus removing the authority of the Assam government over it. Under the government of India Act 1935, the Lushai hills were declared 'Excluded Area', to be governed directly by the Governor of Assam. The administrative measures were aimed at maintaining administration at the cheapest economic costs possible as the hill areas were not considered economically profitable. After World War II, the Mizo Common People's Union (MCPU) demanded equal voting rights for chiefs and commoners in elections to the District Conference. In April 1946, the MCPU changed into the Mizo Union. They later (in 1954) succeeded in abolishing chieftainship by a resolution of the Autonomous District Council. For sometime now, chieftainship had increasingly been perceived as an obstacle to modernisation. Similarly, the sense of deprived political exposure under the British had started engaging the Mizos (Lalchungnunga). The chiefs on the other hand formed the United Mizo Freedom Organisation in July 1947. They advocated merger with Burma. The Mizo union in it's memorandum to the constituent Assembly through the Bordoloi Committee demanded cultural and territorial solidarity and right to self determination of Mizos within Assam. Besides they sought economic help for the upliftment of the region. Added to these integrationist overtones' was the provision that the above should be subject to revision after 10 years, even to the extent of seceding[1]. Meanwhile a faction of the Mizo Union, the Mizo Union Council favoured independence over the choice of joining India, Burma, or a Crown Colony. These different positions were brought to a single negotiating table in Aug. 14, 1947 under

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[1] Verghese: India's North-East Resurgent, Konark Publishers, 1996.

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the chairmanship of L.L. Peters, the superintendent, Lushai Hills. Fifty leaders of all political parties attended the meeting and finally resolved to enter the Indian Union, but with some restrictions. Like maintenance of the Inner Line regulation, a ten year stipulation, all of which were guided by objective identity and negatively propelled by a fear of being revamped by over forty crores of Indians if integrated freely with the Union.

It has been recorded that the Lushai Hills people, like other counterparts in the North East, were not politically mature enough to come to a decision about their political future, on the eve of Indian independence. In the particular case of the Mizos, certain factors played a decisive role in the Mizo leaders (elite) opting to join India. Like, the traditional institution of chieftainship was considered an imposition and an obstacle to rising Mizo aspirations. Verghese feels that this factor weighed most in popular support for autonomy and development within India'. Also, given the extreme economic backwardness of the region, and the political insularity of the region, joining India appeared as a more attractive alternative than joining Burma or opting for independence. Significantly by 1947, Christian missionaries in Mizoram had established themselves for over 85 years (they first came in 1894). This fact was often overlooked by passionate nationalists when the Mizo insurgency was at it's height. It was often alleged that Christianity, a foreign religion, was instigating the break up of India. Rather, retrospectively, it appears that it was more due to successful missionary activity than the colonial administration, that the Lushai hills were better integrated with India, at the time of independence.

'Mizo' is a generic term applied contemporaneously to all those who identify in Mizoram. Mizo etymological means 'hillman'. And Mizoram means land of the hillman. Mizoram has seventeen communities out of which sixteen are scheduled tribes[2]. There are non Mizo's like Nepali and Gorkhas, besides some non-Mizo tribal communities like the Chakmas and the Reangs. The Chakmas and the Reangs are a part of Mizoram as far as political structure is concerned, but remain socially distinct tribes having no common culture and normative pattern with the Mizos. However, we will be concerned only with the Mizo tribe/community in our paper. Tribe as generally defined and understood is a small group (usually) living in geographical isolation , with low level oftechnology, minimal contact with the main population, leading a social life based on bonds of kinship and ritual , guided by belief in animism and other such faith having distinct language and social mores and norms . Basically, the tribe in this view is seen as 'primitive', and pre-literate but with a community sense which needs to be incorporated into the modern development process . In ancient India, tribes were called jana i.e. a community of people identified with a territorial space who were outside the jati system . The Mizo in their traditional mould fit the general definition of a tribe i.e. pre-literate and 'primitive' .They were divided into various clans and tribes. A clan consists of those members of different lineages (actual common ancestor) who trace their origin to a common ancestor, real or mythical. The Mizo tribe is actually the product of a long and continuous process of assimilation of sub tribes into a single tribal identity[3]. The Mizoisation of the tribes or sub-tribes within Mizoram is a continuing process[4].

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[2] Singh ,K . S :People Of India Mizoram ,Vol .XXXIII ,pp.,xiii ,Anthropological Survey Of India ,Seagull Books, Calcutta ,1995 .

[3] Nunthara ,C : Mizoram Society and Polity ,Indus Publishing Co., New Delhi 1996, pp.30.

[4] Singh ,K .S ,ibid., pp.xii

Mizoisation implies the adoption of the codified Dublian Mizo dialect, and increasing withering away of class and sub - tribe distinctions. Earlier these were manifested in the different sacrifice and ritual characteristic of the sub-tribes and clans. For e.g.: according to J.Shakespear[5], each clan had a guardian spiritt to whom they offered sacrifices called Sakhua which varies according to family and clan . Within the clans, differences were minor, like in the items placed in the grave, etc. But absorption into the dominant drieftainship clan of Sailo, and later the embracing of Christianity levelled out these differences based on tribal practices. During the pre-British period, the absorption process was helped by factors like, the village structure composed of heterogeneous clans and sub-tribes; the institution of slavery and 'saphun' rite (adoption in to one's own clan, usually by a chief), and the men's dormitory system i.e. the 'Zawlbuk'. Shakespeare notes that though the 'Zawlbuk' was common to many tribes, he found it most among the Lusheis (Sailo clan's sub-tribe) and the clans allied to them.

Villages were composed of 'many tribes and clans which have more or less adopted the language and customs of their rulers i.e., the chiefs[6]. Thus the influence of ruling claus, like Sailo was widespread and reinforced by absorbing other claus and sub-tribes. Under the slavery system called 'bawiship' a particular type which allowed predominance to Sailo chiefs' influence was one of a person who for any reason (like debt or shelter from enemies), sought the protection of the chief. The price for

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[5] Shakespear ,J : The Lushai Kuki Clans ,Cultural Publishing House , New Delhi. First printed 1912 , reprint 1983.
[6] Shakespear , Op.cit .

protection was the forfeiture of his freedom for all practical purposes under the chief. Similarly, domestic slaves were often absorbed into the chief's clan. Slavery was common more for the chief's family than for the commoners.

The Mizos of Mizoram are only a part of the greater Mizo brotherhood across international and national state boundaries i.e., in Burma, Bangladesh, Assam and Manipur states, respectively. According to K.S. Singh[7], a parallel process (to the process of Mizoisation) is the emergence of a transnational concept of the Mizo people with the ' Zomi' , "the people of the cold-breezy hills" (T. Gougin) encompassing the Kuki-Chin peoples living across international borders. The Zomi unlike the Nagas are described as a homogeneous people, linguistically and culturally'. The term Zomi would include the Hmar, Paite, among others. According to B.G. Verghese ,'the Mizos, like the Nagas, smart under a sense of having been administratively and politically scattered[8]. And according to Lalchungnunga, a Mizo scholar, '... the Chin - Lushai - Kuki tribes who could have developed into a state society of their own were left behind as minorities in different administrative units..... though the area occupied by them are geographically contiguous... a strong sense of unfulfilment is lingering in the Mizo mind because of this and it continue to inspire regionalism in their politics[9]. 'However, the territorial and political consolidation of Mizo identity in the state of Mizoram has had it's effects on this greater brotherhood of Mizos. While for those in Mizoram the process of Mizoisation through integration of the various clans and

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[7] Op. Cit , pp.xii .

[8] Verghese ,Op, cit .,pp. 136 .

[9] Lalchungnunga : Mizoram ,Politics of Regionalism and National Integration , Reliance Publishing House , New Delhi 1994, pp.26 .

sub tribes is that is to be Mizo, those left out in other Indian states like Assam and Manipur, advocate another level of integration under the term ' Zomi' wherein the Mizo is taken as a part like a tribe or clan to be integrated into the 'Zomi.' The formation of Mizoram as a distinct political entity i.e. a state is the main reason for this new development. Those scattered in the other states as minorities are unable to identify themselves with Mizoram though ethnically they share common traits with the Mizos of Mizoram. Within Mizoram itself the absorption process seems to have reached it's limits. For instance, the Hmar tribe in northern Mizoram, recently concluded an agreement with the Mizoram government (1993) to set up the Sinlung Hills development Council, thus consolidating their continued existence as distinct from the predominant Mizos.We will now discuss Mizo social structure and kinship organisation . Study of social structure is an important tool of the sociological perspective. It help in understanding the social situation of any particular society. In case of the Mizos of Mizoram, I'll be concentrating on kinship rules and regulations. Since Mizo society is a tribal society (given it's history, and recognised as a scheduled tribe of India), kinship plays an all important role. However, unlike indigenous tribal societies, where social processes of exchange, co-operation, conflict, and alliance are carried along kin rules & norms, the advent of Christianity among the Mizos has lent it a different colour and meaning.

Social structure is defined by the Encyclopaedia of Sociology as a general term for any collective social circumstance that is unalterable and given for the individual. Social structure thus provides a content or environment for action. They

are marked by regularity or 'routine' and they are objective i.e. the same for every member of society and cannot be altered by any one individual. Thus, social structure are the relatively permanent institutions found in society like the family, the village, religion or kinship. They are social facts which constrain individuals.

Kinship on the other hand is a biological and social phenomenon. Social significance of kinship is derived from the primary biological relationship. Again, referring to the Encyclopaedia, 'Kinship systems are mechanisms that link conjugal families (and individuals not living in families) in ways that affect the integration of the general social structure and enhance the ability of society to produce itself in an orderly fashion. Kinship performs these social functions in two ways - (i) though relationships defined by blood ties and marriage, kinship systems make possible ready made contemporaneous networks of social ties sustained during the lifetimes of related persons.

(ii).They enable the temporal continuity of identifiable family connection over generations, despite the limited lifespan of a family's members. Kinship theory is marked by a debate between the descent and alliance theories (Meyer Fortes, and Levi- Strauss respectively). Anthropologists who have worked in African case studies favour descent model, while those who have studied Asia opt for the alliance model. The crux of their differences lies in the perspectives about the first priority of a kinship system. The descent theorists believe that the kinship system's primary function is to look after the welfare of the kindred over generations. Fortes' concept of filiation i.e., status of child of one's parents alongwith lifetime rights and obligations attached to that status

including inheritance of clan property, aims to drive home this point. Fortes proposes that corresponding to filiation, it is fraternity sibling unity, equality, and solidarity which represent kinship amity, together.

Alliance theorists attribute the primary function of Kinship system as 'the integration of networks of related families into the contemporary social fabric. Thus for alliance theorists, the basic drive in kinship organisation is derived externally, from the kind of alliances appropriate to the structure of power in the community. Buckler and Shelby as quoted in the Encyclopaedia - 'collectively' marital alliances create between families a network of links that integrate them with reference to over reaching religion, economic, and political institutions. On the other hand, descent theory ascribes the basis of kinship organisations to internal demands, structural factors in the persistence of the kindred rules governing residential location division of labour and authority among members, and the various economic and political functions to be performed by the kinship system. According to Buchler and Shelby the crux of the matter is the 'depiction of the kinds of reciprocity norms that define the character of kinship.' Descent presumes an axiom of amity (= prescriptive altruism or general reciprocity) is basic, while alliance theory holds that balanced reciprocity - rightness of exchanges for overt self interest, opportunistic individualism or noumenal norms, is in the final analysis the glue that integrates families and kin groups into coherent whole.

These two opposing impulses are operative in the Kinship system generally. E.g. : while relationship between wife and husband works best along balanced reciprocity principle the socialisation of children and the allocation of resources follows

the descent live i.e., perspective altruism. So finally, the question is which circumstance lead some societies to give priority to descent and others to favour alliance assumptions in their kinship and family organisations [Farber (1975)]. Paige(1969) and Swanson (1974) have analysed the relationship between social structure and kinship organisation. They distinguish between societies that feature the legitimacy of special interests - factionalism - organising social life, and those that feature the importance of common interests - communalism - as an organising theme.

Factionalism - centripetal kinship organisation - norms to facilitate pulling in ward of human, symbolic, and material resources. This centripetal tendency permits each kin group to separate itself from competing groups. Thus they favour norms strengthening descent relationships over norms facilitating new alliances through marriage. Norm of prescriptive altruism ideally, over balanced reciprocities in kinship & family relations. Factionalism arises due to conflict or competition.They emerge as reaction to perceived danger to their well being from other groups.

Communalism - is a situation where special interests are subordinated to common concerns of diverse groups. In stateless societies, the common concern may be a product of economic inter dependence, or threat from a common enemy. In societies with a centralised government, the state symbolises a concern for the common welfare of the populace (E.g. : nationalism as opposed to ethnic self determination). Kinship organisation is centrifugal i.e., spread over as diverse groups as possible. In the process, kinship loyalties, obligations and property are distributed widely. The common

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concerns are served best in this process which links hitherto unrelated people living throughout society.

The centrifugal kinship system subordinates kinship ties to conjugal family ties, and extends marital prohibitions widely in order to inhibit marriages that would merely reinforce existing consanguineous ties. In centrifugal kinship organisation, the appropriate norm for defining family interaction is balanced reciprocity - exchange rather than the axiom of amity.

Among the Mizos, there is a clear distinction between kinship by descent and kinship by marriage, although kinship is reckoned and recognised on both lives. As a patrilineal society, the rule of descent is strictly based on the male line only. In the traditional system, a woman was recognised, even after marriage, by her patri-clan name. "The pattern of inheritance, rules of succession and residence closely followed the system of descent[10]. The principle of ultimogeniture was followed in inheritance. But other sons could demand their share of property besides the immovable ones. This had the effect of encouraging a fission process in the social organisation of the Mizos. Virilocal residence (by a new couple) or migration to new villages reflect this fission process. In the case of the chief's sons, they could set up new villages, thus abetting the fission of village organisation.

Though the Mizos clearly gave more value to the descent live of reckoning kinship, there was no prescription about rules regulating clan endogamy or exogamy. 'Any Mizo might marry with members of one's own clan or outside[11].' However,

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[10] Nunthara , Op,cit., pp. 84 .
[11] Ibid ., pp.86 .

the general norm was to avoid clan endogamy because it was viewed as 'incestuous even in the absence of a formal taboo against it[12].' But the Sailo and other chiefly clans prefer marriage within their own clan or within families of the chiefly clans. Thus alliance played an important note for the chiefs in mobilising support and resources in times of crises. Besides, norms governing marriages also encouraged village exogamy. This had the advantage of reducing blood feuds, and open hostilities, and strengthened inter-village solidarity In marriage bride price traditionally assumed significance as it reinterpreted the relationship between the girl's family/clan and the groom's side. The maternal uncle receives a part of the bride price, (the only member outside the girl's paternal uncles), her sisters and her escorts. According to Nunthara, marriage among the modern Mizos retains some of it's traditional characteristics, although the distribution of bride-price as a means of reaffirmation of ties between clan members assumes less and less importance[13].

The status of women in traditional Mizo society was inferior to men. Often she suffered from many disabilities like denial of right to property, except for the dowry that she took upon getting married. Besides, divorce was the prerogative of the husband. In the pre-marital phase, while men looked for sexual conquests, virginity was considered an asset for the girls. This often led to instances of rape in the chief's courts[14]. Further, while extra-marital affairs were tolerated in case of men, it was not so for the women. Thus the woman was considered akin to property of the male. However with modern education and the spread of Christianity, Mizo women have succeeded to develop

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[12] Ibid., pp. 86.

[13] Nunthara ,Op. cit., pp.91

[14] Ibid, pp. 88

actively. However, they still lack the right to property under customary law. Other

features of Mizo kinship organisation are, the practice of widow remarriage, cross-cousin

marriage(but not parallel cousin marriage), the consolidation of monogamy, and the

practice of levitate, both senior and junior (traditionally). The Mizos were never

known to practice polyandry[15].

Thus traditionally Mizos have preferred descent mode of reckoning, though not

always governed by factionalism'. One of the important social and moral code of the

Mizos is 'tlawmngaihna' or altruism. It symbolises all good qualities of life in an

individual's conduct or behaviour. Like being unselfish, courteous, courageous,

industrious, kind and persevering[16]. Sangkima cites an instance of tlawmngaihna in a

hunting group If a man possesses this virtue, he wouldn't be in a hurry to kill the prize and

take the credit all for himself. Upon spotting the prey, he would tell his other friends first

so that his may get the opportunityfor credit. Thus sharing and subordination of one's ego

to group sense is what it is about. Tlawmngaihna was the norm governing face-to face

interactions within same clan groups, thus maintaining the axiom of amity. But when

viewed at the macro level, this meant segmentation in relation to the other clams

since clan is an important part of the social structure. However, all is not so simple

yet. we have already noted the contradictory impulses inherent in kinship organisations

between alliance and descent. In Mizo society too, this tension was inherent, given the

practice of both clan endogamy and exogamy, and village exogamy. Clan exogamy

increases relations with other clans, and tribes, while endogamy stresses on building

[15] Singh ,K .S ,Op ,cit., pp. 17

[16] Sangkima :Mizos , Society and Social Change ,Spectrum Publications, Guwahati: Delhi ,1992 ,pp.43

own solidarity through intra-marriage in the community. The traditional Mizo kinship pattern based on marriage rules shows that alliance was spread potentially all across the populace since there were no formal taboos on marriage besides one's kindred (immediate family relations considered bilaterally). At the same time, because of such marriage practice, the alliances created could not have been held in great value and esteem. Since the option of a preferred choice of mate was open, alliance between families most probably ended in one generation. This generalised exchange, from the point of view of individual families was therefore temporary that is affecting the marriage partner families, or 'synchronic.' But at the larger level of the tribe, such exchange rested on the rule of tribe endogamy which is what Levi-Strauss[17] meant by a basic trust that the cycle of exchange would close circuit after a period of time. The other important base of kinship organisation, that is the inheritance rule shows that in Mizo society, descent mode of reckoning through the patrilineal line is the dominant rule of kinship organisation. Property as common sense tells us is the source of power influence. Likewise, the institution of chiefship in Mizo society, reinforced the rule of patrilinial descent. Also, since we know that matrilateral cross cousin marriage i.e. preference for mother's brother's daughter is the ideal form of generalised exchange, we can therefore say that such practice inclines towards a patrilinial kinship organisation.

We have drawn on some general observations about the chiefs all along this chapter. The institution of chieftainship was an integral part of Mizo social structure. They had extensive authority, but were bound by customary laws. They were assisted

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[17] Levi-Strauss quoted pp.22-23 in P.Oberoi (ed.) Family, Kinship and Marriage in India. Oxford in India. Readings in Sociology and Social Anthropology, OUP, Delhi, 1994.

by a council of elders. In their association, the chief divided work in the village and distributed jhum fields for cultivation. Apparently the chiefs were also despotic. According to Sangkima[18] just before the advent of the British, there was an uprising against the chiefs called 'Lalsawi'. However, as the unity of the commoners dissipated, the chiefs managed to reassert themselves. After the British took over, they often appointed government employees as chiefs in place of the deposed ones. Also the British superintendent reserved the right to remove the chief. This eroded the authority of the chiefs greatly. Also, British patronage made the new and the young chiefs belligerent, thus upsetting the old order. The ills of the chieftainship institution was one of the leading causes for the decision to join the Indian Union, taken by the Mizo people. They saw it as an obstacle to modernisation.

However any discussion on Mizo social structure will be incomplete without discussion the impact of Christianity among the Mizos. Among the tribal communities of North East India, the Mizos are almost 100 per cent Christians. This has led many to believe themselves as a special 'chosen people', and as a fulfilment of a people's destiny. According to local legend, prophecy about the new faith was made much before the arrival of Christianity to Mizoram. A man called Darphawka prophesied from his dream that people would come from across the oceans with a new light and that by that time all his daughters would have been married. According to Sangkima, this is exactly how it happened. Rev. William Williams of the Presbyterian (Welsh) mission in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills was the first missionary to enter Mizoram in 1891. But the real

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[18] Sangkima Op cit., p.38.

founders of Christianity in Mizoram were Rev. F.W. Savage and Rev. J.H. Lorrain of the Arthington Mission, based at London. They were sponsored by Robert Arthington, a rich man, to spread the gospel among the non-believers. Savidge, and Lorrain are credited with pioneering work, like the codification of the Lusei language. They codified the Mizo alphabets and compiled the first grammar and dictionary of the Lusei language. There upon they recorded their first Lusei convert on 30th March, 1896. The first school was opened on Ist April 1894. In 1987, the work of Savidge and Lorrain was taken over by Rev. D.E. Jones of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission, Aizawl.

The missionaries worked to convert the people through education.[19] Earlier, the colonial administration had initiated measures to impart education, with the aim to maintain law and order. They had also arranged to impart Bengali language as medium according to their convenience. However, since the missionaries proved successful in managing education in the Mizo language, by 1905-1906, all government schools were also transferred to the Christian missions. But a clause forbidding imparting of religious education in these institutions was made by the administration.[20] The people responded eagerly to the new education, soon the number of pupils enrolled increased. The education and literacy efforts of the missionaries exposed traditional Mizo society to enlightenment - i.e., modern ideas of reason, rationality, progress humanitarian principles, material progress, etc. These had a revolutionary impact. They replaced old social values with a new premium. On the other hand, the codification of the Duhtian dialect of the Lusei clan which is spoken by the majority had the

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[19] Sangkima op cit., p.85.
[20] Ibid.,p.88.

effect of expanding and deepening communication and social values. If facilitated the

growth and development of a consciousness of kind. According to K.S.Singh,[21] initially

the people and the chiefs were anti- Christian. The missionaries were ridiculed and

looked down upon. Many people couldn't tolerate songs seen by the missionaries to

woo people. A number of songs called Puma zai or Tlanglam Zai were popularised by

the people around 1908 to oust Christian hymns. The missionaries however

prevailed.... and the evangelization process progressed rapidly through mass

conversion into Christianity.

Besides the obvious gains that missionary activity brought for the Mizos, the

negative side of it was the gradual disintegration of the traditional way of life. The

'Zawlbuk' which used to be the pivot of village life decayed due to disuse. The

introduction of education and missionary work weaned away the youth from it. Besides,

other changed structural factors, like the maintenance of law and order under pax

Britannica, and the erosion of Chief's authority also contributed to the demise of the

Zawlbuk. Rev. F.J. Raper of the Baptist Mission (Serkawn) , and the

Superintendent of Lushai Hills (1926) Parry were amongst those English men who

sought the revival of the institution. But since majority of the villagers had started

abandoning it, there was no recourse. Finally in 1932 it was formally closed by

Superintendent A.G.M. McCall. Most probably, the villagers found the Zawlbuk

meaningless when the Church was there and had become the centre of their lives.

Also, deliberate distancing from it cannot be ruled out since it has been generally

observed that most new converts take on an attitude of revulsion towards the

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[21] Singh, K.S., op cit. P.16.

traditional institutions and customs. All this only goes to show that tribal life is an integrated whole whose parts fall apart when drastic, developments take place. K.S. Singh,[22] notes that with the advent of Christianity, even the traditional festivals have died out. Instead the Mizos now perform festivals like Christmas, New Years Day, and other connected with Christianity. At the same time many of their present practices are a combination of the old and the new. The Government of Mizoram has set up a special wing in the education department of revive, the traditional festivals, Music, and songs. Such initiative reflect the growing consciousness about preserving one's heritage. Also, such consciousness is born out of contact with people of other cultures which stimulate the need to reify cultural signs and symbols, though without the traditional ritual significance attached to them.

The Church has taken over functions regarding marriage, village co-operative activity, and other matters (non-political) of public importance. Marriages are solemnised according to Christian rites, and the old customs regarding marriage have given place to new criteria like education, Christianity, and wealth.[23] This according to Nunthara, has paved the way for emergence of class consolidation in Mizo society. Now family is the main criteria in arranging alliances, and often families of same class background prefer marriage within their own kind. Other modern developments, like cash economy, displacement of jhum cultivation initially due to the regrouping of villages, breakdown of village solidarity, urbanisation - these have

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22 Singh,K.S, op cit., p.23.

23 Nunthara, op,.cit., pp.90-91.

indicated new changes. Like, the growth of nuclear families, middle class aspirations, etc. Thus, we can assume that in contemporary Mizo society alliance relations and blood relations (close) play a more significant role than clan membership.

The kinship organisation, the village structure, and the agrarian economy of Mizoram were drastically affected under the grouping of villages as a counter measure to contain insurgency, and initiate rapid development. The village regrouping carried out between 1967-70 is a watershed in Mizo history. There were four kinds of grouping - (1) Protected and progressive village of PPV, (2) New grouping centres Where 184 villages were grouped into 40 growing centres, (3) voluntary Grouping centres, and (4) the Extended Loop Area (1970). The whole process involved a total population of 2,36,162 i.e., 82% of the total population of Mizoram.[24] The grouping centres were guarded heavily with security checking while going out for cultivation and while re-entering the centre in the evening. Though the in-charge of these centres were from the civil service, the actual operations were in the hands of the military. According to Nunthara, the immediate effect of grouping was the dislocation of jhum cultivation cycle. Besides the increased population pressure reduced the jhum cycle leading to lower yield. The measures by the government to provide additional earnings through wage labour proved inadequate. More significantly ,Nunthara notes that grouping had the effect of loosening village solidarities.

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[24] Nunthara: Impact of the Introduction of Grouping of Villages in Mizoram, Omson Publication, New Delhi, 1989.

From the point of view of containing insurgency the grouping scheme was a failure. The harassment and difficulties faced by the people led to wide spread popular support for the underground Mizo National Front of Laldenga. And economically, the grouping scheme encouraged petty trade and business but failed to offer a sustainable alternative to jhum cultivation. Also, the bureaucratic procedures of the centres ensured the exploitation of the poor by the well connected, as recorded by Nunthara (P.12). Though modernisation would have brought these changes, the grouping scheme accelerated the pace of change. The regrouping of villages led to rapid migration of rural population to urban areas. However, social problems due to such transformation are yet to be deeply investigated.

Thus far we have discussed the social structure of Mizo society mainly focusing on their kinship organisation, Christianity, the village, structure, and notion of Mizo as a community. We have left out political aspects of Mizo society which will be dealt with in the next chapter on ethnicity. Our discussion shows that today the Mizo community is banded morally through the Church, and the consciousness of kind based on their ethnic identity (history, language, and other hereditary factors). Besides this there are faint beginnings of a class order which is however subordinate to the ethnic identity of Mizos.

CHAPTER IV

ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM

According to T.H. Eriksen,[1] ethnicity is an aspect of a relationship between groups who have a minimum regular contact and who consider themselves as culturally distinct. It is an emic (native) category for describing oneself. Hence objective cultural factors perse do not automatically lead to ethnicity. Rather, to the extent that these cultural differences have any significance in the groups social interaction that an ethnic element colours their relationship. Hence, ethnicity is also linked to politicisation of cultural differences through ethnic organisations.

The first fact of ethnicity is the application of systematic distinctions between insiders and outsiders; between us and them[2] Thus ethnicity is a means of classifying people in group based on criteria like fictive kinship, shared history, religion, or shared ancestry. Ethnicity is not limited to territorial basis all the time. Ethnicity can transcend political boundaries, like the Mizo and Naga communities of North-East India who are divided mainly between

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[1] Eriksen, T.H : Ethnicity & Nationalism, Pluto Press, London, 1993.
[2] Ibid., p18.

India and Myanmar. Ethnic boundaries therefore, are social boundaries. For ethnic membership to have a personal importance, it must provide the individual with something he or she considers valuable.[3] This value could be a general form of identify or ethnic categorisation in a plural society, or it could be job related, where ethnicity determines to a large extent, one's chances of getting employment through ethnic networks. Thus, context is very important while discussing ethnicity, because it determines whether a cultural factor gets emphasised in social relations, or not. This aspect of ethnicity has been stressed by writers (Abner Cohen, Paul Brass) to show that ethnicity is an 'instrumental' phenomenon. The sole reason of ethnicity and ethnic organisation lies in it's political functioning.[4] Thus history and culture according to instrumentalist's point of view, are not as important as the contemporary social conditions that lead to rise of ethnicity. Such an approach is adopted by scholars investigating 'nativist' movements (Myron Weiner) and those who view ethnic movements as simply a middle class phenomenon or an elite based phenomenon (Paul Brass: 1991). This approach has been countered by the argument that ethnicity is not a random phenomenon. It emerges within

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[3] Op, cit p.33.
[4] op, cit., p.55.

certain broad cultural boundaries. Otherwise, one cannot explain the symbolic significance of ethnicity manifested in its members in forms of self sacrifice and extreme commitment to the cause. The symbolic aspect of ethnicity comes close to the primodialist approach to ethnicity as primordialists view ethnicity as a given or an immutable aspect of the social person.[5] which can be activated whenever the need arises such as competition over scarce resources (job). Primodialists have been criticised for giving a static view of ethnicity.

Thus ethnicity is a phenomenon that emerges through the process of interaction between groups or communities that regard each other as culturally distinct. In this interaction, economic, social, and political factors impinging on power and denominance in the social set up come to be underlined by the common dominator of cultural differences as ascribed to each other by the people involved. So ethnicity is a political principle or organisation which draws on symbolic traits to inspire great emotional commitment to the community which generally cannot be found in any interest based (exclusively) association.

How is ethnicity related with 'the ideology of the state' i.e., nationalism? identities are constructed in relation to some others.

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[5] op, cit., p.55.

In case of nation states, the others would be members of the international community. Both ethnic and national identity stress a fraternity overriding all inequalities. Nationalism draws on culture and tradition similar to ethnicity. It attempts traditionalisation of customs shared by ancestors of the nation, thereby reifying the culture.[6] Reification of culture i.e., making culture appear as a constant factor, is done by nationalism to impart a sense of nationhood to its members who can draw on this culture to reflect upon one's own cultural distinctness vis-a-vis other nation. In the context of modern industrial society, nationalism aims to create a sense of continuity through time to overcome the rapture between self and society that modernity has given rise to.[7] And Eriksen points out, that at the individual level, nationhood is a matter of belief.[8]

The relation between nationalism and ethnicity is clear when we see that both make use of kinship in their mobilisation of popular support. While at the ethnic level such kinship may be more concretely experienced due to a core cultural content, at the level of nationalism kinship is used to create an abstract identification with the whole nation. In this endeavour, standardised education really

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[6] op, cit., p.101.
[7] op, cit., p.105.
[8] Iop, cit., p.105.

promotes growth of patriotic feeling for the whole nation as pointed out variously by Gellner, Eriksen, among others.

Model nationalism like that of West European nation-states was built around the ideology of political representation of interests of a particular ethnic group. Be it Frenchness or Britishness. However, multicultural nation states like India has a adopted a non-ethnic nationalist ideology as enshrined in the Constitution. It is based on pillars of social justice, secularism, and democracy giving citizenship rights equally across social barriers. The Constitution of India can be said to be one of the basic shared meanings of multicultural India.

The distinguishing feature of nationalism is it's relation to the state. The state as defined by Weber, is the monopoly holder over all powers of coercion within it. This gives it immense power to restructure the content of nationhood through it's education and language policies, besides others like power of taxation. The nation state's ideology is that political boundaries and cultural boundaries should coincide. The nation state is the face of a successful nationalist ideology. Often, the nation-state tries to impose an official nationalism on it's members which can trigger counter ethnic mobilisation. E.g. the language issue in Tamil Nadu, India during 1950's and 1960's for multicultural states. Ethnicity giving over

to non ethnic shared meanings like civil rights, seem to be the long term solution to harmony.

Thus nationalism and ethnicity are closely linked. The core cultural context of ethnicity is often harnessed by nationalism to get effective popular support. However, attainment of statehood impose other responsibilities on nationalism when political and cultural boundaries are not coterminous. Then the nation state has to create citizens imbibing values over and above ethnicity, of any particular variety.

According to Prof. B.K. Roy Burman, whereas in a nation, membership is by volition, in ethnic groups the conventional means of membership is hereditary. Ethnic groups are primarily morally binded while in a nation-state it is fear of coercive power that holds them together. This has implication for collective conceptions. While the ethnic groups see themselves as a moral community rather than as abettors of the coercive power of the states. But a nation society as distinct from a nation -state may manifest many features of ethnicity.[9]

Thus ethnicity and nationalism can be complementary if reciprocated at the social level. Then it offers the individual with an identity which is wholesome i.e. while it satisfies his national

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[9] Roy Burman: Transformation of Tribes and Analogous Socail Formations. EPW, July 2, 1983.

identity, it also carries value and meaning for his individual self. However only a nation-state without a nation society is a task carved out for nation building efforts. We have seen two senses in which nationalism in India is without a nation. First in Aloysius, conception about the still existing inequalities of power in society contrary to the objective of social justice. And secondly in the sense of sharp cultural markers distinguishing a tribal people (the Mizos) from the dominant cultural framework of Indian civilisation. Phenomenologically such cultural differences mean a lack of inter-subjectivity which often has negative consequences for face-to-face inter action and persistence of cultural racial stereotypes. They hamper communication. However the study of ethnicity also shows that it is intimately related to the process of assimilation. It can result in acculturation i.e., adoption of cultural ways of one (dominant) group by the other group, or it could lead to social or structural assimilation (Gordon).[10] Structural assimilation means 'the entry of an ethnic groups members into close primary relationships with members of the dominant group or ethnic outsiders. These would dispel prejudices and lead to greater participation in social process by all people. Primary relationships are best fostered by wide intermarriage across cultural frontiers. This would

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[10] Encyclopaedia of Sociology.

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increase network of alliance as seen in kinship systems, and tone down differences based on ethnicity. However, for India where caste remains the sentinel in marriage alliances, and there are varying levels of education and economic development, such a 'melting pot' syndrome still needs a long period of time to materialise. The more common instance of multi-cultural coexistence are 'plural societies'. Here each ethnic group retains it's distinct cultural identity, it's social institutions like schools, neighbourhood, and largely community endogamy is practised. In the same vein earlier we mentioned how Victor D'Souza rejects this plural model and opts for a heterogeneous model where the nation is formed not on the basis of dominance by one group over another, but by volition of all groups and communities. A culturally pluralist society per se scores low in case of developing structural changes in inter community interaction.

In Indial, ethnicity and nationalism have played a historical role. During the 1950's and 60's the linguistic movements marked a sharp break from the earlier politics which emphasised subordination of regional interests to national interest. With the reorganisation of states on linguistic basis vested interests in employment & education opportunities, in economy and land ownership set in. These have taken a firm grip over politics and

social relations. Though India has held on as a viable territorial unity, the substantive development of it's nation society has taken a backseat. In case of the North-East, the reorganisation of the region was based on ethnicity. Through the political, territorial integration with India and subsequent development of autonomous district councils, union territories, and later as states of the Indian Union, there has been a definite integration at the associative level where utilitarian norms govern interaction. However, by and large, North East as a whole has remained in the model of the plural society where community endogamy and sharp sense of ethnic identity prevail. The inter-caste, inter-community alliances are few, and regarded with less value. Structural factors like laws regarding land ownership low level of geographical mobility have ensured the continued preference for ethnic endogamy.

The rise of Mizo ethnicity : according to Max Weber , an ethnic group is one whose members "entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarity of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonisation and migration". Also, "it doesn't matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists". The Mizo ethnic awareness is based on shared descent, migration, customs and race. While coming in contact with the British must have greatly reinforced their own self

consciousness, the earlier contacts with neighbouring hill tribes and plainsmen had also fostered ethnic awareness i.e., distinctions and classification between 'us' and 'them' marked by a certain degree of ethnocentrism and prejudice towards the other people (hill and plains folk alike). In the Mizo language, the term 'vai' is used to denote all non-Mizos, and at a more broader level, all non-tribals. Within the Mizo community, the consciousness of kind grew along with the consolidation of Mizo identity which we have already discussed in chapter II. Thus, the predominant influence of the Duhlian dialect, marriage alliances across clan and tribe, and the gradual withering away of clan differences under the shadow of Christian brotherhood, all facilitated a cohesive territorial and ethnic identity of being Mizos. Beside, in relation to the non-Mizo population outside Mizoram, there were many cultural markers to distinguish each other. In the case of the plains of Assam, and Bengal, the explicit geographical distinction between plainsmen and hillmen governed notions of 'us' and 'them'. With more knowledge about the social ways of other peoples of mainland India, language, religion, and social structure i.e., the caste system were used to distinguish oneself from the others. Mizos has already embraced Christianity at large by the time they came into regular contact with mainland India. Thus, from the beginning they remained outside the

pale of caste society. And even though within Mizo social organisation there were several strata of people i.e., chiefs, commoners, and slaves, there was however no rigid ranking system like caste. Nor was there any scheme of social distance and avoidance rules based on notions of purity and pollution. The inequality within traditional Mizo society was balanced by the fraternity of clan organisation within the tribes. Thus while intra-clan interactions were governed by norms of self interest, inter-clan exchanges were governed by notions of collective good over individual gain. More broadly, since the Mizo society is tribal, it is also closed in nature,[11] and hence different from non-tribal ethnicity, say like the linguistic movement that India witnessed during the 1950's and 60's. A closed altitude has a negative tendency leading to dissociation exclusion, and exclusivism. Therefore these come into conflict with nation building processes and growth of a national citizenry. It affects local and regional politics vis a vis the centre and generally doesn't augur well for the 'nation society'. Further, the closed nature of tribal ethnicity contributes to the multiplication of ethnic mobilisation among tribes where infra-nationalism[12] i.e., mobilisation for achieving political and material

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[11] Roy Burman, op,cit.,

[12] Roy Burman op, cit.,

aspirations of the tribe spearheaded by the tribal middle class and intelligentsia, gains ground. Since tribes as such are segmentary, such proliferation of ethnicity exerts pressure on the centre and creates dis-economies of scale. But from a counterpoint, ethnic mobilisations are also seen as signs of awareness, and integration with the mainstream. Proliferation of ethnic groups has often raised the question, where does it lead to, and where will it end?

First of all, ethnic (tribal) movements in India are primarily due to two discontentments. One, that there is no development, or inadequate and wasteful management of development in economic and social sectors like health and education. The second discontent is at an ideological level i.e., the tribal people wish to be considered as part of the greater mosaic of Indian society not as 'back ward Hindus' or a primitive society that needs to be settled and developed alone, but the tribal needs to be accepted in his own right. His culture, cosmology, social organisation, values, symbols demand to be accommodated a framework of parity with the dominant cultural traditions like Hinduism or Islam, etc. Lack of recorded history, lack of traditional script, and a backward economy using primitive technology have been the factors that have proved a disadvantage in the struggle to give tribal ideology a rightful place in the Indian civilisation. The economic and the ideological or

cultural discontentments have to be tackled along with initiatives to build secular and socialistic national citizens. Citizenship building according to our Constitution is based on the notion of individual freedom, autonomy, rights, and duties. However, traditional ties of caste, tribe, and language play a significant role in Indian polity. Like the continuing policy of positive discrimination in public secular employment and education opportunities. However, just as caste in politics has progressed from vertical solidarity (patron-client relation) to caste federations, so also the politicisation of tribal ethnicity has travelled from clan and tribe solidarity to more fractured interests groups and so formation of association across communities, like a Naga chief minister (Rishang Keishing - Congress I) in the predominantly Meitei populated Manipur. Politicisation may thus hold a key to better integration of diverse and closed elements like tribal ethnicity. Integration does not mean the extinguishing of all differences. Rather it is a situation where there is cultural plurality at the macro level and balanced reciprocity norms governing interaction at the micro level.

Ethnicity however is inherently a political principle as it is a quest for power i.e., control over resources, means to achieve goals control over your future, and strength to lay down your

own terms to any action or agreement. Mizo ethnicity came to the forefront with the rise of the Mizo National Front of MNF which was secessionist in character, during the late 1960's till the Mizo peace Accord in 1986. We will explore the rise and fall of the MNF to see it's links with ethnicity.

The roots of Mizo insurgency lie in two extreme years of hardship faced by the people of this remote region i.e., the bamboo flower famine, or 'Mautam'. This was a periodic occurrence when on account of the bamboo flowering there is a great increase in rodent fertility which meant destruction of crops by the rodents and hence famine for the human population. Hence anticipating loss of crops, the Mizo Hills District council tried to insure against circumstance by encouraging paddy cultivation in the flatlands adjoining the Cachar plains of Assam. Soon some Mizo farmers were arrested for trespass by the Assam government (Verghese, P.140, 199) The famine was the propelling and immediate factor. Besides, other developments since independence contributed to strengthening insurgency. Verghese has noted that partition severed Mizoram's riverine links with markets in Bangladesh. On the Burma side, civil war in Burma compounded the situation, economically. The Lushai hills were now at the very extremity of an uncertain and inadequate line of communications on which they depended for all

essential supplies' (Verghese, p.139).   There   was inflation   and

scarcity making living tough.   The District councils formed in 1954

did not have adequate manpower or finance to address the problem.

'Thus, in the   absence   of direct   finding by the centre, economic

dependency on   Assam partly   belied Mizo hopes for economic

salvation by joining India,' (Verghese, p.139).

On the political front, in 1960 a bill was   introduced in the

Assam legislative assembly, seeking to make Assamese the official

language   of the   state.   This   sparked   off protest   movement

throughout the hills of North East.   The ex-chiefs' organisation, the

United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO), joined   the Eastern

India Tribal Union in 1957, seeking separation from Assam. Thus,

when the famine (nature's tragedy) occurred, it was in a context of

great economic, physical,   mortal   hardship,   and   a   politically

charged situation to seek greater autonomy in deciding the political

future of Mizoram.

Appeals to the Assam government to rush aid for famine struck

Mizoram, took long enough for bitterness to enter in the relations

between   the   Mizo   people   and   the   Assam government   in

particular. 'The Mizo cultural Society was converted   into the Mizo

National Famine Front   (1960). Laldenga   was active in it. 'He

developed a network of workers and supporters who distributed food

and travelled to the remotest villages with relief, and a message. That the state and central government did not care about the Mizos, that the Mizo District council has failed to support the crisis and so cannot be held as a representative of Mizo aspirations; that Mizo territory was integrated into Assam as late as 1898; and that the Mizos, like the Nagas were a nation and deserved a place of their own, away from India.[13] The strong factor in favour of Laldenga was that he developed a strong base at the grassroots level. On 28 February, 1966, Laldenga declared Mizoram independent and soon took over Aizawl and other district centres. 'The Indian Defence Ministry retaliated furiously, especially due to it's recent debacle with Pakistan (1965) and China (1962). Air raids were ordered for the first time in free India's history on rebel holdout within the country.'[14]

However, the single most important decision affecting the whole of Mizo society, besides the Special Powers Act, etc., was the military strategy to regroup villages by security troops in order to cut off the rebels from sources of shelter and food. While on the one hand this decision disrupted the symbolic relationship between the land and it's people', it also resulted in many youth joining the rebels.

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[13] Hazarika Sanjay: Strangers of the Mist. Penguin Books, 1995, p.112.
[14] Ibid., p.113.

On the other hand, as Nunthara (1989), quoted by Verghese observes, regrouping led to loosening of village solidarity ties, giving rise to emphasis on individual achievement, rising crime, and tribal sub-nationalism. It also led to rapid urbanisation. Mizoram is today the most urbanised state in the country (46.09% as against 5.36% in 1962).[15] Also, it faces a serious drug addiction problem. As of 1994, there were 1,407 addicts in the state of which 109 were female.[16] Though there is no direct connection made between the social upheavals witnessed by Mizoram and it's drug problem, the connection might be there, though only tenuously as Mizoram's border with Burma (Golden triangle Zone) and it's effect on drugs cannot be ruled out.

External factors, like creation of Bangladesh in 1971 with the help of India, effectively helped curbs the growth of Mizo insurgency. While the Nagas could take refuge in Burma (Myanmar), the Mizos did not have this opportunity.[17] In 1986 after the signing of the Mizoram Accord between the MNF & the Government of India, Laldenga assumed power in the state. But soon corruption, nepotism etc. saw to it that he was popularly voted out. Sanjoy Hazarika mentions that the rehabilitated jungle gorillas could not really adjust

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[15] Verghese op, cit., p.144.
[16] Ibid., p.159.
[17] Hazarika op,cit.,p.117.

to life in peaceful times. While some fell into depression ,liquor, others went to the extreme of hoarding all material goods, deprived during the jungle years. During the anti-insurgency state action, there were also gross violations of human rights of common Mizo people.[18] But as Hazarika notes, the Mizos have found the rare power of forgiveness which few find. Thus, with the death of Laldenga, insurgency too died a peaceful death in Mizoram.

From our discussion on Mizoram, we find that though integration (geographical and political) with India took place to an extent according to Mizo terms of safe guarding culture, identity, subsequent failure of adequate response from state agencies and neighbouring anti state activities (Nagaland) influenced the rise of insurgency in Mizoram. It was unfortunate that external factors like the wars with Pakistan and China diverted the meagre resources of the newly independent India from the foundation tasks of development for nation building. After independence, Mizoram was under the Assam government's care for sometime. Relations between the two of them reflect the general hills vs. plains dichotomy that governs relations generally in the North East region. Among the people of both sides we find racial/social stereotypes. While the hills people like the Mizos categorised plains people as cunning,

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[18] Ibid., p.118.

shrewd, and untrustworthy, the plains people on the other hand mostly regarded the hills men as barbarous, dumb-witted, and crude. The fact that hill people visibly look different in terms of physical feature, and religion (Christianity and indigenous - and even if Hindu influenced, had a paternalistic relation with the plains Hindus) way of life (life food and clothing), all these acted as obstacles to cultural affinity. However, in contemporary time, with the spread of education within the states, sending of students from the North East to different educational institutions in various parts of the country, the joining of people from the North -East in various services all over India, establishment of a regular electoral democracy, all these have considerably reduced the handicaps of not sharing deep cultural affinity. The instances cited above are examples of geographical as well as social mobility which have contributed to the development of a twin process i.e.., greater awareness about the vast size and extent of India and the meaning of being an Indian in a multicultural society, and at the same time increasing the awareness about distinctiveness of one's own culture and group identity.

Lalchungnunga's book has a survey listing several factors according to priority which the natives of Mizoram felt contributed most to Mizo regionalism. His respondents rate the distinct culture

and tradition (norms governing behaviour, sense of justice and fairness, 'tlawmngaihna', etc.) as the first factor whereas economic backwardness is rated sixth amongst eight factors. However, as scholars have pointed out, there is a difference in what people say and what they actually do. But the real value of such a survey may be in communicating the fact that culture as a symbolic entity is socially important for the Mizos, and this may be generally extended for other hill people of North - East India, in their interaction with people of the plains and mainland India. Similarly, ethnicity as biologically distinct (physical) features have played a socially meaningful role in the inter-group relations concerning the North East region and the rest of the country. Thus ethnicity as we have understood theoretically, plays an important role in Mizoram and other hill areas of North East region. Nationalism as the ideology of the nation-state may be said to be subservient to Mizo identity when Mizos are within India.

At the practical level which is the state apparatus, certain steps like upgrading communication and trade link and developing infrastructure in the region are important development agendas. It is worth exploring the possibility of an intra-North east region trade region which would help the people themselves while. This brings to an important issue regarding the Indian Union i.e., the relation

between regional cultural identity and national identity, or sub-nationalism and the nation state. Many writers on the subject consider sub nationalism to be a pro-secessionist posture unlike regionalism which assumes a part and whole scheme. It is interesting that vernaculars address their own people as a people which has the potential (de facto) to be a nation society and if secessionist, a nation-state too. However, such meanings are subordinated while speaking of being an Indian nation-state. It is not just a question of where you are articulating your national identity, at the regional level or at the national level. But it is a basic tension in the Indian nation state because it is a civilisation or a multicultural, multisocial entity. Thus it does not adhere to the one-nation one state model of western nation-states. However, as pointed out, our adoption of a liberal democracy with the individual as a unit glosses over the ground realities of identity in India. We shall make use of an empirical study to understand this point better.

A.E. Ruud[19] has discussed the position of Bengali regional identity vis a vis the dominant Hindu nationalism ideology of the Bhartiya Janata Party and the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak (RSS). He is sensitive to the historicity of Bengali identity formation and traces it

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[19] Ruud A.e: The Hindu Natioanlist Discourse, article in Donnesson and Antlov ed. Op, cit., p.159.

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to the nineteenth century 'Bengali Renaissance'. From where the Bhadralok emerged as the core Bengali i.e., 'a specifically Bengali social group, consisting of the educated professionals or the leisured classes.

'The hallmark of the Bengali Bhadralok was his education, his non manual labour, and his refined mannerisms and dress..'[20] The Bhadralok was an elite where rustic Bengalis were not included. But it formed the identity of being a Bengali. Despite a strong sense of regional identity, 'Bengal is rarely represented as a nation in itself but always as part of India'. The main feature is that Bengalis tend to see themselves as more cultured and advanced than other Indians. At the same time they remain staunch advocates of Indian unity.'[21] According to Ruud, there are two reasons why Bengal could not be defined as a nation in itself. One, due to left influence, and the second due to a "sense of being more 'modern'".[22] The nature of relations between Bengali identity and the Indian nation is reflected in a sense of distance from the central government in the field of culture and in federal centre-state relations.

Though Bengal forms part of Hindu civilisation, yet, there are certain important differences in acceptance of the Hindu nationalism

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[20] Ibid., p.159.
[21] Ibid., p.157.
[22] Ibid., p.161.

ideology. These differences, according to Ruud are the adoption of the national language Hindi when Bengalis in fact consider their own vernacular literature to be of much higher standard. And they have to make a deliberate attempt to learn Hindi. Secondly the god Ram occupies a marginal status in Bengal where the important dieties are Durga, Kali, Saraswati, Laskhmi, and Ganesh. Ruud also mentions the lack of explicitly articulated anti-Muslim sentiments in Bengal though it shares a 'porous' boundary with Muslim Bangladesh. On top of this, 'the Hindu organisations do not enjoy support in West Bengal' to the extent witnessed in northern states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat. And from his personal 'interviews' with RSS and BJP activitists in Bengal, Ruud concludes that there is a certain ambiguity and awkward evasion of events related to the nationalist discourse like the demolition of the Babri Masjid which his respondents felt was 'necessary as a rallying point for the north Indians, because, people in north India were 'uneducated villagers' who could not grasp complex arguments and therefore need simple issues.[23] Such an attitude helped them maintain their regional identity (considered superior) as well as their avowed nationalism. On the other hand, Hindu nationalist discourse is often used by the Bhadralok for legitimising their

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[23] Ruud, op, cit., p.167.

social advancement which is a purely local process. Ruud's conclusions are instructive "In a society as large and complex as India, even a nationalist' ideology tends to emerge from and find it's practical expression in the concerns and socio-political realities of one particular region. A strong regional tinge and flavour prevent a smooth export into other regions.' 'Ideologies formulated in regions outside one's one will remain partly alien because they do not relate to the experiences and realities of one's home region. In India 'nationalist' ideologies coloured by region of origin will in other regions tend to become ideologies only in the strict sense of a conscious and formulated (and often adopted) world view, not in the more extended sense of signs and symbols with an immediate appeal to profound and unconscious emotions."[24]

From our discussion on Mizoram and Bengali identity, we find that regional cultural contexts are important in the making of India as a nation state and nation-society. We have to agree with Paul Brass that the central tendency in India is towards decentralisation. Besides having implications for policy and politics, such a conclusion for our purpose legitimates regional ethnicity especially when national ideologies need to have a popular resonance, which is possible only through regional identities.

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[24] Ruud, op, cit., pp.179-180

What Ruud has concluded about the alienation between nationalist ideologies and regional interests and sentiments holds valid for contemporary India due to it's large rural population who are without access to education and awareness. But at the same time frustration of middle class aspirations is also why nationalist discourses are thrown off track. But after all is said and done due to it's vast size and complexity, we have to admit that regional ties which invoke strong sentiments are articulated by the cultural context which cannot be hoped to be emulated at the national level generally. Another observation by Ruud about the help of Hindu nationalist discourse to local social advancement of the Bengali Bhadralok is a useful reference to understand such integrating processes at the political level in Mizoram. Like the participation by local political leaders in elections on national political party tickets does help in the social advancement of the local elite. The insignificant level of social consciousness of being one and the same social Indian, except for the common political identity of being Indian is common for all Indians, the North east included.

In this chapter we have discussed ethnicity, and it's relation to nationalism, the relation of regional identity to national identity and the ethnic basis of Mizo insurgency. We thus found that in the context of Mizoram, ethnicity as a political principle lay in

frustrated hopes about economic development soon after independence. It was also based on valid reasons like the suffering faced by the people during the famine and the subsequent neglect of the administration. Besides the political aspect, Mizo ethnicity~~rooted~~ is rooted in a cultural context which needs sensitiveness if the process of nation building in India is to be a success. Ethnicity and nationalism will continue to be in a relationship of tension so long as perceived grievances of the people be it economic or cultural based are not resolved. In this the state has an important role to facilitate people's empowerment. Suffice is to say that Mizoram is a unique case in the North- East region which has seen volitional integration with India in 1947, then insurgency and now peace has returned. We can say that it is integrated into the Indian nation state.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The objective of undertaking this study was to see how people of the North-East especially tribals have formulated their notion about being part of the Indian union. We find that there is a basic tension in the dynamics of this relationship between the cultural and ethnic self definitions of the region, and the mainland cultural framework which is considered different from their own. The differences are based on objective factors like religion, race, language, geography, social values as in the case of Mizoram. However, structural linkages making way for integration are the state, extending market economy, and most importantly, the growing personal social contacts between people across cultural boundaries. E.g. : joining of educational institutions by students from Mizoram and the North east region in mainland India. Such processes need to be governed by macro perspective of nation building and empowering of citizens. Or the fusion of culture and power in the sense used by G. Aloysius.

Indian nationalism is a complex historical process of accretion. Though we have seen that the Indian state has been the major instrument of welding together the Indian nation state, yet the identity of an Indian can only be understood in a broad institutional perspective. And this is usually couched in a centre-periphery relationship of ideologies. The Hindu mainstream which is the dominant ideology is used

reference for the other traditions. Smaller scale tribal ethnicity however do not consider such posturing with any positive favour. As we have observed, the aspiration of these smaller solidarities is to evolve an ideological framework at parity with the dominant Hindu one. Such an enterprises has it's own pitfalls due to the distrust that the establishment and the majority have towards such activities. At times distrust has been validated due to the secessionist movement. But it must be kept in mind that it can do no good for a centre which alienates it's border people by treating them as means only i.e., as border states alone from the point of view of national security. Such postures subordinate the humanistic assumption of human (and therefore group) dignity. Further, our discussion on Bengali identity and the Hindu nationalist discourse also highlighted how even a cultural region historically linked to the mainstream is rooted in a regional cultural and political context. As regards the North- East I would like to point out that despite the long standing relationship of the region with the union, the majority of the hill tribal states, barring may be Assam, and Tripura, would like to be treated as autonomous cultural, political entities which are sui generis, and independent of the dominant mainstream cultural framework. Such a situation may be sociologically based on the pre modern unrestricted freedom and power that these hill people enjoyed over territory, way of living, etc. As J. Shakespeare noted, each Mizo village was like a small independent state in itself.

In our study we have discussed at length the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism. In conclusion, we can say that in a multicultural society like India, ethnicity is an inevitable phenomenon. However, the moot point is whether

it is good for common interests and nationalism. From our analysis, we find that in terms of the individual group's cohesion, ethnicity is valued socially. But in relation to other communities it can be a block to integration. However ethnicity also contains tendency to assimilation through acculturation. Such processes are ongoing. The important point is, in a multicultural society, the question is not of homogenization drives but of integration. Here ethnicity can be a boon in disguise by allowing a place of dignity to all i.e., accommodation. However there is a limit to multiplication of ethnicities. The panacea lies in the building up of citizens who are individuals with their first loyalty toward the state or country. For India it is a problem of modernity and tradition. Besides our study of the social structure of the Mizos showed us the differences that are there between mainstream and the region, Mizoram in particular. But despite these differences, a plural ethos is necessary for co-operative harmony, given the fact that within Mizoram itself, the Mizo form the dominant community vis-à-vis the Chakmas and Reangs with it's attendant social problems of harmonious living.

Under the modernist paradigm, most social problems' cures are located in economic growth and development . To a large extent such a position is the cure to social problems solving. However, the critical question is, what kind of economic growth are we heading for? The key to a positive economic growth which is sustainable is the mantra of people's empowerment at the grassroots level . Here culture context acquires significance in communicating and achieving

development from the grassroots level. And so ethnicity which plays an important role in self definitions in a region like the North-East have to be taken into account for successful implementation of nation-building processes .

This dissertation is a small attempt at clarifying concepts about nationalism, ethnicity, and people's aspirations about a little known region of India. Most of the time the North-East figures in public memory only through instances of reported violence or on the other extreme, through pictures of an idyllic, rustic existence. However, as this dissertation states, there is an urge today from the region to assert itself socially, economically, and politically, which itself is a sign of the ongoing process of integration of the Indian nation-state .

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